

Washington FAMILY

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AUGUST 2020

Back
-to-
School

3 New
S'mores
Recipes



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Special Series



Calendar of
Events



Family Matters
Family Fun



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PJ Feinstein
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Into the Unknown

When my children's school district announced last week that their first semester would be held entirely online, I felt relieved. Since there are so many unanswered questions about kids and coronavirus, in-person learning—even if it was only two days a week—seemed risky.

But then I began to panic. It was hard enough to help my elementary school-aged boys with online learning this spring when they each only had one class on Zoom. How will my husband and I juggle our full-time jobs while helping our kids with (potentially) several hours of schoolwork?

I know that we're not alone in our anxiety. My Facebook feed is abuzz with posts about pods, tutors and babysitters. Actually, I had to delete the app from my phone recently because reading about other people's potential plans was becoming overwhelming.

But parents aren't the only ones worried about school. In this issue, Megan Gregoire talked to teachers about their expectations for the fall and discovered that the uncertainty is stressing them out, too.

Before I deleted Facebook, I also saw many posts about families considering private school. If you're thinking about making the switch, you'll want to read Joy Saha's story about the changes to admissions events during a pandemic.

Also in this issue: creative ways kids have been making money now that traditional summer jobs are unavailable and expert advice on raising an eco-conscious family. Plus, we're sharing books to get your kids excited about school, our favorite places to pick fruit and three s'mores recipes to try at your next cookout.

After reading our digital issue, check out our website. Did you know that we accept contributions from readers? If you have something you'd like to share, such as a review or a personal essay, please email me; I'd love to hear from you!

Deep breaths, everyone. We'll get through this. (I hope!) ■

PJ Feinstein

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HERE'S WHAT WE'RE **LOVING** FOR **YOU** AND YOUR **FAMILY** THIS MONTH

By PJ Feinstein

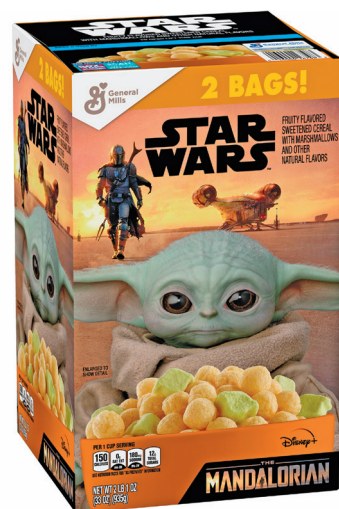


"Baby Yoda" is coming to breakfast! A new cereal inspired by the Disney+ series, "The Mandalorian," features sweetened corn puffs mixed with green marshmallow pieces shaped like the Child. But hurry: we have a feeling cereal boxes will be flying off shelves faster than Mando's speeder bike.

\$6 for two bags; Sam's Club

Apple-picking season is almost upon us, and these comfy slip-ons, a collaboration between TOMS and Once Upon A Farm, are a stylish way to celebrate everyone's favorite fall fruit. They're available in kid sizes, too, so you can coordinate with your little ones when you hit the orchard.

\$25-\$60; toms.com



Yes, these colorful mismatched socks—Strawberry & Banana, Dragon & Unicorn, Zombie & Werewolf and more—are totally adorable. But what we really love is their positive message about diversity and inclusion: Life's more fun when we're all different! Ages 6 months to adult.

\$10-\$13; palssocks.com



Many hand sanitizers have a not-so-pleasant antiseptic smell to them—but not Everyone Hand Sanitizer Spray. In fact, they offer four fragrance combinations that smell downright delish. Pop one in your purse or your child's backpack for easy on-the-go cleansing. \$18 for six; eoproducts.com



Sure, you can keep sand in jars as a way to remember your family's beach vacation—or you create a wearable time capsule of your travels. Send samples you've collected to Dune Jewelry or explore their extensive Sandbank to find sand and natural elements from over 4,000 locations around the world, including Ocean City and Virginia Beach. Prices vary; dunejewelry.com

Girls Can! Crate is a novel way to introduce your daughters (and sons!) to the women who've made the world a better place. Delivered monthly, each box includes a variety of activities that highlight the work of female role models like Clara Barton, Madam CJ Walker, Ida B. Wells and others. For each box purchased, the company donates crates to families in need and nonprofits working to empower girls. \$19-\$28; girlscancrate.com



There's a lot to remember to pack when you're heading outdoors these days. Make life easier by leaving a container of Wondercide's Insect Repellent Wipes in your car. The DEET-free wipes, available in four fresh scents, repel 98-100 percent of mosquitos, and they're biodegradable to boot. \$10 for 30 wipes; wondercide.com

Just when you thought you finally escaped the doo doo doos, Baby Shark is back to help your preschooler practice proper brushing techniques. BriteBrush's new smart toothbrush plays the Pinkfong hit and features a treasure hunt game to make brushing something your kids actually look forward to doing. We apologize in advance for the ear worm. \$20; target.com



Chalkboard Hall Pass

Your child's teacher will appreciate this handmade hall pass when they're back in their classroom again.

We all know that back-to-school season is going to look different this year. Maybe your kids will be in the classroom on an adjusted schedule. Or maybe they'll be home for distance learning or home schooling.

Either way, I'm a big fan of anything we can do to make things feel as familiar as possible for our kids and their teachers. This DIY chalkboard hall pass is a thoughtful yet practical back-to-school gift for whenever in-person learning begins again. And in the meantime, you can let your little students use it when they need to step away from Zoom!



INSTRUCTIONS

1 Lightly smooth both sides and the edges of your door hanger with sandpaper to make it easier to paint. Wipe off any dust with a clean, dry cloth.

2 Cover one side of the door hanger with a few coats of chalkboard acrylic or spray paint, and set it aside to dry. Don't worry if a printed design on the door hanger shows through a little bit. It will be less obvious once there's writing on it.

3 When the chalkboard paint dries, make a straight line with a piece of washi or painter's tape and write "I'm on my way to the:" above it using white acrylic paint and a thin paintbrush. Tip: Practice on scrap paper to get the size and spacing correct.

4 Tape off 1" stripes on the other side of the hanger, and paint them in a rainbow

pattern using a couple coats of acrylic paint.

5 Using tape as a guide, spell your teacher's name by gluing wooden letters over the rainbow stripes. Tip: Make sure the paint is very dry before you tape over it or it can peel off.

6 Wrap tape around the middle of two differently sized wooden beads. Paint half of each bead in one of the colors from the rainbow side of the door hanger.

7 Wrap black yarn or twine around the handle a few times, then thread the beads. (Tip: Wrap a bit of tape around the ends of the twine to thread it through the beads.) Tie a double knot near the end to keep the beads from falling off. You can tie a tassel at the end for some extra fullness and flair. ■

SUPPLIES

Everything you need to make this project should be readily available at your nearest craft store or online. I had good luck recently with curbside pickup from Michaels.

- Wooden door hanger
- Sandpaper
- Cloth
- Chalkboard acrylic or spray paint
- Washi or painter's tape
- Acrylic paint in white and an assortment of rainbow colors
- Paint brushes
- 3/4" wood block letters
- Glue
- Yarn or twine
- Wooden beads in two sizes

Lindsay Ponta created the DIY and lifestyle website Shrimp Salad Circus in 2009 to inspire busy women to live perfectly-imperfect creative lives. She lives in Silver Spring, MD. Find easy DIYs and recipes at shrimpsaladcircus.com.

Govey & Good

RECIPES

WF

3 New Ways to Make S'mores

It's hard to beat s'mores for the tactile sweet pleasure they bring to a summer meal. A picnic just isn't a picnic without that melt-in-your-mouth, sticky, chocolate treat. Summer nights + s'mores are right up there with baseball + hot dogs, beach + snow cone, wave + boogie board.

It's a tradition, for sure, but not one that can't be reimagined. We've got three fresh takes on this classic that come to us courtesy of Nourish Culinary in Washington, D.C. Many thanks to owner Dara Lyubinsky for sharing these recipes with our readers. You can find out more about Nourish Culinary at nourishculinary.com or on Instagram at @nourishculinary.

Now, get that fire pit ready!



By Jessica Gregg

CAST IRON S'MORES FOR A CROWD

Serves 8

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 cups milk chocolate chips
- 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
- ¼ cup Nutella or similar hazelnut spread (optional)
- 1-2 bags large jet-puffed marshmallows
- Original graham crackers, for serving (We like Nabisco)

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 425.
2. Over medium heat on the stove, melt the butter in a 12-inch cast iron skillet. Tilt the pan so that the melted butter coats the bottom.
3. Remove the pan from the heat and add both kinds of chocolate chips.
4. Drizzle with Nutella if using.
5. Top with marshmallows, making sure to leave no space between them.
6. Bake for 10 minutes until the tops of the marshmallows are golden brown. If they don't brown, carefully heat them under the broiler until they get a touch of color.
7. Transfer the skillet to a trivet and cover the handle with a heat-proof cover or towel. Serve with graham crackers.



S'MINTS

Serves 8

Ingredients

- 8 rectangles chocolate graham crackers
- 1 bag large jet-puffed marshmallows
- 16 Andes mints

Directions

1. Prepare your fire. These marshmallows are best when toasted over a wood-burning fireplace or in a fire pit, but you can also toast them over a grill or under a broiler. Be sure to take extra precaution to keep everyone safe around any kind of fire.
2. Place three marshmallows on the end of a wooden or metal skewer and roast lightly until the marshmallows have turned to your preferred level of toasted. We like golden brown with a touch of char.
3. Place two Andes mints on one square of chocolate graham cracker and use another square to help the marshmallows off of the skewer to make a sandwich.
4. Repeat with remaining ingredients.



CAMPFIRE BANANAS FOSTER S'MORES

Serves 8

Ingredients

- 4 medium-ripe bananas
- 4 tablespoons dark brown sugar
- 8 rectangles cinnamon sugar graham crackers
- 24 large jet-puffed marshmallows
- 4 square sheets of aluminum foil, approximately 12 inches by 12 inches

Directions

1. Prepare your fire. A wood-burning fireplace, gas fireplace or a fire pit work best, but you can also use a grill or your oven's broiler.
2. Slice bananas lengthwise, so just the tip of your knife cuts through the top peel and scores the flesh. Sprinkle 1 tablespoon of brown sugar along slice of each banana. Wrap bananas securely in the foil and place them in an even-heat spot of your fire, on your grill or under a pre-heated broiler. Cook bananas for approximately seven minutes, or until they give when you squeeze them with tongs.
3. While you allow the bananas to cool slightly, roast three marshmallows on a skewer until they have reached your preferred level of toasted. We like golden brown with a slight char. Scoop melted banana onto one square of graham cracker and use another square to help the marshmallows off of the skewer to make a sandwich.
4. Repeat with remaining ingredients. ■



5 FAMILY-FRIENDLY PLACES TO PICK FRUIT

Get outside, they tell us. The safest activities to do during this pandemic summer are the ones in the open air, under sunny skies or starry nights. When your family has exhausted the trails and parks, drive-in theaters and sandy beaches, another fun outdoor activity awaits—fruit picking. Here are five local farms that offer pick-your-own opportunities in August and September. Pack a mask and consult websites to find out how each farm is complying with COVID-19 safety protocols. Most will not let you bring your own containers this year; also, expect to make a reservation for a picking time.



BUTLER'S ORCHARD

BUTLER'S ORCHARD Germantown, MD

As in past years, the farm is open Tuesday through Sunday starting at 8:30 a.m. for families that keep the early rising hours of a farmer. Red raspberries, blackberries, apples and pumpkins are the treats ready to be plucked between now and October. New this year: pickers are not allowed to bring their own containers and must make a reservation on the website. Admission is \$3 per person and fruit pricing starts at \$5.50 a quart for blackberries. Reservation time is 1 ½ hours. butlersorchard.com



VISITLOUDOUN.COM

GREAT COUNTRY FARMS Bluemont, VA

Big bumper for berry fans earlier this year—a Mother's Day frost did some serious damage to Great Country's strawberry and black raspberry crops. The farm is closed for picking now, but apples will be ripe and ready at the end of August. End of September, of course, will bring pumpkins. Reservations will be required and pickers must use the farm's containers. Socially distant shopping and curbside pickup are offered 9 a.m.-5 p.m. daily at the farm market, which is known for its produce, local honey and cider doughnuts. Admission: \$8 for kids ages 3 and up, \$10 for adults. greatcountryfarms.com



HOMESTEAD FARMS

HOMESTEAD FARM **Poolesville, MD**

Pick peaches and blackberries seven days a week. During other seasons, the farm grows apples, pumpkins and tart cherries. In their market you can purchase pre-picked fruits and summer veggies as well as preserves and local honey. Mask wearing is required in the market, according to Maryland law. Admission is \$2 per person, then you'll pay by the pound for what you pick. homestead-farm.net



WF STAFF

LARRILAND FARMS **Woodbine, MD**

There is a wide variety of fruits to pick with little ones at this family farm in western Howard County, Maryland. Satisfy your sweet side with seedless grapes, Asian pears and more than a dozen varieties of both peaches and apples. Outside containers are not allowed, and social distancing is observed. Families who picked strawberries earlier this summer, for example, were assigned a row or location to pick. But expect plenty of room to spread out. Check website for hours and price ranges on all you-pick produce. pickyourown.com



WEGMEYER FARMS

WEGMEYER FARMS **Hamilton, VA**

Mark your calendar for September when Wegmeyer Farms opens for pumpkin season. This farm offers more than 50 varieties of pumpkins, as a matter of fact. We had no idea there were that many different kinds of our favorite carve-able squash! The farm is open Thursday through Sunday, and pumpkin picking will begin September 28. Expect a reservation system and social distancing rules. No admission



Summer job
cancellations
encourage
local students
to create their
own work

KIDprene

By Joy Saha

LONG GONE ARE the days of stressing over impending homework deadlines and grueling late-night study sessions. During the summer months, tweens and teens look forward to making some extra cash and working.

But this year's summer came with its own challenges. As health and safety risks related to the pandemic continued to prevail, many local businesses cancelled their job opportunities for the season.

For a select group of local students, the current setbacks haven't dampened their entrepreneurial spirits. Instead, they're putting their creativity to work, launching their own individual startups to earn a few bucks and, for some, giving back to the community.

Eleven-year old Orit Vainstein from Bethesda kick-started her babysitting business in early June with help from her friends and family. The rising sixth grader at North Bethesda Middle School is both the founder and a member of Virtual Kidsitters, an online kid sitting group helping parents efficiently work from home with minimal stress.

"Virtual kid sitting is to help parents be able to work while the kids do fun and educational activities," Vainstein says. "We know that parents during this quarantine need to work, but their kids always want attention."

Virtual Kidsitters currently includes nine babysitters, including Vainstein

and her friends from school, Hebrew school and camp. The group primarily works with children in kindergarten through second grade. The babysitters also offer classes and storytime sessions for younger children through their newly launched Pre-K program.

Each kid sitting session features two babysitters who engage in interactive activities, including arts, crafts and games, with up to five children. These sessions are free and take place over Zoom, lasting for a maximum of 45 minutes.

Although the group's collective goal is to help working parents amidst the ongoing pandemic, Vainstein mentions that Virtual Kidsitters has a larger humanitarian goal—one that's more universal than personal. The babysitters collect optional donations from their customers and donate proceeds to the Manna Food Bank, American Red Cross and Feeding America. As of mid-July, Virtual Kidsitters has collected close to \$200 in donations.

"We're actually not getting money for ourselves...we want to help people and our community in these rough times," Vainstein says.

In the same spirit as Vainstein, Noah Medved and Mac Patterson, two 15-year-old teens from Virginia, are also making money this summer by detailing and cleaning neighborhood cars. What started as a simple act of generosity soon flourished

into a complete business idea for the pair.

"I started, at first, cleaning my mom's car...just because I was trying to be nice," Medved says. "I soon realized that I could make money off of this."

Medved and Patterson's car detailing business, which was launched in May, has garnered more than 40 local customers. The business's services are advertised on Facebook, which allows for quick and efficient customer outreach.

Although their work is quite rewarding—the pair make \$85 to \$95 per car—Medved and Patterson acknowledge that their jobs are both strenuous and difficult. They both work approximately six to eight hours per day and are oftentimes overbooked due to their high volumes of clients.

"We get pretty tired and we get triple booked on cars," says Patterson. "We put our hard sweat into these cars." The pair are also saving their profits for college.

But despite all the challenges, both Medved and Patterson agree that managing their car detailing business is a "learning experience." Proper scheduling and organization are key for running their business smoothly and ensuring that each of their customers receive the best service possible.

Unlike Vainstein, Medved and Patterson, 15-year-old Ryan Weiner from Potomac is using his personal passion—specifically, his passion for baseball—to



make profit. The high school student is providing individual baseball lessons to local children in hopes of giving them the opportunity to improve their skills and appreciate the sport.

“One thing that I’ve always noticed when I’ve taken lessons is that sometimes they are never geared towards the kids,” says Wiener. “I really want to gear my lessons to these [elementary school] kids who are [8 - 11 years old], where they can really grow and get so much better in a short amount of time.”

Weiner uses personal connections, online listservs and social media platforms to help publicize his lessons and encourage kids to enroll. Each lesson is catered towards Wiener’s individual students, focusing on their technique, form, pitching and more. Baseball lessons also are anywhere from an hour to two hours long.

The price for Wiener’s lessons all depends on the length of the practice and the number of students. For an hour-long lesson with one student, Wiener charges \$30.

Because his lessons are interactive, Wiener adds that he constantly has to be aware about his students’ safety as well as his own. He’s readily stocked with plenty of hand sanitizer, masks and disinfecting wipes. He’s also mindful of social distancing protocols and makes sure that he and his students maintain at least 6 feet in distance.

“That’s really a setback when you’re in

a pandemic, just in general,” he says. “If I were to do this when it’s not quarantine, I can basically meet up with my clients wherever.”

And Wiener mentions that he does plan to continue his lessons even after quarantine passes.

“This is something that can help a lot of kids,” Wiener says. “I want to be a role model to these kids and I think this is a great way to be [one].”

Compared to the other young entrepreneurs, David Renbaum’s own business initiative doesn’t focus on a single service, but rather many. The college student’s Baltimore County-based task service, Clock In, completes routine errands for individuals within the COVID-19 high-risk demographic. Errands include grocery shopping, car washing, dog washing, moving furniture, restaurant pickups and delivery and dump runs.

Like many students, Renbaum was set to work as a camp counselor at sleepaway camp for the summer. But his plans were cancelled due to the pandemic and his own autoimmune condition. Devoid of work and unable to find local jobs, Renbaum began creating his own jobs to make money over the summer.

“I forecasted a pretty empty summer, and I was brainstorming ways on how to fix it and how to create work for myself,” he says. “So, the first thing that I came up with is an employment agency.”

After completing a few grocery runs for his grandparents, Renbaum and his friends developed their business idea and organized the task service startup. Clock In was officially launched on May 26 with a strong staff entirely made up of Renbaum’s friends, family and family friends. The startup currently has 10 independent employees.

Clients first sign up for a specific service(s) on Clock In’s official website. Employees then coordinate amongst themselves to determine who will serve each client and what specific services they’re requested to provide. After errands are run, employees continue to keep in touch with their clients to ensure that any future requests or services can be completed immediately.

“People don’t necessarily know what they need until they need it,” Renbaum says. Such tasks, like grocery shopping or food pickup, are both simple and routine in nature. And for those who are wary of stepping outside during this time, having these tasks completed for them is greatly beneficial.

Staying true to the startup’s principal mission, Renbaum adds that 10 percent of Clock In’s profits in the month of June was donated to Johns Hopkins’ COVID-19 Response team. Another non-profit organization or local charity will be chosen for the month of July, says Renbaum. ■



By Jason Fontelieu

remembers her first act of environmental activism as a third grader.

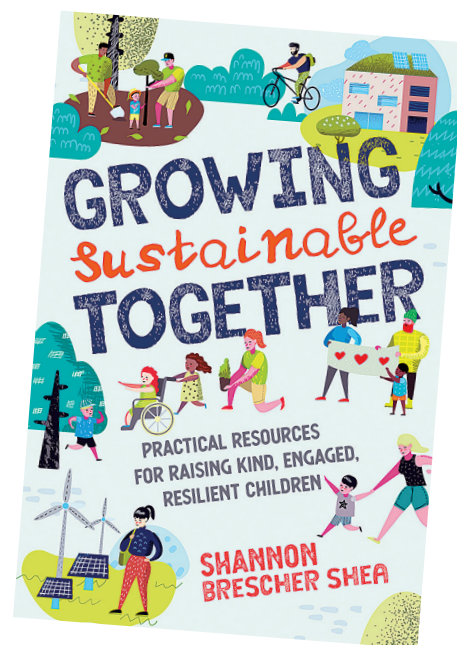
"I went to Homosassa Springs Wildlife State Park in Florida with my parents, saw the manatees, absolutely fell in love with them and then found out they were endangered," says Shea. Returning to school, the nature-loving kid convinced her class to adopt a manatee.

Shea's success as a first-time activist inspired a lifelong commitment to environmentalism. She went on to receive a Master's degree in nature, society and environmental governance from the University of Oxford and currently writes for the Department of Energy's Office of Science.

But when she became a mom, Shea struggled to find time for her eco-friendly hobbies, including gardening, biking and composting, while juggling the “stresses of modern day parenting,” she says.

Until one day she realized that green living and parenting didn't have to be at odds. Involving her children in the environmental activities she loved was actually part of being an engaged parent because, Shea says, she could "teach them how to be better people and ultimately, hopefully, good adults in the world."

Gardening has become something the



Rockville resident and her two boys, ages four and seven, enjoy doing together—when her younger son isn't spraying his brother in the face with the hose. They take bike rides and walks and have participated in a stream cleanup in Rockville Park and a climate march.

Besides just being fun things to do as family, these activities help her boys understand how they fit into larger environmental systems and how their behaviors affect other people, says Shea.

And now, the environmental activist hopes to inspire other parents to live a greener lifestyle as a way to instill moral values in their own kids with her new book, “Growing Sustainable Together: Practical Resources for Raising Kind, Engaged, Resilient Children” (North Atlantic Books, 2020, \$16.95).

“Parents can teach most of these skills without a hint of environmental concern. But many action that are environmentally sustainable also fulfill children’s psychological needs or teach them the skills and values needed to be a moral person,” Shea writes in Chapter 1. Subsequent chapters introduce different ways of being environmentally sustainable, such as the rejection of materialism, engaging in environmental activism and energy efficiency. Each ends with family activities, recommended children’s books and a compilation of resources to learn more on the topic.

“Growing Sustainable Together” is for parents and caregivers of toddlers through young teens. According to Shea, there are two reasons why it’s important to begin to introduce the complexity of the environment at a young age.

First, it helps kids “see their inter-connectivity to the greater world” and breaks them out of the “it’s all about me” mentality, which can be as simple as explaining that somebody grew the food on their plate.

The second reason is that “kids are B.S. detectors,” says Shea.

“Even young kids are going to hear about climate change...and they’re going to ask about it.” Avoiding the subject or telling them they’re too young to hear about it could make the situation seem scarier now—and lead to cynicism as they get older.

Instead, Shea recommends tackling a difficult topic like climate change by “presenting it to them in a very age appropriate fashion with a little bit over time.” Attending protests, watching the news, even bringing reusable bags to the grocery store are all learning opportunities.

“Just pointing it out as you go along, kids pick up on these things,” she says. “They see we have values that we care about other people, we care about the Earth, we care about the environment and our family is living out those values every day.” ■

Earthly Inspiration

5 More Green Titles

These five books bring the natural world into your home with their pictorial insights and prose. They tackle climate change, fracking and native leadership in the environmental movement as well as the water cycle and gardening. Kids can dig into these lesson-filled books—recommended by Hannah Fester, special projects manager at the Ivy Bookshop—all the while enjoying a good story.

“We Are Water Protectors,” by Carole Lindstrom, illustrated by Michaela Goade, 40 pages, ages 3-6, \$17.99

I love how “We Are Water Protectors” introduces Indigenous-led environmental movements across North America through the lens of a child. And this book is as educational as it is gorgeous. The young person who rallies her community to protect the Earth’s most sacred resource becomes a symbol for the urgency of environmental movements more broadly and their inextricable connections to legacy, family and community.

“The Rhythm of the Rain,” written and illustrated by Grahame Baker-Smith, 40 pages, ages 4-8, \$17.99

I find this portrayal of the water cycle so breathtaking, totally antithetical to other more rigid, textbook ways I learned about this process as a child. “The Rhythm of the Rain” follows young Isaac as he empties out his jar of water and follows it all across the earth. It’s total magic, because you get to tour the world and its diverse landscapes and—spoiler alert—you’ll start to notice that the water always, always plays an essential role.

“Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt,” by Kate Messner, illustrated by Christopher Silas Neal, 56 pages, ages 5-8, \$7.99

There’s nothing like some catchy repetition to charm your way into new knowledge. I recommend this book (part of a three-book series) for its repeating refrains of “up in the garden” and “down in the dirt,” which help display the parallel, interrelated worlds above and below ground in a garden. As you read about a child and grandmother working in the garden together, it’s fun to encounter regular reminders of the curiosities happening beneath their feet. It ends with an “About the Animals” glossary, and it’s lovely to flip back through and see if you can spot all the animals.

“The End of the Wild,” by Nicole Helget, 288 pages, ages 5-8, \$7.99

A poignant coming-of-age story centered around one 11-year-old’s resistance to fracking in her small town. With characters who support the economic boost of this development, “The End of the Wild” takes an elegant and nuanced approach to demonstrating the complexities of advocating for environmental protection. It’s perfect for middle grade readers with all kinds of interests, as it is a story not only about the environment, but also life on the poverty line, friendship and family—and, most of all, finding your place in the world.

“Parable of the Sower: A Graphic Novel Adaptation,” by Octavia E. Butler, adapted by Damian Duffy, illustrated by John Jennings, 272 pages, ages 13 and older, \$24.99

A new, faithful graphic novel adaptation of the 1993 classic from Octavia Butler, absolutely striking in visual form. Set in the U.S. in the midst of global climate change, economic crisis and social chaos in the early 2020s, there is no denying the eerie resonance of this tale today. Fifteen-year-old Lauren Olamina, guided by hyperempathy, translates her fight for survival into a new vision for a way forward. She embodies the critical role of youth leadership at the intersection of environmental, economic and social movements; her story contains encouragement and validation for young adult readers.

2020

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DIRECTORY

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PREPPING for ANYTHING

BY MEGAN GREGOIRE

Teachers ready for fall in a variety of ways

This summer Baltimore middle school teacher Elisabeth Budd is developing a website with a very specific purpose, one that arose after online learning challenges in this year's pandemic.



Budd will use the site to post the content that she teaches her students, so parents can see and help their child if they have any questions or issues at home. She, who is starting a job at Barclay Elementary/Middle School, hopes it will help her students and their parents ease into the school year which will initially start online, with school officials updating their plan by mid-October.

Both public and private schools are considering the best way to teach students this fall as the coronavirus pandemic continues and the world awaits a vaccine. Not knowing what the next school year will be like has left many teachers like Budd working around uncertainty as they prepare.

“So for me, (I’ve been) troubleshooting and saying ‘How can I have better parent communication if we are completely virtual, or even hybrid,’” she says.

Budd hopes to begin accumulating more resources to improve family communication as well as prevent such problems as students who don’t participate, or online classroom environments that don’t function well.

Bobby Bobson, a special education teacher at North Bend Elementary/Middle School in Baltimore, has dedicated the summer to helping other teachers develop online lessons while also bettering his own understanding of technology.

“I feel like I’m maximizing my time off in the summer to build systems that will support my own teaching, but also other teachers,” he says. “I’m planning on doing more Google certification this year as well. I’m going forward with the concept that virtual learning is going to continue to happen.”

Other teachers, however, are using the summer to prepare content that pertains to events happening across the nation. Michelle Ardillo, a language arts teacher at St. Jude Regional Catholic School in Montgomery County, is writing lesson plans to include the Margot Lee Shetterly novel “Hidden Figures” in her class’s curriculum.

“I think this book will work well with the current focus on diversity and racial equality. I am hoping to offer it to my colleagues who teach math, science and social studies,

as a cross-curricula unit,” she says.

While school systems haven’t rolled out official plans, certain proposals have been discussed, such as an A/B day schedule, hybrid learning (a mix of online learning and in-person learning), and recorded class lessons for those who don’t feel comfortable going back.

Bobson heard from friends in other states who have told him that their school districts will use hybrid learning in the fall.

“I can only predict, but I see something similar happening in Maryland,” he says, adding there are a lot of complications. Maryland State Superintendent of Schools Karen Salmon laid out a blueprint for the fall return that included a number of suggestions. “But it left the ultimate decision on how learning was going to look next year to the specific school district,” he says. “So, all of the districts are kind of scrambling right now, trying to make sense of the document.”

Without knowing what the fall semester could hold, Ardillo says that she has felt the need to over plan in case of any situation.

“I feel like I am doubling up on what I would be doing already. I am worried that we will go back in the classroom and then have to close again due to a resurgence of the virus. The uncertainty is stressful, and the planning for both scenarios is time-consuming,” she says.

As the start of the school year grows closer, many teachers, including Peter Ruhno, a special education teacher at Aberdeen Middle School in Harford County, feel that time is running out to make an official decision on the fate of the coming school year.

Harford County officials announced that the fall semester will start online. Teachers and parents don’t know if there will be a transition to hybrid or in-person learning and when that might occur. Ruhno hopes that this past spring’s sudden switch from in-person learning to online learning will prepare students and teachers for fall’s online learning and a potential switch to some form of in-person learning.

“If we were to stick full time with online learning, at least we had a trial period where we could see what didn’t work and what we’d want to tweak,” he says. ■



BY JOY SAHA

Open Houses Go *Virtual*

Many local private schools are hosting their annual open houses online to maintain social distancing protocols and observe the additional health measures associated with the ongoing pandemic. Like IRL open house events, virtual open houses allow families to meet school administrators, talk with faculty and safely tour classrooms—all from the comfort of a family's own homes.

Prior to the onset of the pandemic, a typical open house at Congressional School in Falls Church featured in-person welcome remarks from school administrators and guided tours led by current parents and students. Now, virtual open houses at the school will take place on GoogleMeet with specific sessions and unlimited participants, explains Alyce Penn, director of strategic marketing and communications.

"The event will begin with an overview by the head of school and the division directors, then participants will break up into smaller groups based on grade level or division," says Penn. Within these small groups, parents will be able to speak with teachers, current parents, students and administrators.

At Friends School of Baltimore in Baltimore and Oneness-Family School in Bethesda, virtual open houses have already been taking place on Zoom.

Amy Mortimer, director of admissions at Friends School, says that the school's virtual open houses include most of the activities that took place during on-campus open houses, like talks with the head of school, faculty Q&A sessions and current student panels. The biggest difference is that parents and prospective students can no longer participate in guided tours and mock classroom sessions with teachers.

"We actually did a virtual open house last spring, and now we [are running] it very similarly," Mortimer says. Fall open houses may also feature some slight modifications, including the addition of short videos and recordings of classroom sessions for families to view.

At Oneness-Family School, pictorial slideshows are shared during virtual open house sessions to compensate for the school's inability to host parents and students on-campus. Slideshows feature detailed photos of school grounds, classrooms and the campus community.

Following the virtual tour is an in-depth talk with parents and school faculty, where information about school programs and school schedules are shared. Afterwards, administrators and teachers have conversations with parents on school curricula and application procedures.

"It's a very inadequate replacement for in-person tours, but it's the best that we can do under these circumstances," says Andrew Kutt, Oneness-Family's head of school.

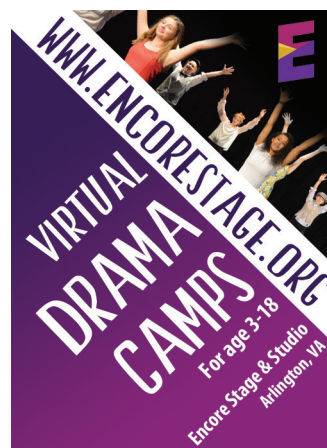
The other school administrators share Kutt's sentiment and acknowledge that virtual open houses come with its own set of challenges. Hosting them online fails to effectively show families each schools' vibrant atmosphere and campus community. But the administrators hope that these challenges can be overcome with in-depth parent Q&A sessions and open faculty conversations. ■

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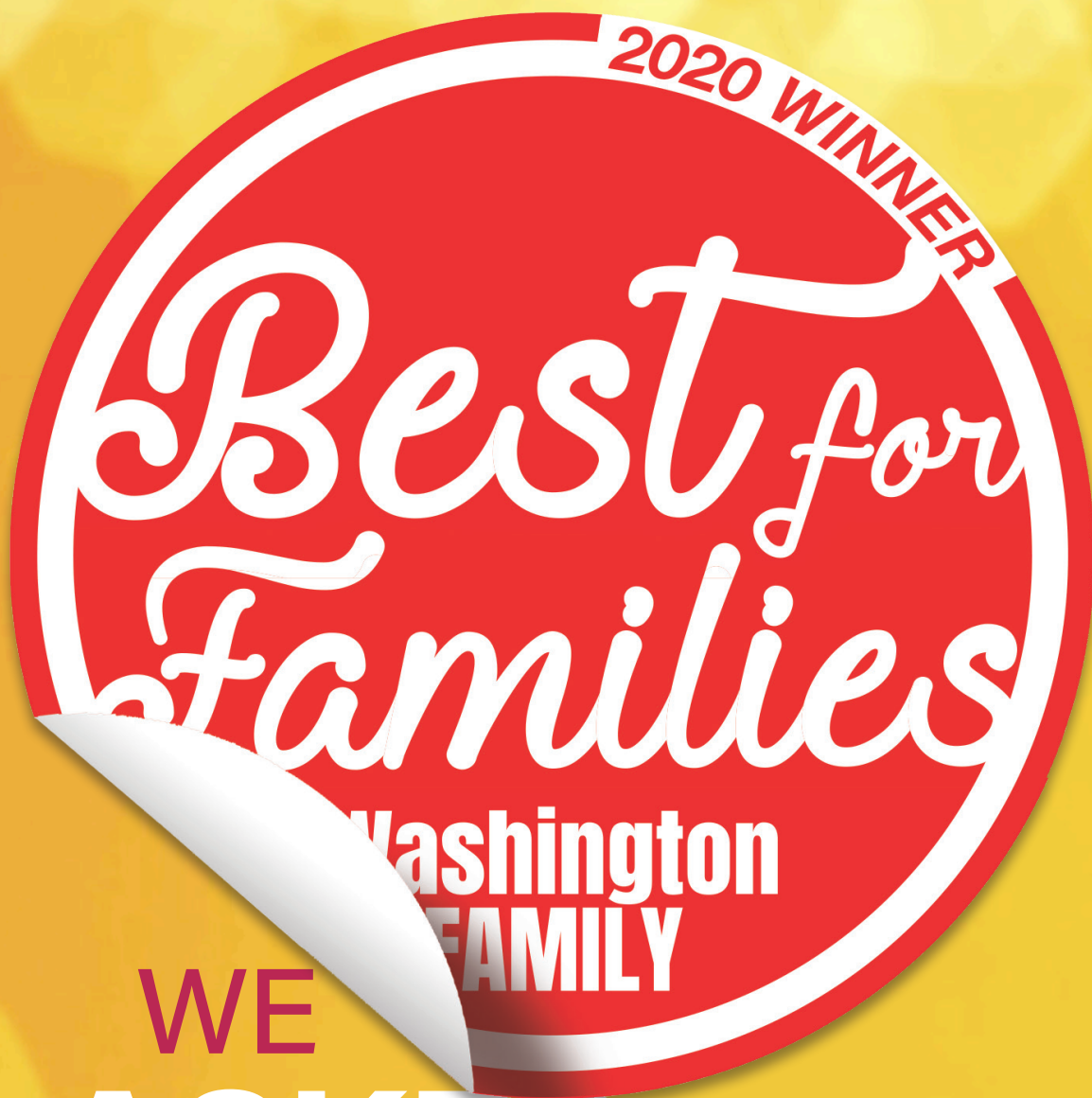
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WE ASKED, YOU VOTED!

For more than 25 years, Washington FAMILY has been running our annual Best for FAMILIES survey. Each year, we ask our readers to vote for their favorite people, places and things to do in the DMV. And now, after tallying the votes, this year's survey results are here!

From the best childcare center to the best place for a birthday party, read on to discover all of your FAMILY favorites in the D.C. area.

2020 BEST FOR FAMILIES “BEST SWIM SCHOOL”



Our Mission

Is to ensure that every person, regardless of age or ability, has the opportunity to become a safe and happy swimmer.



Special Congratulations
Ms. Sarah
2020 WINNER
BEST FOR FAMILIES
“Best Swim Instructor”

833-486-3250

britishswimschool.com/dmv



British Swim School is independently owned and operated.
Franchise opportunities are available. For more information: Franchise.BritishSwimSchool.com

EDUCATION & ACTIVITIES

BEST ARTS PROGRAM

Moonlit Wings Productions

RUNNER UP

Tiny Dancers

BEST BALLET OR DANCE STUDIO

Tiny Dancers

RUNNER UP

Bella Ballet, Gaithersburg

BEST BASEBALL CAMP

Washington Nationals Baseball & Softball Camps

RUNNER UP

Montgomery County Recreation

BEST CHILD CARE/ DAYCARE CENTER

Guidepost Montessori

Multiple locations, Virginia

866-202-8593

inquiry@guidepostmontessori.com

guidepostmontessori.com/northern-virginia

northern-virginia

Guidepost Montessori is a growing network of schools that serves over 3,000 families worldwide. Our schools in Northern Virginia serve children infant to 12 years old. Each of our schools has a beautifully prepared environment with authentic Montessori materials, designed to inspire your child. At Guidepost Montessori, we believe that children thrive when given freedom and responsibility under the thoughtful guidance of dedicated teachers. Mandarin and Spanish Immersion programs are available at selected locations.

RUNNER UP

Robin's Nest Child Care

BEST CHILDREN'S COOKING CLASSES

Cookology Culinary School

Dulles Town Center, Sterling, VA

Ballston Quarter, Arlington, VA

703-433-1909

cookologyonline.com

Our Kid's Cooking program has been voted Best for Families by a Washington



Family Magazine reader's poll since 2014, and we won again in 2020! We take important steps to keep your children safe while they have fun learning to cook. Birthdays for ages 5-17, Cooking Camps, Mommy/Daddy & Me, Girl Scout Badges, Corporate Events, and now virtual classes for kids and adults.

RUNNER UP

Tiny Chefs, Tyson's Corner

BEST CHILDREN'S THEATRE OR DRAMA INSTRUCTION

Moonlit Wings Productions

RUNNER UP

Imagination Stage

BEST CHILDREN'S YOGA CLASSES

Shining Kids Yoga, Rockville

RUNNER UP

Circle Yoga

BEST DANCE OR BALLET STUDIO

Tiny Dancers

RUNNER UP

Bella Ballet, Gaithersburg

BEST DAY CAMP

Tiny Dancers

RUNNER UP

Camp Griffin, Westminister School

BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

Westminster School, Annandale

3819 Gallows Rd

Annandale, Virginia 22003

westminsterschool.com

RUNNER UP

Rochambeau French International School, Bethesda

BEST GYMNASTICS CENTER

Hills Gymnastics

RUNNER UP

The Little Gym

BEST MARTIAL ARTS INSTRUCTION

Kaizen Karate

RUNNER UP

Kicks Karate

BEST MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Oneness-Family Montessori School

onenessfamily.org

6701 Wisconsin Ave., Chevy Chase, Md.

admissions@onenessfamily.org

For 30 years, Oneness-Family School's award winning Montessori program has served families of students 2 years through grade 12. OFS features highly trained, supportive teachers and a diverse, engaged parent community. We create a collaborative learning environment where everyone feels successful. We foster students who are prepared to lead and succeed in a changing, challenging world by balancing college prep academics with a focus on well-being and shared values such as empathy, inclusion and equity.

RUNNER UP

Guidepost Montessori

BEST MUSIC INSTRUCTION

**The International School of Music,
Bethesda**

ismw.org

RUNNER UP

Westminster School, Annandale

BEST OVERNIGHT CAMP

Randolph-Macon Academy

RMA.edu

admission@rma.edu

540-636-5484

200 Academy Dr, Front Royal, VA 22630
Randolph-Macon Academy's award-winning summer camp has been lauded by parents as a program that inspires their children to rediscover a love of learning. Through interactive, dynamic classes that are high on activity and low on pressure, students connect with their natural curiosity. Courses are held in the morning, with plenty of engaging activities planned the rest of the day and weekends, from sports and swimming to hiking and theme park trips.

RUNNER UP

YMCA Camp Letts

BEST PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

Seneca Academy, Darnestown

senecaacademy.org

office@senecaacademy.org

301-869-3728

15601 Germantown Rd

Darnestown, MD 20874

Seneca Academy offers an academically inspiring and developmentally appropriate preschool and elementary program that is uniquely positioned to provide as much in-person learning as possible under public health guidelines. Experienced and warm faculty, intentionally small class sizes, ample outdoor space, and the highest standards for well-being comprise an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program like no other. We invite you to learn more about how we help preserve the wonder of childhood!

RUNNER UP

**The Griffin Academy at
Westminster School**

From our family to yours, thank you.

OrthoVirginia is proud
to be recognized as
"Best Orthopedist &
Practice" by Washington
Family Magazine.



ORTHOVIRGINIA.COM | 703.277.BONE (2663)
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McLean | Reston | Springfield | Stone Springs | Tysons Corner



**Stronger
starts
here.**



RANDOLPH-MACON ACADEMY

THE POWER OF RISE.



Winner of TWO 2020 “Best for Families” Awards
Best Private High School and Best Overnight Summer Camp

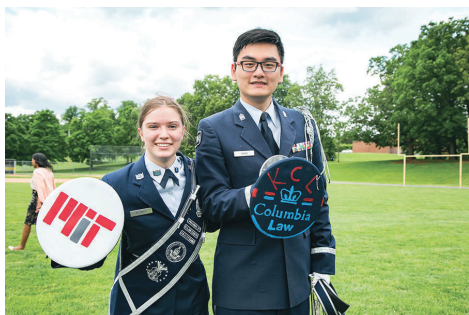


Randolph-Macon Academy Class of 2020:

65 Graduates

211 Acceptances to
130 Different Universities

\$8.4M
in University
Scholarship Awards



R-MA is a co-ed university prep school with a distinguished Air Force Junior ROTC program, offering both day and boarding programs.

Limited openings available for this Fall in grades 6-12.

Scholarships and Financial Aid available.

**Apply today at www.RMA.edu/FAMILY,
scan the QR code on the right,
or call 540-636-5484.**



BEST PRIVATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Seneca Academy, Darnestown

RUNNER UP

Redeemer Christian School

BEST PRIVATE HIGH SCHOOL

Randolph-Macon Academy,

Front Royal

200 Academy Dr, Front Royal, VA 22630

540-636-5484

RMA.edu

admission@rma.edu.

Randolph-Macon Academy (R-MA) provides students with a superior university-prep education and a distinguished Air Force Junior ROTC leadership program. The mission of R-MA is "To Inspire the RISE Within." The Academy is a co-ed boarding and day school where students develop critical and analytical thinking skills and cultivate their creativity and curiosity. The Class of 2020's 56 seniors and eight Falcon Scholars earned 211 acceptances to 130 universities and received over \$8.4 million in scholarships.

RUNNER UP

Flint Hill School, Oakton

BEST PRIVATE SCHOOL (OVERALL)

Seneca Academy, Darnestown

senecaacademy.org

office@senecaacademy.org

301-869-3728

15601 Germantown Rd

Darnestown, MD 20874

Seneca Academy offers an academically inspiring and developmentally appropriate preschool and elementary program that is uniquely positioned to provide as much in-person learning as possible under public health guidelines. Experienced and warm faculty, intentionally small class sizes, ample outdoor space, and the highest standards for well-being comprise an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program like no other. We invite you to learn more about how we help preserve the wonder of childhood!

RUNNER UP

Redeemer Christian School

BEST SAT/ACT PREP

No Anxiety Prep

Silver Spring, MD

301-649-2128

info@noanxietyprep.com

noanxietyprep.com

RUNNER UP

Kaplan

BEST SPECIAL NEEDS CAMP

Celebrate Ability

RUNNER UP

Fitness for Health

BEST SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOL

The Siena School

1300 Forest Glen Road

Silver Spring, MD

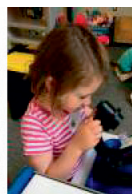
301-244-3600

info@thesienaschool.org

thesienaschool.org

RUNNER UP

McLean School



preschool through fifth grade

6.5 acres of outdoor learning space

small classes and more in-person learning





www.SenecaAcademy.org

Discover your capable, confident Montessori child.

From infancy through elementary school, children learn best when they're working with activities they love. At Guidepost, your child will enter the wonderful world of Montessori lessons and learning materials, designed to captivate and inspire.

Now
Enrolling!

Visit us online today to RSVP for a virtual event.

guidepostmontessori.com/northern-virginia

Aldie

24328 Marrwood Drive
Aldie, VA 20105
(703) 542-5522

Broadlands

42945 Waxpool Road
Ashburn, VA 20148
(703) 723-3364

Chantilly

4550 Walney Road
Chantilly, VA 20151
(571) 321-0364

Fairfax

3909 Oak Street
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 934-0920

Herndon

13251 Woodland Park Road
Herndon, VA 20171
(571) 203-8686

West Alex

NEW CAMPUS!
3475 N. Beauregard Street
Suite 301
Alexandria, VA 22311
(571) 206-1687

Reston

11579 Cedar Chase Road
Herndon, VA 20170
(703) 404-9733

Montclair

NEW CAMPUS!
3551 Waterway Drive
Montclair, VA 22025
(571) 402-1888

*Spanish Immersion program
available at selected campuses.*



Infant • Toddler
Preschool • Kindergarten
Elementary

Winner of Best for Families!

BEST STEM PROGRAM

Westminster School, Annandale

3819 Gallows Rd
Annandale, Virginia 22003
westminsterschool.com

RUNNER UP

Feynman School, Potomac

BEST SWIM SCHOOL

British Swim School

841-F Quince Orchard Blvd
Gaithersburg, MD
833-486-3250

kristinaw@bssmoco.com
brit-ishswimschool.com

British Swim School provides water survival and learn-to-swim lessons for ages 3 months to adult. Our mission is to ensure that every person, regardless of age or ability, has the opportunity to become a safe and happy swimmer in the water. Our specially trained Instructors use our 38+ year proven curriculum in indoor, heated pools, year-round. Come see what makes us the BEST FOR FAMILIES!

RUNNER UP

SwimKids Swim School

BEST TUTORING PROGRAM

Educational Connections Tutoring and Test Prep

RUNNER UP

Kumon

BEST YOGA/PILATES STUDIO

Opus Yoga

RUNNER UP

Sun and Moon Yoga, Fairfax

BEST YOUTH SPORTS LEAGUE

Arlington Little League

RUNNER UP

Fairfax Police Youth Club

FOOD

BEST CATERER

Occasions Caterers

RUNNER UP

Athens Grill, Gaithersburg

BEST FAMILY-FRIENDLY RESTAURANT

Ledo Pizza

RUNNER UP

Guapo's

BEST FARMER'S MARKET

Bethesda Central Farm Market

RUNNER UP

Mosaic

BEST FOOD TRUCK

District Taco

RUNNER UP

Captain Cookie and the Milkman

BEST GROCERY STORE

Wegmans



Thank you for voting Bethesda Family Smiles as a Best for Families Winner!

Meet Dr. Khanna & her team!

We are a General Dental practice offering services from cleanings, implants/crowns, whitening and everything in between.

We pride ourselves in improving our patient's oral care and providing personalized, comprehensive dental care needs for the whole family. We continue to strive for excellence in caring for our patients. Come check us out and let us take care of your family.



Wildwood Medical Building
10401 Old Georgetown Rd. #310
Bethesda, MD 20814

301-530-0700

bethesdafamilysmiles.com
info@bethesdafamilysmiles.com

RUNNER UP

Trader Joe's

BEST HEALTH FOOD STORE

MOM's Organic Market

RUNNER UP

Trader Joe's

BEST ICE CREAM/ FROZEN YOGURT SHOP

Cold Stone Creamery

RUNNER UP

Tie - Carmen's Italian Ice, Rockville
Brusters, Gaithersburg

BEST LOCAL BAKERY

Heidelberg Pastry Shoppe,
Arlington

RUNNER UP

Fresh Baguette, Bethesda

BEST LOCAL CHEAP EATS RESTAURANT

District Taco

RUNNER UP

Crisp & Juicy

BEST LOCAL CUPCAKE SHOP

Georgetown Cupcake, Bethesda

RUNNER UP

Lily Magilly's

BEST LOCAL CUP OF COFFEE

Caffé Amouri, Vienna

RUNNER UP

Northside Social, Arlington

BEST LOCAL OUTDOOR/ PATIO DINING

Uncle Julio's

RUNNER UP

Founding Farmers, Potomac

BEST LOCAL RESTAURANT WITH A KIDS' NIGHT/SPECIAL

Silver Diner

RUNNER UP

Mamma Lucia

BEST LOCAL ROMANTIC RESTAURANT

The Inn at Little Washington

RUNNER UP

L'Auberge Chez Francois

BEST LOCAL SPORTS BAR

Glory Days Grill

RUNNER UP

Yard House

HEALTH

BEST ALLERGY OR ASTHMA DOCTOR & PRACTICE

Dr. Rachel Schreiber, Schreiber Allergy

RUNNER UP

Drs. Kim and Butt, Allergy & Asthma
Center of Fairfax/Lorton

BEST CHILDREN'S DENTISTRY

VK Pediatric Dentistry, Arlington

RUNNER UP

Kids Teeth, LLC, Rockville

BEST DENTIST OR ORTHODONTIST & PRACTICE

Dr. Khanna, Bethesda

Family Smiles

Wildwood Medical Building
10401 Old Georgetown Rd. #310
Bethesda, MD 20814
301-530-0700

bethesdafamilysmiles.com

info@bethesdafamilysmiles.com

Bethesda Family Smiles is a general dental practice that strives for excellence in patient care by providing compassionate, gentle, and comprehensive dentistry for your entire family. Dr. Khanna, a graduate from University of Maryland Dental School, has been practicing in Maryland for over 10 years. At our office, our goal is to create a lifetime of happy and healthy smiles. Our patients love our personalized care and prioritizing their safety and wellness, especially during these unprecedented times in the wake of Covid-19. We accept most major dental insurances and are dedicated to providing dentistry at affordable costs, even if you have no insurance. Enjoy our

in-house insurance options. We would love to be your friendly neighborhood dentist!

RUNNER UP

Dr. Fritz, LLC, Rockville

BEST DERMATOLOGIST

DermAssociates, Rockville

RUNNER UP

McLean Dermatology & Skincare
Center

BEST OPTOMETRIST & PRACTICE

Dr. Kevin Chan,
Treehouse Eyes

RUNNER UP

Dr. Ellis, Northern Virginia
Ophthalmology Associates, P.C.

BEST FAMILY DOCTOR & PRACTICE

Dr. Deva, Medstar Medical Group,
Gaithersburg

RUNNER UP

Potomac Pediatrics, Rockville

BEST FAMILY THERAPIST/ PSYCHIATRIST & PRACTICE

Vicky Nogales, Expressive
Therapy Center

RUNNER UP

Potomac Therapy Group

BEST FERTILITY CLINIC

Shady Grove Fertility

RUNNER UP

Dominion Fertility

BEST GYM OR HEALTH CLUB

Life Time Fitness

RUNNER UP

Fitness for Health

BEST HOSPITAL

INOVA Fairfax Hospital, Fairfax

RUNNER UP

Adventist HealthCare Shady Grove
Medical Center

BEST MIDWIFE

Midwifery Care Associates,
Rockville

RUNNER UP

Birthcare & Women's Health of
Alexandria

BEST NUTRITIONIST/DIETICIAN

Tie - Wendy Johnson,
Inova Loudoun Hospital
Dr. Daisy & Co., Rockville

RUNNER UP

Jennifer Anderson
(@kids.eat.in.color on Instagram)

BEST OB/GYN & PRACTICE

Capital Women's Care

RUNNER UP

Tie - Anne Shrout, Capital Women's
Care, Silver Spring
Dr. Ampey, Advantia OB/GYN
Women's Health Specialists,
Rockville

BEST ORTHOPEDIST & PRACTICE

OrthoVirginia

10 locations across Northern Virginia
Fairfax, Virginia

703-277-2663

ovnfeedback@orthovirginia.com

orthovirginia.com

As Northern Virginia's largest orthopedic practice, we offer a wide range of specialties, advanced treatments and convenient in-house therapy, imaging and out-patient surgery services. With 10 offices, two orthopedic urgent care locations and an out-patient surgery center, we're available when and where you need us.

RUNNER UP

OrthoBethesda

BEST PEDIATRIC OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST & PRACTICE

Fitness for Health

RUNNER UP

Exceptional Children's Center,
Springfield

BEST PEDIATRICIAN & PRACTICE

Potomac Pediatrics, Rockville

RUNNER UP

Dr. Alan Gober

BEST PHYSICAL THERAPIST & PRACTICE

Fitness for Health

RUNNER UP

Washington Wellness Physical Therapy
& SportsCare, Washington DC

BEST URGENT CARE

Tie - INOVA Urgent Care
Patient First

RUNNER UP

PM Pediatrics

BEST WEIGHT LOSS PROGRAM OR DOCTOR

BodyTech Weight Loss Center,
Rockville

RUNNER UP

Weight Watchers, Fairfax

HOME IMPROVEMENT

BEST DECK/PORCH BUILDER

Manny Alvarez

RUNNER UP

Knoble Inc.

BEST ELECTRICIAN

havePOWER

RUNNER UP

Electrical Connections

BEST FLOORING COMPANY

Classic Floor Designs

RUNNER UP

Floor & Decor

BEST FURNITURE STORE

IKEA

RUNNER UP

Tie - Belfort Furniture
Pottery Barn

BEST GENERAL REPAIRS/ HANDYMAN

CASE Architects & Remodelers,
Bethesda

RUNNER UP

Tie - Sanchez Remodeling LLC
Taylor Construction,
Fairfax Station

BEST HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING COMPANY

GAC Services

RUNNER UP

James & Son

BEST HOME BUILDER

Toll Brothers

RUNNER UP

Sandy Spring Builders

BEST INTERIOR DECORATOR

Billet Collins, Darnestown

RUNNER UP

The Silver Lining Interiors LLC,
Gainesville

BEST KITCHEN DESIGNER

Billet Collins, Darnestown

RUNNER UP

The Silver Lining Interiors LLC,
Gainesville

BEST MARBLE AND GRANITE COMPANY

Architectural Ceramics, Rockville

RUNNER UP

Flintstone Marble and Granite

BEST PAINTING COMPANY

Billet Collins, Darnestown

RUNNER UP

Sonny-N-Son's Painting

BEST PLUMBER

Booze Plumbing, Vienna

RUNNER UP

M.E. Flow, Inc.

BEST REMODELING COMPANY

The Silver Lining Interiors LLC,
Gainesville

RUNNER UP

Bethesda Carpentry Contractor, LLC

BEST HOME CLEANING SERVICE

Season Maids Cleaning Service,
Rockville

RUNNER UP

Maid Brigade of Bethesda

PARTY

BEST KIDS' BIRTHDAY PARTY VENUE

Tiny Dancers

RUNNER UP

SwimKids Swim School

BEST KIDS' PARTY ENTERTAINER

The Great Zucchini

RUNNER UP

Trish Huheey, Alexandria Face
Painting, Alexandria

BEST PLACE FOR A TEAM PARTY

SwimKids Swim School

RUNNER UP

Ledo Pizza

BEST PARTY SUPPLIES

Party City

RUNNER UP

Target

PEOPLE

BEST COSMETIC SURGEON

Cosmetic Surgery Associates

RUNNER UP

Austin-Weston, Reston

BEST FAMILY BLOGGER

Adventure Moms DC

RUNNER UP

Capitol Momma

BEST FINANCIAL PLANNER

Edelman Financial Engines,
Fairfax

RUNNER UP

Tie - Financial Advantage Associates,
Inc., Rockville
Keen & Pocock, Fairfax

BEST LOCAL AUTHOR

Jaime Paredes

RUNNER UP

Hope MacDonald, "Bella Goes to
Ballet"

BEST FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHER

Funkhouse Photography

RUNNER UP

Cynthia Sambro-Rier Photography,
Alexandria



Cookology Culinary School



Best For Families Winner! Children's Classes



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Summer Camps:

www.cookology.live

Virtually only, we are offering kids and adult classes, networking events, birthday parties!



**BEST LOCAL NEWS
PERSONALITY**
Doreen Gentzler, News 4

RUNNER UP
Doug Kammerer

**BEST LOCAL
PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE**
Alex Ovechkin, Washington Capitals

RUNNER UP
Ryan Zimmerman, Washington Nationals

BEST MECHANIC
Cho's Auto Service, Gaithersburg

RUNNER UP
G & C Tire & Auto Service, Chantilly

BEST MORTGAGE LOAN OFFICER
Larry Finkelberg, Apex Home Loans

RUNNER UP
Karen McGee, Rockville

**BEST NANNY SERVICE/
BABYSITTER**
ASAP Sitters

RUNNER UP
Tie - Let Mommy Sleep
Tender Hearts Loving Hands

BEST PERSONAL ORGANIZER
The Rest

RUNNER UP
DeClutter DC, Washington DC

BEST REALTOR
Jen Vo, Keller Williams Capital Properties Bethesda-Chevy Chase

RUNNER UP
Ellie Hitt, RE/MAX Realty Group

BEST SWIM INSTRUCTOR
Sarah Reed,
British Swim School
841-F Quince Orchard Blvd
Gaithersburg, MD
(833) 486-3250
kristinaw@bssmoco.com
brit-ishswimschool.com
We cannot say enough how proud we are of Miss Sarah! Miss Sarah has been with British Swim School for almost three years and she is one of our most beloved instructors. She teaches all ages from babies up to swim team. Miss Sarah also swam for the Northwest High School swim team and Coaches the Diamond Farms Swim Team. Congratulations on a well-deserved honor, Miss Sarah!

RUNNER UP
Katelyn Humphrey, SwimKids Swim School

PETS
BEST PET GROOMER
PetSmart

RUNNER UP
Bark 'N Bubbles

BEST PET SITTING/BOARDING
DogiZone

RUNNER UP
Country Club Kennels, Catlett

BEST PET STORE
PetSmart

RUNNER UP
Petco

BEST PET TRAINER
Sit Means Sit

RUNNER UP
Pack Place K9, Germantown

BEST VETERINARIAN
Dr. Christina Stotz, Maple Springs Veterinary Hospital, Gaithersburg

RUNNER UP
Kentlands Veterinary Hospital, Gaithersburg

PLACES
BEST AMUSEMENT PARK
Busch Gardens & Water Country USA

RUNNER UP
Hersheypark

BEST ART GALLERY
National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

RUNNER UP
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden

BEST CONCERT VENUE
Wolf Trap, Vienna

RUNNER UP
The Anthem, Washington DC

BEST CHURCH/PLACE OF WORSHIP
Seneca Creek Community Church

RUNNER UP
St. Rose of Lima, Gaithersburg

BEST FAMILY DAY TRIP
Smithsonian's National Zoo

RUNNER UP
Harpers Ferry, West Virginia

BEST ICE SKATING RINK
Cabin John Ice Rink,
Bethesda

RUNNER UP
Fairfax Ice Arena, Fairfax

BEST INDOOR ACTIVITY
Smithsonian National Air
and Space Museum

RUNNER UP
Earth Treks, Rockville

**BEST INDOOR PLAY
FACILITY**
Badlands, Rockville

RUNNER UP
Busy Bees

**BEST INDOOR
SWIMMING POOL/REC
CENTER**
SwimKids Swim School

RUNNER UP
Germantown Indoor Swim
Center

BEST LOCAL BREWERY
Flying Dog

RUNNER UP
2 Silos Brewing Co.,
Manassas

**BEST LOCAL
GETAWAY/RESORT**
Rehoboth Beach

RUNNER UP
Great Wolf Lodge,
Williamsburg

**BEST LOCAL SHOPPING
CENTER OR MALL**
Westfield Montgomery Mall,
Bethesda

RUNNER UP
Tysons Corner Center

BEST LOCAL WINERY
Rocklands Farm Winery,
Poolesville

RUNNER UP
Sugarloaf Mountain Vineyard

BEST MOVIE THEATRE
Cinema Arts Theatre,
Fairfax

RUNNER UP
ArcLight Cinemas,
Bethesda

BEST MUSEUM
Smithsonian National
Museum of Natural History,
Washington DC

RUNNER UP
Smithsonian National
Air and Space Museum,
Washington DC

BEST PETTING ZOO
Roer's Zoofari

RUNNER UP
Leesburg Animal Park,
Leesburg

BEST ROLLER RINK
Skate N' Fun Zone,
Manassas

RUNNER UP
Laurel Roller Skating Center,
Laurel

BEST STADIUM
Nationals Park, DC

RUNNER UP
Oriole Park at Camden Yards

BEST WATER PARK
Water Country USA,
Williamsburg

RUNNER UP
The Activity Center at Bohrer
Park, Gaithersburg



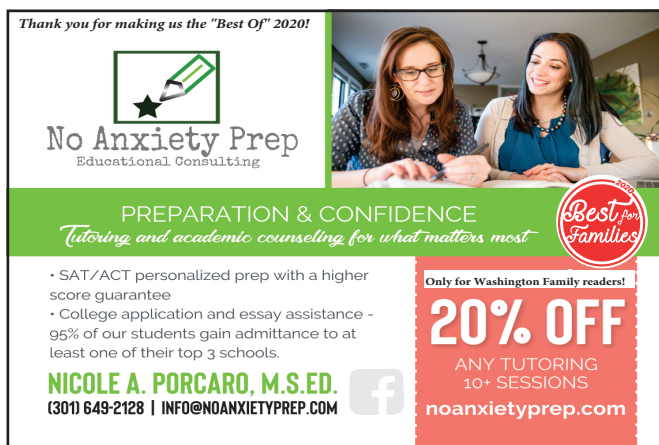
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www.ismw.org
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Thank you for making us the "Best Of" 2020!

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PREPARATION & CONFIDENCE
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10+ SESSIONS
noanxietyprep.com

Best for Families 2020



Westminster School
Preschool - 8th Grade | Est. 1962

Presenting Challenge - Building Character - Instilling Confidence

**Enrolling Now for In-Person Learning
with Safety Measures in Place**

"This experience at Westminster School has added much to my personality, turned my weaknesses into strengths, instilled confidence in me, and given me a passion for things I never knew I enjoyed. Because of Westminster, I will never again be the shy boy in the back of the class who always doubts himself."
Anthony
Class of 2019

Accelerated Curriculum
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Writing | Penmanship
Critical Thinking | Public Speaking
Great Books | French | Latin
Daily PE | Field Trips

admissions@westminsterschool.com
703-256-3620

www.WestminsterSchool.com

Best for Families 2020

RETAIL

BEST CHILDREN'S CONSIGNMENT OR RESALE STORE

Kid to Kid, Rockville

RUNNER UP

Lemon Lane, Falls Church

BEST HAIR SALON FOR CHILDREN

Cartoon Cuts

RUNNER UP

The Yellow Balloon, Gaithersburg

BEST LOCAL CAR DEALER

Fitzgerald Auto Mall

RUNNER UP

Ourisman Honda

BEST LOCAL CHILDREN'S CLOTHING STORE

Little Birdies Boutique

RUNNER UP

Ashby Mae

BEST LOCAL CHILDREN'S FURNITURE STORE

Go To Your Room, Rockville

RUNNER UP

Belfort Furniture

BEST LOCAL SELECTION OF CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Barnes & Noble, Tysons Corner

RUNNER UP

Child's Play Toys & Books, Arlington

BEST LOCAL TOY STORE

Tie - Toy Castle, Potomac

**Child's Play Toys & Books,
Arlington**

RUNNER UP

Barstons Child's Play

BEST PLACE TO BUY MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

Music & Arts



RUNNER UP

Foxes Music Company, Falls Church

BEST PLACE TO BUY OUTDOOR PLAY EQUIPMENT

Costco

RUNNER UP

Play N' Learn, Columbia and Chantilly

STYLE

BEST ACCESSORIES STORE

Lou Lou Boutique

RUNNER UP

Occasions, Kentlands

BEST DAY SPA

The Woodhouse Day Spa

RUNNER UP

Red Door Spa

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Tie - Tiffany & Co.

Tiny Jewel Box, Washington DC

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BEST MANI/PEDI

Bella Salon + Spa, Germantown

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Cute Tips Nail Salon

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Nordstrom

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BEST UPSCALE CONSIGNMENT

Tie - Twice is Nice

Finders Keepers, LLC, Arlington

RUNNER UP

grace & griffin

BEST WOMEN'S CLOTHING STORE

Target

RUNNER UP

LOFT

BEST LOCAL WOMEN'S CLOTHING STORE

South Moon Under, Bethesda

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**Tie - Altar'd State, Leesburg
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spring-bilingual.org
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301-962-7262
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brookfieldschool.org
brksfield@aol.com
Ages: 2-6
1830 Kirby Road, McLean, VA
703-356-KIDS

Community Montessori School

cmsreston.com
bonnieredcms@gmail.com
Ages: Infants-6 years
1700 Reston Parkway
Reston, VA
703-478-3656

Holly Brook Montessori School

preschoolmontessori.com
info@hollybrookmontessori.com
Ages: 3-5
2455 Gallows Road
Dunn Loring, VA
703-573-7800

Hunter Mill Montessori School

preschoolmontessori.com
info@huntermillmontessori.com
Ages: 2 years, 9 months-5 years
2709 Hunter Mill Road
Oakton, VA
703-938-7755

Montessori School of Cedar Lane

preschoolmontessori.com
info@cedarlanemontessori.com
Ages: 3-6
3035 Cedar Lane
Fairfax, VA
703-560-4379

Montessori School at Goose Creek Preserve

goosecreekmontessori.com
Ages: 16 months-6 years
42470 Rosalind St.
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571-417-3999

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Protecting Summer Skin

Stay sun-safe and healthy outdoors

BY COURTNEY MCGEE

Is it weird that I am 100 percent a better person when I can feel the sun? On a sunny day, anything seems possible, and a sunny day just makes me happy—bonus points if there’s water involved. However, summertime fun often means more skin exposed and vulnerable. What do we need to do to keep our children’s skin safe and healthy, and ensure that we put our own best skin forward?

Dr. Teri A. Kahn is a pediatric dermatologist at Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital and the University of Maryland Children’s Hospital, and clinical associate professor of both dermatology and pediatrics at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. Dr. Kahn spoke with me about some key concerns for summer skin health and safety.

Whenever possible, I asked Dr. Kahn to recommend specific brands or products. As a busy mom myself, I sincerely appreciate when I can get help picking out good items for my family—particularly when there is such an overwhelming number of items to choose from. Here is some of the great advice she shared with me. She does not have any professional relationship with these products.

Limiting sun exposure is key

The first point Dr. Kahn wanted to reinforce is the critical importance of sun protection. There are various ways to stay safe. One popular ad campaign slogan, “Slip! Slop! Slap! Seek! & Slide!” promotes slipping into sun protective clothing; slopping on SPF 30 or higher sunscreen; slapping on a broad-brimmed hat; seeking shade; and sliding on sunglasses to have fun without getting “fried.”

It’s a great message, because it emphasizes how to make sun protection part of your daily routine.

The hours of 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. are consid-

ered the strongest sun hours, but Dr. Kahn says she’d extend the risk to 4 p.m.

Chemical vs. mineral

There is a huge retail market for sun protection lotions and sprays. How do we choose? Which ones are safest? Studies have shown that chemical sunscreens can be potentially dangerous. Yes, they do a good job, but can they get into the bloodstream? In Hawaii, they don’t even want you to get in the water wearing chemical sunscreens because they can harm the coral reefs.

Mineral sunblocks are a preferred choice, and they are far more refined than earlier versions from years ago. Think back to clunky white Nosecoat (although I did love my hot pink Zinka in the ’80s). Zinc oxide and titanium dioxide offer exceptional UVA and UVB protection, with SPF 30+, and have been made “much more aesthetically elegant” these days, with applications that aren’t as visible, Dr. Kahn says.

Brands Dr. Kahn loves include: Blue Lizard, Babyanics, EltaMD UV Clear, Vanicream Sunscreen (for ultra sensitive skin), Neutrogena Pure & Free, Aveeno Ultra-Calming and CeraVe. “Anything that says it’s made for babies or women is usually smaller and more expensive,” Dr. Kahn says. “Just going with something for ‘sensitive skin’ should be fine.”

Seek a broad-spectrum product that offers UVA and UVB protection with an SPF of 30 or more. Apply the protection every morning before you leave the house, and again if going out before 4 p.m. You should reapply every hour if staying outside, especially if you’ll be in or around water. Dr. Kahn cautions, “The ones that say one application lasts for hours/all day? They lie.”

Feeling the burn?

Did you know that sunburn can take six

Quick Tips:

- Use a mineral sunblock with SPF 30 or higher.
- Remember the hours between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. are the riskiest for sun exposure.
- Out in woods or fields? Check for ticks as soon as you come inside.
- Clean and cover scrapes.
- Moisturize skin within three minutes of bathing.

to 12 hours to peak? Anticipate that a little pinkness now may develop into something much worse later. First-degree sunburn brings red, sore skin. Second-degree sunburn penetrates the skin's layers, bringing blistering and swelling. The Skin Cancer Foundation warns that, on average, risk for melanoma doubles with five or more sunburns, but just one blistering sunburn in childhood more than doubles melanoma risk later in life.

If you do get sunburn, Dr. Kahn suggests the following: Apply cool compresses, take a cool shower, drink lots of water, take Advil/Aleve if very painful, use aloe-vera or a general moisturizer (such as CeraVe). If you have blisters, don't pop them. Keep the affected skin moist and intact.

Bug off, little creeps

Another skin issue in summer: Bugs. Annoying insects such as mosquitos, ticks, chiggers, gnats, no-see-ums, biting flies and sand fleas can ruin an otherwise lovely time outdoors. We've tried lots of different repellent strategies, so I was excited to hear about Dr. Kahn's favorite, picaridin. I'm hoping this is a game-changer, because I am a mosquito magnet.

"Look for 20 percent picaridin, in spray or lotion. Generic is as good as brand-name, but if you want a brand to look for, Sawyer's is great," Dr. Kahn says. "It's safe for babies and pregnant women, and lasts 8 to 12 hours." Apply at edges of clothing and on exposed areas.

Because Lyme disease is common in ticks around here, it is important to do tick checks after you've been outdoors. Getting ticks off within the first 24 hours is important to prevent a full blood meal and avoid transmission of disease. Picaridin will help repel ticks, but not as well as DEET, so it is a good idea to add something with DEET for more protection if you're hiking. Be sure to wash it off as soon as you come inside to limit exposure. Remember, too, that asthma and eczema are often triggered by seasonal allergies—another good reason to change clothes and wash up as soon as you come in from outdoors in summer.

Skin injury care

With active young kids, shorts weather brings out lots of fun. Often, however, it

also brings along skinned knees and scraped elbows, which can put a damper on outdoor playtime. Skin injuries such as scrapes, scratches and cuts require a few simple care routines, according to Dr. Kahn—cleanse, moisten and cover.

First, clean the injury with a gentle cleanser, such as Dove soap, and pat the area dry. Next, apply a clean ointment base—could be just be plain Aquaphor or Vaseline petroleum jelly, or if you feel the need for antibiotic ointment, you can use Bacitracin or Polysporin. While Neosporin has been a first-aid kit staple for many years, but it really should be avoided at best, or used very rarely and sparingly at minimum. Not only are three antibiotics unnecessary, but the neomycin in it can cause allergic reactions that may eliminate the potential to use certain other antibiotics in the future.

Dr. Kahn adds that covering the skin injury is a key step in promoting healing. "Sorry, but Grandma's advice about air-drying a wound was wrong. Open to air delays healing," she says. "Keeping skin injuries clean, moist and covered creates an environment where skin cells can reproduce and fill the wound, and also cause less scarring."

Fight chemical dry skin

Swimming, splashing, or soaking in the pool is one of the best parts of summer. The chlorine that keeps the water clear and safe is actually a great cleanser. Dr. Kahn notes that some of her patients with eczema see improvements in their skin when they swim. That said, pool chemicals can be irritants, and it is important to rinse, cleanse and moisturize skin after swimming. Pre-coating skin before swimming can also help reduce irritation.

A good habit to start

There is a "three-minute rule" for moisturizing, according to Dr. Kahn. The idea is to apply moisturizer within three minutes after bathing, while the skin is patted off but still slightly damp, to lock in moisture. "The key is to keep good stuff in and bad stuff out," she says.

Alternately, you don't even have to dry off at all before using some newer products. Called wet moisturizers, water-activated or in-shower moisturizers, these are great for using just after washing and before toweling

dry (be careful about bottoms of feet so you don't slip). Some brands Dr. Kahn suggests are Curel, Eucerin, Nivea and Jergens. Don't forget to also reapply sunscreen if you'll be heading back out.

Haircare counts, too

"Hair is specialized skin," Dr. Kahn reminds us. "There is sunscreen for hair, too." Before a beach trip, Dr. Kahn researched hair products and discovered Reflect H2O Pre-Swim and Sun Protecting Gel at sporting goods store. She found it a welcome addition to her sun protection routines. She also tipped me off to Trader Joe's Nourish Spa shampoo and conditioner as gentle hair care favorites.

Dress to protect

There are fabulous catalogs of specialized, sun-protective fashion such as Coolibar, Solumbra, UV Skinz and Wallaroo hats. You can also find general rash guards and sun-safe clothing online and in local stores that will do the job just as well, for less money. Don't think that wearing more clothing necessarily means you'll feel hotter. In fact, rash guards can actually help you stay cooler, as they wick away sweat and shield skin from the sun.

Check for damage regularly

When it comes to monitoring skin for dangerous changes, one mantra Dr. Kahn shared is "have your birthday suit checked on your birthday," a reminder to schedule annual screenings from adolescence on. In her pediatric dermatology practice, as she sees lots of children with eczema and teens with acne, and she finds opportunities to discuss skin concerns in the midst of other treatments. But at any age, if anything suspicious comes up, get it checked ASAP.

In the U.S., more than two people die every hour from skin cancer. Protect yourself and your family by getting skin checks and being vigilant about protection. We live and learn, and when we know better, we do better. Even Dr. Kahn used to do some sun worshipping in her youth. But she says "you should see me now on the beach," as she has made skin protection an absolute priority.

Luckily, kids today have the benefit of our knowing so much more about importance of protecting skin and so many options for doing so. ■



My Pandemic

Thanks to COVID-19,

As of late June, I had not been to a hair stylist since April 2019.

** Insert horror scream here **

I know. I know. That is bad. Don't @ me.

I have some friends that religiously go every six weeks. I say, good for them. That's awesome. For me, it is just harder. I tend to always put everyone else above myself. Kids. Husband. Dog. Cat. Friends. Neighbor. Extended family. You get the idea.

This winter alone, my son was involved in four sport activities while my daughter was taking three dance classes. But I made a promise to myself. Before the early April start of my son's spring baseball season, I would go get my hair cut because I needed multiple inches taken off.

And then COVID-19 shut down the country.

In the months that followed, we quarantined like everyone else. Only going out to get groceries

every two weeks. Washing our hands after getting the mail. Trying to teach our kids through distance learning.

Throughout this time, my hair continued to grow (although I probably lost a fair amount to pulling it out during distance learning—insert another scream here). I figured when salons started opening up, I'd get about 6 inches cut off. However, I had no plans to run there the moment they opened back up in May. They were going to be super busy.

In mid-May, I saw a picture of actress Jamie Lynn Sigler in a magazine holding up a long braid of her own hair that she had decided to donate to a nonprofit. I've been a fan of Sigler since her days on "The Sopranos." I thought it was really amazing that she donated her hair, and I couldn't stop thinking about the picture. Then it hit me. If I was already planning on a sizable haircut, why not just add a few more inches to the total and donate my hair like Sigler?

I began researching the best places to donate hair. I am a cancer survivor, so I wanted to give to an organization that supports young children facing the disease. I very vividly remember the prospect



Haircut

BY GINA GALLUCCI-WHITE

I donated my hair

JASMINA81 / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS

of losing my hair to chemotherapy and I wanted to help others in the same position.

Some nonprofits wanted a minimum of 12 inches. Others can't take hair that has been colored. In my research, I also found that some nonprofits charge families to make child wigs or sell some of the donated hair to private companies which I was completely against. In the end, I decided to donate to Children With Hair Loss, a Michigan-based nonprofit that supplies wigs to children and young adults facing medically-related hair loss. They only required a minimum of 8 inches of hair for a donation and provide wigs to recipients for free.

As temperatures started to climb into the 90s in June and our regular pool remained closed, I decided to make my appointment at my Frederick salon. Although I was very sure of my decision, I couldn't help but be nervous the morning of my appointment. Throughout my life, the largest haircut I had ever had was probably 3 inches. Now I would be going from having hair that reached to around my belly button to hair that was shoulder length.

When I told my stylist about wanting to donate my hair, she divided my hair into four different sections, measured out 8 inches by marking the distance with a rubber band and chopped the hair off with a few quick cuts. My mouth flew open as she cut off the first ponytail, but she couldn't see because I was wearing a mask.

My initial feeling was shock but I shortly, thereafter, felt a lightness and not just because a huge chunk of my thick hair was now gone. I was finally taking care of myself. I was finally out of the house by myself after months of quarantine, and I could picture a child putting on a wig with my hair, excitedly looking in the mirror.

For those of you that have not made it to the hair salons yet due to pandemic shut downs, perhaps consider delaying the appointment a little longer and donate your hair to a worthy nonprofit.

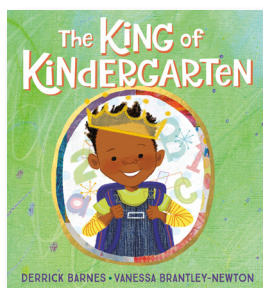
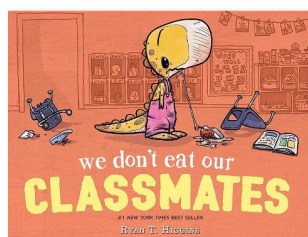
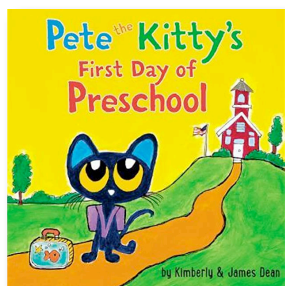
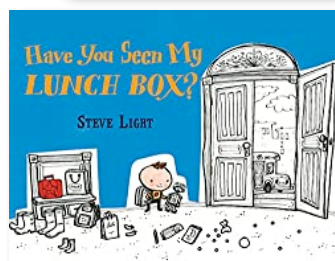
You will feel great afterward. ■

Gina Gallucci-White is a Frederick County mom, writer and reporter for several local and national news outlets.

Back-to-School Books

The first day of school is always ripe with possibility for what the year will bring, even in a pandemic

BY JENNIFER ROTHSCHILD, COLLECTION ENGAGEMENT LIBRARIAN,
ARLINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY



BOARD BOOKS

'I'm Going to Preschool'

Written and illustrated by Marion Cocklico
Ben's nervous about his first day of school, but he finds his cubby, joins circle time, makes new friends and enjoys himself in this comforting read designed to prepare children for their own first days. Young readers will enjoy the bright illustrations full of flaps to lift and other manipulative features. Parents will appreciate the tips on each page to help their children transition to preschool.

'Have You Seen my Lunch Box?'

Written and illustrated by Steve Light
Many parents will recognize the scene that plays out in this seek-and-find board book. It's time to catch the bus, but first the young protagonist must find his school things amid a jumble of other household items. Careful use of color against the black-and-white illustrations make items easy to spot for young readers.

'Pete the Kitty's First Day of Preschool'

Written and illustrated by Kimberly and James Dean
Crowd-favorite Pete the Cat stars in a line of board books about his younger days. On his first day of preschool, when asked if he's nervous, he says "No, I'm cool." He has his cool new backpack and art supplies and is ready to go. While at school, he does many typical preschool activities like singing and painting. At the end of the day, he doesn't want to leave! Older readers may want to opt for "Pete the Cat: Rocking in my School Shoes."

PICTURE BOOKS

'We Don't Eat Our Classmates'

Written and illustrated by Ryan T. Higgins
Penelope is excited to start school and can't wait to meet her classmates. Unfortunately, her classmates are all human and Penelope is a T Rex—so she eats them. Even though she spits

them out, eating your classmates isn't the best way to make friends. When the hungry class fish shows Penelope what it feels like to be a snack, she's able to make amends.

'The King of Kindergarten'

Written by Derrick Barnes, illustrated by Vanessa Brantley-Newton
After his mother tells him he'll be the King of Kindergarten, a young boy can't wait to start school. On the first day he puts a royal spin on everything (instead of the school bus taking him to school, the yellow carriage takes him to his towering fortress). The result is a fantastic first day. Readers will see many routine classroom experiences filled with a positive energy to get kids excited for their own first day.

'The Proudest Blue: A Story of Hijab and Family'

Written by Ibtihaj Muhammed and S. K. Ali, illustrated by Hatem Aly.
Faizah's ready for the first day of school with her new backpack and light-up shoes, but she's even more excited because her older sister, Asiya, has started to wear her hijab. Mama wanted her to pick a nice pink, but instead she chose a bright, proud blue. But when Asiya is teased on the playground, Faizah has to find a way to be strong. Luckily, Asiya shows her how to handle the bullies in this powerful and uplifting story about the bonds of sisterhood.

EARLY READERS

'The Best Seat in Kindergarten'

Written by Katherine Kenah, illustrated by Abby Carter
Sam's pretty nervous for his first day kindergarten. As a fun activity, his teacher takes the class on a nature walk and when they return to class, everyone gets to share something they found on the walk. A reassuring story about the big feelings that can accompany starting school.

'Big Shark, Little Shark Go to School'
Written by Anna Membrino, illustrated
by Tim Budgen

Odd-couple Big Shark and Little Shark are off to school. Little Shark shows up extra early for the bus, but Big Shark is running so far behind, he doesn't arrive until the bus has come and gone. Now how will the friends get to school? While the plot line won't happen to many human students, young readers will enjoy these fun shark antics.

'The Buddy Bench'

Written by Gwendolyn Hooks,
illustrated by Shirley Ng-Benitez

Padma loves school and playing with her friends. When she notices a boy sitting all by himself at recess, she works to create a Buddy Bench—a place for kids to sit to signal that they would like to be asked to play. This early reader is a great introduction to the Buddy Bench, which are becoming more common on school playgrounds.

MIDDLE GRADE

'Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus'

Written by Dusti Bowling

Due to a rare genetic condition, Aven Green was born without arms, but she likes to tell people she lost them wrestling alligators. Moving across country so her parents can take over an old theme park is hard enough, but Aven also must deal with all the questions and comments about her body as she starts at a new school. After a rocky start she befriends a boy with a disability of his own, and the two work together to solve a mystery about the history of theme park.

'Real Friends'

Written by Shannon Hale, illustrated by LeUyen Pham

Award-winning author Hale tells a poignant and familiar story of changing friendships in this graphic novel memoir. Shannon always felt like the odd-one out, but she found a great best friend in Adrienne. Over the years, Adrienne becomes one of the most popular girls in school, and Shannon suddenly feels like an outsider looking in. Hale is careful to show the sympathetic side to mean characters as well as highlighting her own mistakes as she finds her own place and real friends.

'New Kid'

Written by Jerry Craft

Jordan loves art—especially drawing cartoons about his life. He wants to go to art school, but his parents send him to Riverdale Academy

instead, a prestigious school known for its academics. At his new school, Jordan is one of one a few non-white students, which brings many challenges, such as regularly being confused with the few other Black kids. Meanwhile, he also struggles to stay true to his friends from the neighborhood even though they are no longer classmates. A moving graphic novel about staying true to yourself.

YOUNG ADULT

'Her Royal Highness'

Written by Rachel Hawkins

In this fizzy companion to Prince Charming, heartbroken Millie decides to apply to boarding schools far, far away from her Texas home. She lands at a prestigious school in Scotland, where her roommate is a literal princess. At first, Flora seems every bit the selfish entitled brat the tabloids make her out to be, but Millie soon gets to know the troubled and unhappy girl beneath the tiara and a wonderful friendship and possible romance bloom. But if starting a new school in a new country was hard, dating a royal is a whole new level of intensity that Millie doesn't know if she's prepared for.

'Popular: A Memoir'

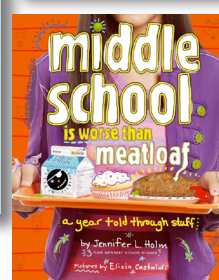
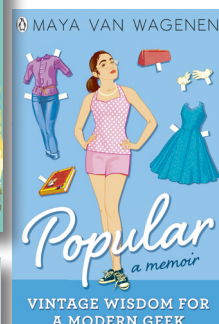
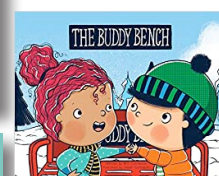
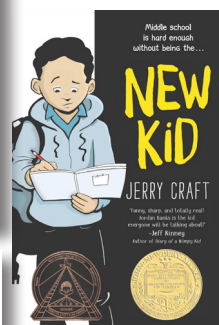
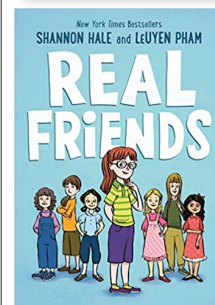
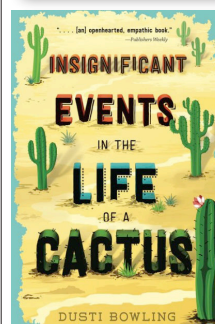
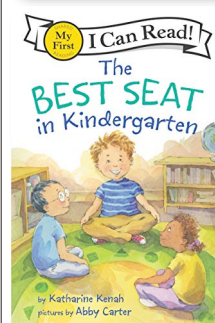
Written by Maya Van Wagenen

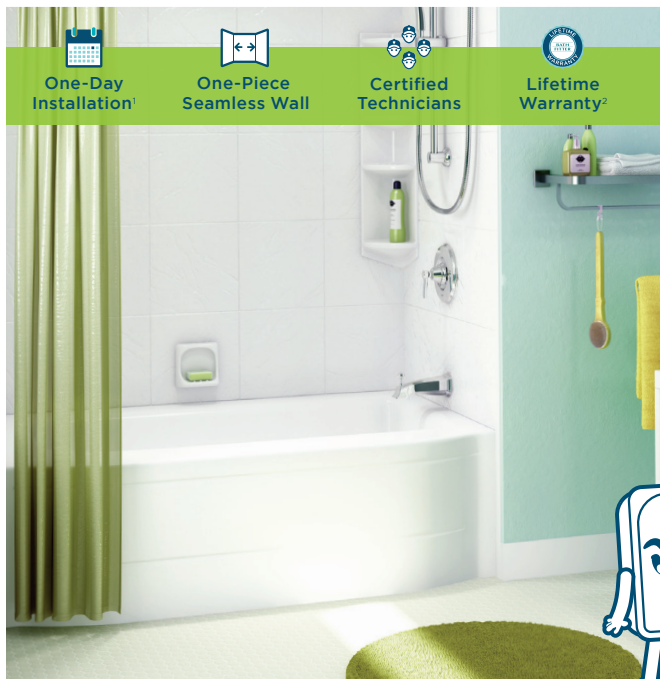
At her Texas middle school, Maya is at the bottom of the popularity ladder. Figuring things couldn't get any worse, she decides to live by the advice she finds in a 1950s popularity guide and document the results. While the pearls and girdle work against her, Maya gains a lot by widening her social circles and interactions. Maya's voice shines as she documents the harder parts of living on the Texas/Mexico border during the drug war as well as her failures and ultimate successes with decades-old, but timeless, advice.

'Middle School is Worse Than Meatloaf: A Year Told Through Stuff'

Written by Jennifer L. Holm, illustrated
by Elicia Castaldi

Full-color pages feature a collage of magazine articles, school assignments, notes, bank statements and ephemera to tell the story of Ginny's first year in middle school. It's a fun and revealing way to show the highs and lows of the school year. For example, drug store receipts for hair dye are followed by significantly higher salon bills for dye-reversal, while notes with her friends reveal changes in her house as she gets used to living with her new stepfather. It's a fun and revealing way to show the highs and lows of the school year. ■






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Not a **CHORE**

Take self-care off the to-do list



BY KRYSTINA WALES

If one more person tells me I need to “fill my cup” in the interest of self-care, I’m going to hotbox them in a meat locker. With lots and lots of aged meats.

Stop telling me to get a massage. I don’t want a facial or a pedicure. I might be able to stomach a manicure if I wasn’t forced to sit still for longer than 20 minutes.

I have a 2-year-old and a 6-month-old. I work full-time as the breadwinner and am always running a side hustle or two at any given time. My husband stays home as the full-time caretaker, so I feel guilty any time he has to take care of them outside of, you know, every day. Even though I couldn’t have found a more supportive spouse had I conjured him up from the Ideal Husband Factory in Palo Alto (don’t lie, you just Googled it).

My time with my daughters is precious. My time with my friends is insanely precious because it’s so rare. The idea of taking an hour or two to do something completely by myself sounds asinine. Calling it a ‘luxury’

isn’t the right term. Being alone basically feels like a waste.

It’d be like trying to stick to a restricted diet where I am banned from eating brownies, bagels, coffee and cheese. It is completely unrealistic to believe I could follow that. I wouldn’t enjoy eating anymore, which would make me miserable. My self-care equivalent to a diet of beets and dandelion greens is being touched for an hour and slicked up with so much product the neighborhood kids could play Slip-and-Slide on my cheeks. I am never going to get behind the idea of self-care if it’s restricted to a certain type.

Science says

The importance of self-care has been scientifically proven. It’s a mental health regiment as much as a physical one, helping to reduce anxiety, elevate patience and resilience, foster creativity and open-mindedness as well as combating burnout and exhaustion.

It’s also a buzzword that has gotten a lot of face time recently. And just like any good, old-fashioned game of telephone, the more it’s talked about, the more its original meaning and purpose falls away, replaced by the commercialization of the concept for an individual’s or company’s own benefit.

Self-care is more than just actions taken. It says it right there in the name: it is the art of taking care of yourself. So for mothers who can’t fathom the space to spend hours doing something alone, who are overwhelmed and guilt-ridden by the idea of trying to practice self-care in the way it’s currently being marketed, it’s OK. You aren’t doing it wrong.

Do it your way

I practice self-care in four ways that are really important to me and work for me rather than against me.

Boundary setting. Self-care to me means not straining my already overfilled mental and emotional load. Saying no to opportunities,

no matter how awesome they seem or how much I want to help, is a tool it has taken me years to hone, but one that serves me well when it comes to my mental health. By stepping away from volunteer activities or extra projects, I give myself permission to prioritize what's important to me at this time in my life, knowing I can go back to them later when I'm ready.

Literally taking care of myself. Making sure I am drinking water, choosing the stairs, eating good foods that fuel my body, taking a shower—no need to wile away in a pile of bubbles, just being clean is enough. Doing simple daily activities to give me the energy and confidence to tackle the day feels like a win.

Hanging out with friends. Those bitches are my life line! It doesn't matter if I need to air out some grievances, bounce ideas off them or just check in to see what is going on in their lives, touching base with other women in my life truly energizes me and gives me the space to get out of my own head. The women I surround myself with are smart, driven and empathetic people. They listen, laugh and love with the best of them. I know stepping away for a coffee or a walk with them will give me a new perspective or just a break from the monotony of the day. And, honestly, a hot coffee and really good breakfast sets me up for a week's worth of happiness.

Writing. It gives me such joy to share my perspective and feelings with the world to help women feel less alone. But even if I am journaling for no one but myself, getting my thoughts down on paper helps me work through situations more effectively than anything. Alternatively, writing creatively gives my mind an outlet, a space to go where I can imagine any scenario and outcome I want. I can create new characters and timelines. The freedom to create and see my work on paper is a gift and a release all at the same time.

Self-care doesn't have to be a burden or one more proverbial item on the to-do list. The expectations for how self-care is supposed to go can sap the very mental energy it's expected to bring. If you can make yourself a fancy meal for one that you can enjoy after bedtime instead of eating PB&J crusts and macerated vegetables, or steal away three minutes before walking in the door after work to meditate, or say no to the 10th birthday party this month, your mind, body and overfilled cup will thank you. ■

THE
EXPECTATIONS
FOR HOW SELF-
CARE IS SUPPOSED
TO GO CAN SAP
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IT'S EXPECTED TO
BRING.



Dr. Brian Stipelman

BY WF STAFF



TITLE: Associate Vice President/Dean of Liberal Arts at Frederick Community College

LIVES: Frederick

FAMILY: Wife, Hilary; daughters, Elayna, 9; and Mia, 6; and two cats, Socks and Lula

Do you know a local parent who juggles multiple priorities while managing to make a positive impact in their community? Nominate them as a subject of our Mom/Dad Life column by emailing us at editor@washingtonfamily.com.

What are five things you can't live without?

My iPhone and nice headphones. I try to walk 5 miles every day, and they stop me from being bored while I do it. Plus, this way I can fit music and podcasts onto the list without taking up more spots. It's like wishing for more wishes.

Good books. My sleep habits are terrible and reading before bed (without a screen) really helps.

My iPad. At the end of the day, I like to be able to watch movies with headphones on so the sound can be loud and I can be horizontal. This is before the reading.

Mountain Dew. I am not much of a coffee drinker, so this gets me through the day. I started drinking diet Mountain Dew as a concession to my health. But diet soda tastes like sadness, so I've gone back to regular Mountain Dew. But in tiny cans.

This list used to be much longer, but then I had kids. And it turns out that most things I thought were essential really weren't. Ask me again when my girls turn 18.

What do you love about being a dad?

The fact that I have two wonderful, loving, thoughtful, smart, crazy girls. Really just having something in your life you can care that deeply about. And as they get older, watching them interact with and learn from the world around them is a joy. I also love that they do not hesitate to call me out when they don't like what I'm doing. Keeps me honest.

What do you find challenging about raising kids?

Just about everything. Turns out raising kids is way harder than I expected. Who knew? Ensuring that they are learning (especially now), making sure they eat right and stay healthy are all at the top of the list. Stressing about whether or not they spend too much time on screens. Worrying about modeling bad behavior (like spending too much time on screens). Basically, making sure I don't screw

up anything too badly that will hurt them in the long run.

What is something your family loves to do together?

So much of our weekdays are spent ferrying kids to activities that our weekends had really been about decompression. One silver lining about COVID-19 is that has slowed down the pace of our life, and we are building more family activities into our routines. Right now, hikes in the woods have become a favorite. With a little luck, my girls will come out of quarantine with happy memories of the experience.

What's your favorite chore?

I like doing the dishes. My wife generally trusts me not to screw it up (as opposed to say, laundry), and it is satisfying to take on a project that definitively ends. When I started, dishes were dirty. When I am done, dishes are clean. However, my family insists on eating every day, so these are small victories in a battle I cannot win.

What's something that makes juggling parenthood and your career a little bit easier?

Honestly, knowing that other people struggle as much as I do. Parenting is a challenge. A career is a challenge. Trying to have both and be halfway decent at them is even harder, especially if you also want your partner to be anything more than a co-parent/roommate (and my wife also works full time). I think it is helpful for all of us to be open about how hard this is to manage and that even the people you think of as the super parents who really have it down are (probably) experiencing the same angst and exhaustion that you are. They just hide it better.

I have been especially lucky in that Frederick Community College has a number of family-friendly policies that have made this all much easier. Given the uncertainty facing all parents for the foreseeable future, I hope all employers are able to adopt policies that make life manageable for working parents. ■

A close-up, high-resolution photograph of a dog's face, likely a Weimaraner, with brown and white fur and striking light-colored eyes. The dog is looking slightly to the left of the camera.

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