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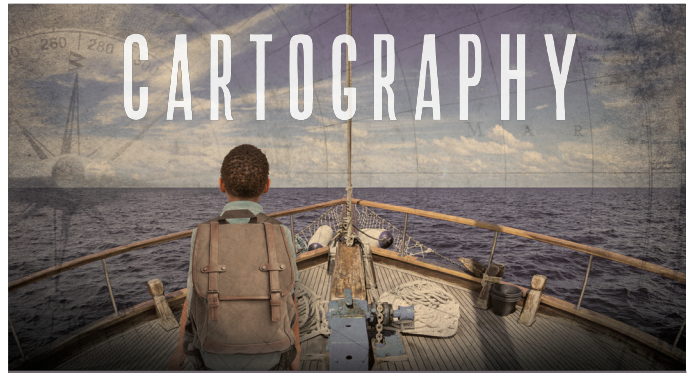
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Twinkling lights, festive cheer, joyful kiddos, crowded department stores ... it must be December! Like many other Starbucks red cup-giddy individuals, it's my favorite month of the year.

Growing up, we didn't waste much time getting into the Christmastime spirit. The day after Thanksgiving, the autumnal décor went down and the house instantly got sparkled and tinsel-ed up. And finding the perfect tree was at the top of our list.

Each year, my family and I would head to a local Christmas tree farm to find our perfect piney match — and to kick off the holiday celebrations. It was a yearly tradition that I always looked forward to. We'd take a fun hayride out into the farm, singing songs along the way and pick out a tree. Then, we'd come back to the main area to play with animals at the petting farm, drink hot cider, eat delicious Texas-style barbeque and take our annual Christmas card photos. It was truly a full day of festive family fun. And even now, it's a special memory that I always cherish.

My family has continued to accumulate many other holiday traditions over the years — hiding the “pickle” ornament in the tree, drive-through light shows, watching *The Muppet Christmas Carol*, eating German stollen on Christmas Eve and baking “monkey bread” on Christmas Day. More recent traditions include hiding the “Elf on the Shelf” for the kids in hysterical locations and binge-watching every Hallmark Christmas movie we can find.

(Even though each movie has the same plot, we still can't get enough!)

It's these special traditions that make me love this holiday the most. If you're looking for some more family traditions to add to your lineup, we have our extensive “Holiday Happenings” guide on pg. 32. There you will find the best local festivals, performances, light shows and more! For more seasonal inspiration, we have a list of children's holiday books on pg. 24, some tasty holiday eats on pg. 36, a holiday gift guide on pg. 39 and tips on getting your kids involved with hosting a festive party on pg. 45. Plus, there are many other parenting resources inside! For even more holiday events happening around the DMV, go to washingtonFAMILY.com.

From our FAMILY to yours, we wish you a wonderful holiday season full of traditions, memories and endless Hallmark movie marathons.

Happy Holidays!



Britni

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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL — to play or not to play?

BY AMANDA SOCCI

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With recent reports showing a national trend in declining participation in high school football, this topic has once again jumped to the forefront. Many families are debating whether or not their children should play football.

Starting in 2015, the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS), the nationally recognized body that oversees interscholastic sports, began reporting declines in participation of 11-player football. In each succeeding year, the NFHS has reported slight declines in participation. A more substantial statistic is that participation has dropped 6.7 percent since its peak in 2009. However, it is important to note that currently, “with 1,036,842 participants, 11-player football remains the No. 1 participatory sport for boys in high school by a large margin,” as per the NFHS website.

Frequent high-profile coverage on the dangers associated with football—like concussions and brain disease—might

be one of the main reasons football participation has been affected at the scholastic level.

“Public knowledge about the NFL and college-level head injuries and trauma and the press ... all had an effect [on the sport], and athletes and parents have had to make more choices,” says Dr. Matthew Levine, a surgeon and sports medicine orthopedic specialist from the Mid-Maryland Musculoskeletal Institute, a division of The Centers for Advanced Orthopaedics in Frederick, MD.

Dr. Levine disagrees with the idea that parents are unnecessarily afraid of having their sons play football, but does believe they are now more well-informed. Dr. Levine believes the news reports and medical studies detailing

the effects on concussions to the brain are a benefit to parents and athletes, because they now “understand what might happen [if a concussion occurs during football], whereas previously, that information wasn’t known.”

Dr. Matt Jepson, a primary care sports physician also from the Mid-Maryland Musculoskeletal Institute, concurs that while the topic of concussions caused by football remains a hot-button issue today, the fact of the matter is, “We’re talking about somebody’s brain. People don’t understand. It’s scary. How much risk are we seeing with concussions?”

Dr. Jepson mentioned how a recent study by Dr. Andrew Peterson from the sports medicine program at the University of Iowa concluded that there was no major difference in concussions sustained in flag football versus tackle football. Despite the availability of multiple medical research and studies on concussions, “We [still] don’t know enough. People are apprehensive when there is not enough information [to make an informed decision.]”

“Public knowledge about the NFL and college-level head injuries and trauma and the press ... all had an effect [on the sport], and athletes and parents have had to make more choices.”

Yet not everything is doom and gloom in the world of football as is being currently reported. There is room for awareness, education and informed decisions.

One positive aspect has resulted from the reported statistics that high schools are either canceling their football programs altogether or struggling to recruit new members. Both Dr. Levine and Dr. Jepson alluded to the fact that the ongoing medical research and reports of football-related concussions has resulted in a greater awareness of risks and preventative measures. Parents are strongly encouraged to do their research with their student athletes and discuss findings together before deciding whether to play high school football.

Student athletes and parents have many resources at their fingertips to help them make informed decisions on participation. One such resource is the Heads Up initiative, created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which disseminates educational concussion materials to scholastic sports programs. (See here for more information: www.cdc.gov/headsup/index.html).

Another option? Have an informative discussion with your child's coaches. Stefan Green, assistant coach for Bishop O'Connell High School's JV football team, recommends that parents “get involved and interrogate the coaches.” Ask questions like “How are you making football safer for my child?”

Making sure coaches are actively teaching methods to help protect their players could be a good solution for putting parents' minds at ease and increasing participation. In fact, Green, who has two teenage sons who play for O'Connell, took up coaching because he didn't like what coaches were doing—he wanted to make it a safer sport. Green says that he “stresses to his players how to tackle without using the head” and coaches his team this way. He makes sure players practice safe ways to tackle with minimum contact during practice each week.

And part of the problem with football injuries in high school is that parents are waiting until high school before they let their kids play football. Coach Green says that when half the team hasn't played before, it becomes dangerous. Middle school football is controlled by weight and age, so he recommends parents enroll their kids at least one year in middle school to lessen the chance for injury in high school.

Local coaches are urging student athletes and parents to still keep the positive aspects of the sport in mind. Football has been weaved into the history of the U.S. as a beloved national pastime.

Coach Brown, head coach of the Watkins Mill Wolverines, believes the love of the sport and the benefits of playing the sport outweigh any fear or panic from the possibility of sustaining concussions during football. “Football gives kids the opportunity for hard work and diversity. The world is a better place due to football,” he says emphatically.

Coach Green shares a similar sentiment, noting “[Football] is the ultimate team sport. Unlike other sports such as basketball, where you can have one person running up and down the court taking control of the shots, football requires you to depend on your teammates to be successful,” says Green. Knowing how to work together as a team is essential in life.

High School Varsity football coach Trey Taylor from Fairfax High School in Fairfax, VA is concerned that the



media reports detailing the brain disease and suicides of NFL players has caused unnecessary alarm which has, in turn, had a direct effect on participation in high school football. During his 11 years spent as an assistant coach and the most recent 12 years as head coach, Coach Taylor has not encountered players or parents who made decisions to not play football due to injury or fear of injury. He believes the lack of participation seemed to “mostly come from people who have never tried the sport and are basing their decisions on media reports and conversations with people whose kids don’t play football.”

In fact, the NFHS reports only numbers of students who have chosen to participate in high school football. The number of student athletes who have initially played football and chose not to come back versus the number of students who attended recruitment events and never initially played football and chose not to play at all does not seem to be reported anywhere. If this data were available, it would surely help student athletes and parents make better decisions.

Coach Taylor is disappointed that the media has chosen to emphasize the negatives in football without spending equal time talking about the benefits of football. “It is the greatest team sport—where individuals must put aside their desire for self and work for the team. Football requires a selfless mentality that a lot of kids today struggle with.”



SISEET/E+/GETTY IMAGES

Despite the problems reported in football and the reality that the face of scholastic football is changing throughout the United States, Coach Brown is confident things will work out in the end. “I think the future is bright. It’s an awesome sport [with] many parallels to life. It’s true that participation has decreased, but it’s not a huge alarming [statistic]. Football is still going strong.”

The final piece of the puzzle involves an action that many parents are uncomfortable with—involving their children in the decision-making process. Parents are wired to make decisions on behalf of their children to protect them and offer them the best options in life. But in the case of high school (and middle school) football, where coverage has caused fear and alarm, a better way to handle things is to involve your children.

Research with your student athlete, talk to the coaches and athletic directors and ask the tough questions. Help your children understand the risks and benefits.

But you can’t make the final decision without: Attending a local high school football game. It’ll make the decision a lot tougher, but it’ll be a better and more informed decision. You will notice safety measures in place—it’s not the same football game played 20 or 30 years ago. And you’ll have a great time. The Star-Spangled Banner is played. You’ll notice friendship among parents, camaraderie among the student body, local community involvement, lots of cheering, cowbelling, arm chair quarterbacking and the smell of grilling hamburgers in the crisp fall air.

And the boys on the field having the time of their lives.

“It is the greatest team sport — where individuals must put aside their desire for self and work for the team. Football requires a selfless mentality that a lot of kids today struggle with.”

Amanda M. Socci is a mother and freelance writer living in Alexandria, VA.

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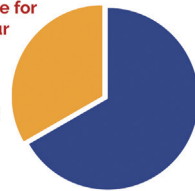
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DESPERATELY SEEKING DRYNESS

Families struggling with bedwetting are not alone

BY COURTNEY MCGEE

Bedwetting is an issue many parents deal with, yet few discuss. They may fear violating their child's privacy or feel that others will criticize their parenting; or maybe they wrestle with their own feelings of concern and frustration. It can be isolating.

The American Academy of Pediatrics says that 5 million children older than 6 continue to cope with nocturnal enuresis, or bedwetting. About two out of three of these are boys, and most have a parent who struggled with bedwetting as a child. The AAP also says that enuresis can often go away on its own in a certain number of affected children each year. But what is a parent to do when a child doesn't "grow out of it?"

Marlo Eldridge, a nurse practitioner, is director of the Pediatric Voiding Improvement Program at Johns Hopkins Hospital's Brady Urological Institute. Eldridge understands the strain that bedwetting can put on family

functioning, and she helped shed light on this nighttime challenge.

Involuntary Action

Let's start with a key fact: "There is nothing tied between intelligence and continence," Eldridge says with great emphasis. Primary nocturnal enuresis is involuntary urination during sleep, after an age when bladder control generally occurs. The Type A parent in all of us may find it hard to ignore the parents who boast about little Jane who potty trained at age 1 and kept dry all night at 2. Stop comparing.

Ordinary Development

Bedwetting often resolves by about age 4 but is still not uncommon even between ages 8 and 10, according to Eldridge. Most often, development will resolve the issue over time. By age 10, about 95 percent of children are dry at night. But as many as 2 percent still present at age 18—mostly due to unresolved or missed diagnostic

opportunities. "It is not considered out of the ordinary until the seventh birthday," Eldridge says. "When it persists beyond age 7, there are factors to investigate."

Tank Size

I wondered if continence was more a factor of age or body size. Eldridge reminded me that it varies by child, as she's seen some bedwetting 9-year-olds weighing 50 pounds and others 100 pounds, so there's no magic number. "Instead, think about tank size," she says, "and what could be limiting capacity." An undersized bladder, or incomplete emptying of the bladder, may be a root cause. Find baselines of functional bladder capacity by measuring urine output. "A 7-year-old's max urine output is about 270 cc (cubic centimeters)," Eldridge relates for perspective. "If he or she is only voiding 120 cc, think about that. That's four ounces (about a juice box). Some kids may need to urinate after only 60 cc. What is limiting that tank capacity?" Talk to your pediatric primary-

care provider about your concerns. You may want to discuss imaging studies, such as an abdominal X-ray and renal/bladder ultrasound, with your child's provider. These can sometimes be done before seeing an urologist and help expedite proper diagnosis.

Other Issues

Functional elimination syndrome refers to bladder issues with bowel involvement (constipation). Eldridge says that, in her experience, 95 percent of the time the answer is that a stool is causing the wetting. "Think of it like a brick on top of the bladder," she says. "Many kids poop daily and show no signs of constipation, yet a scan may reveal blockages." That stool is taking up space and putting pressure on the bladder, causing it to feel full before normal capacity. In some cases, a one-day cleanup followed by a regimen of MiraLAX resolves the issue.

Regulatory Hormones

Another possible cause of bedwetting is deficiency of arginine vasopressin — an anti-diuretic hormone that tells the body to slow down kidney production overnight and prevent the bladder from filling up during sleep. Some bedwetting is resolved by supplementation with desmopressin acetate (DDAVP). It's not dosed by weight, so providers may begin with a .2 milligram oral tablet at bedtime and adjust from there. "If desmopressin deficiency is the culprit, you would know within the first three days if it works," Eldridge says.

Super Deep Sleep

"Sleep quality can definitely be another factor," she says. "About 90 percent of the parents we see say, 'Oh, you could drive a truck through the room and he/she wouldn't wake up,' which implies very deep sleep, and that means trouble rousing for bladder signals." Deep sleep may be due to chronic fatigue. Ensuring healthy sleep habits, eliminating caffeine, restricting fluid consumption

in the evening and waking a child to urinate partway through the night are some of the many ways you can help heavy sleepers. Obstructive sleep apnea from oversized tonsils causes poor airflow while sleeping and leads to chronic fatigue. Although this would not be a reason for a tonsillectomy, the elimination of bedwetting is sometimes a bonus outcome.

Some children can benefit from bedwetting alarms, which detect moisture and trigger a loud noise to rouse the child and condition them to wake at the sensation of a full bladder. However, kids may desensitize to the alarm over time. Also, the use of absorbent nighttime underpants would render an alarm ineffective.

Pull-ups and Pads

Today there are abundant commercial products for bedwetting, particularly those geared toward children over preschool age. Eldridge says it does not mean that the problem has become more common, rather that we are doing a better job with information. "More products mean more kids are better able to socialize and participate in things and function normally, and that is a huge step," she says.

A common question is whether pull-ups hinder progress. "The answer is no," Eldridge says. "Think of it this way: Waking up in wet sheets does not set the stage for a positive day." Children feel ashamed and guilty for something that wasn't even in their control. Parents find it hard to respond with understanding to running yet another load of laundry and scrubbing a mattress. "It is worthwhile to use products that allow the child to wake up dry, as the issues are resolved," she says. What's more, those absorbent underpants for bigger kids help unlock potential to go to sleepovers with less fear of embarrassment.

Risks for Older Kids

What happens when children don't outgrow bedwetting? The biggest issue is self-esteem, particularly as they get older. Some pediatric urology offices have a behavioral psychologist on staff to help children and families with compliance, to address self-image and to guide families in developing healthy habits. "Pressure, shaming or punishment for a condition they cannot control is psychologically damaging to children," Eldridge says. "Check all underlying factors. Get them motivated. Treat them fully and holistically. Prepare the body to be successful."

Who Can Help?

If your child is past the seventh birthday and still not staying dry at night, ask your pediatrician or pediatric nurse practitioner for help in finding the root cause. If you need to see a specialist, Eldridge advises, "Seek out a fellowship-trained pediatric urologist. Any urologist can hang a shingle that says they'll treat peds, but they cannot have the depth of knowledge that a pediatric specialist will have. I don't try to treat prostate cancer, but I know all about pediatric elimination issues."

Rest assured, better days (and nights) are within reach.



RAISING *Money Savvy* KIDS

BY CHRISTA MELNYK HINES



Kids may not always listen to the life lessons we try to impart, but when it comes to money, they are an amazingly attentive audience. T. Rowe Price, a global investment management firm, found in a survey that 65 percent of kids approach their parents about money matters.

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Mike English, economic educator and facilitator of the parent-teacher program "Talking to Your Kids About Personal Finances," encourages

parents to teach kids about money as soon as they can count.

Shape savvy spenders. For Megan Lynch, whose daughters are 5, 3 and 10 weeks, understanding money is an important life skill.

"It took me a really long time to learn to budget and get my credit on track," says Lynch. "I want my girls to know that being responsible with their finances will reap better rewards than the instant gratification of just blowing it all."

First, distinguish between wants and needs. Your child will become a more prudent spender, who fulfills needs first and saves for wish-list items to purchase later.

Lynch's girls use a piggy bank to watch their money grow. "We are trying to teach them that saving up for something special takes time and patience, and in the end, they are always proud of how much money they were able to save," says Lynch.

Basic budgeting. For novice money managers, offer budgeting and planning tips. Trish Batten provides

some guidance for her daughter Kendall, but overall, she gives her the freedom to make her own decisions about how she spends money.

“Recently she had a goal to save up for a pet, then got invited by a friend to the American Girl Doll Store,” Batten says. “She chose to dip into her money for American Doll items. Her savings for a pet dwindled significantly for what a 9-year-old is able to save up, and she is just now realizing it.”

Allowance is another tool for teaching kids as young as 4 basic budgeting skills. Make the connection between work and earnings by assigning chores that benefit the entire family, like feeding pets or washing the dishes.

Wondering how much to pay? “Err on the side of frugality,” says English. “Keep it low enough so the child learns some discipline and learns to save.” Provide enough allowance each week to cover one of your child’s needs, such as lunch money and a little extra to go towards a want. “Whatever is left they can spend on discretionary items.”

Avoid bail-outs. If your child spends all of his allowance without considering his weekly expenses, natural consequences like brown-bagging lunch for the rest of the week will quickly teach him the value of planning and budgeting his money. If your child wants to earn more money, offer extra chores for additional allowance.

Talk family finances. Early on, lead by example. “Kendall sees when we give to charity, save money, pay bills, use coupons and such,” says Batten. “We talk about what we are doing and why we are doing it.”

Once your children enter middle school or high school, involve them in family budget discussions to help them understand weekly expenditures. Divide the week’s expenses into envelopes. Even if you wish your finances looked different, “be

transparent with kids about your family budget,” English says.

The lesson? When a child sees that money isn’t in the budget for the designer jeans she wants, she can save some of her own earnings to purchase the jeans herself.

Open a savings account. By the time your kids are age seven or eight, encourage them to put birthday money, holiday money or allowance left over at the end of the week into a

savings account in their name. With a savings account, children learn about interest and how their money can grow. To get your children started, consider matching their already accumulated savings.

Christa Melnyk Hines and her husband are the parents of two middle school boys. Her latest book is “Happy, Healthy & Hyperconnected: Raise a Thoughtful Communicator in a Digital World.”

Money Smart Books

to teach kids the value of a dollar

“The Opposite of Spoiled: Raising Kids Who are Grounded, Generous and Smart About Money”
by Ron Lieber

This book offers a detailed blueprint for the best ways to handle the basics: allowance, chores, cars, savings, birthdays, holidays, the tooth fairy, checking accounts, etc. It aims at helping parents raise kids who are more generous and less materialistic.

“Smart Money Smart Kids”
by Dave Ramsey and Rachel Cruze

Financial expert Dave Ramsey and his daughter Rachel Cruze equip parents with helpful methods for teaching their kids about money. The book discusses the basics like working, spending, saving and giving, to more challenging issues like avoiding debt for life and paying cash for college.

“The Everything Kids Money Book”
by Brette McWhorter Sember

This beginner book teaches kids about money and how to save or spend it wisely. Kids will learn how coins and bills are made, what money can buy—from school supplies to games, how credit cards work, how to save money and much more.



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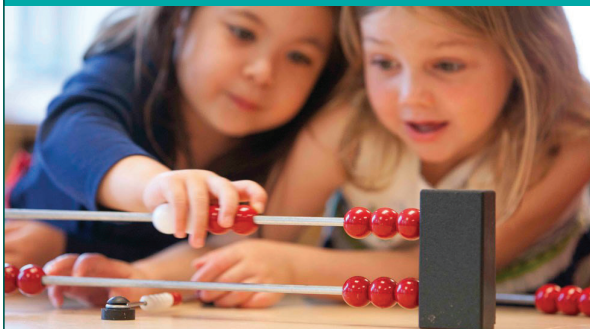


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2019: Jan. 11

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Open House:
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BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF WASHINGTON

biswashington.org; admissions@bigwashington.org
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9545 Georgia Ave., Silver Spring, MD
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Open House:
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BARRIE SCHOOL

barrie.org; admission@barrie.org
301-576-2800
13500 Layhill Rd., Silver Spring, MD
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2019: Jan. 12, Apr. 13, May 17
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feynmanschool.org; admissions@feynmanschool.org
301-770-4370
11810 Falls Rd., Potomac, MD
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2018: Dec. 9, 3-5 p.m.
2019: Jan. 10, 7-8:30 p.m.

THE SIENA SCHOOL

thesienaschool.org; info@thesienaschool.org
301-244-3600
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ROCHAMBEAU – FRENCH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

rochambeau.org; admissions@rochambeau.org
Forest Rd Campus (Elementary, Secondary):
9600 Forest Rd., Bethesda, MD
301-530-8260

Rollingwood Campus (Elementary):
3200 Woodbine St., Chevy Chase, MD
301-907-3265

Open House:

2018: Dec. 7

2019: Jan. 11

Bradley Campus (Maternelle, Preschool):

7108 Bradley Blvd., Bethesda, MD

301-767-1683

Open House:

2018: Dec. 1

2019: Jan. 12

SPRINGDALE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Johnny Graham, Head of School, CEO

springdaleps.org; adminssions@springdaleps.org

443-671-0050

500 Main St., New Windsor, MD

Grades: 5-12

Open House:

2019: Feb. 9, March 9, April 6, May 18, 1-3 p.m.

SPRING BILINGUAL MONTESSORI ACADEMY

spring-bilingual.org; info@spring-bilingual.org

301-962-7262

3514 Plyers Mill Rd., Kensington, MD

Ages: 2-6

Open House:

2019: Jan. 6, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

Virginia

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theauburnschool.org; info@theauburnschool.org

703-793-9353

3800 Concorde Pkwy., Chantilly, VA

Grades: K-8

Open House:

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BROOKSFIELD SCHOOL

brooksfieldschool.org; brksfield@aol.com

703-356-Kids

1830 Kirby Rd., Mclean, VA

Ages: 2-6

Open House:

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FAIRFAX CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

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Open House:

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Open House:

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703-256-9577

Hillbrook Campus: 6820 Pacific Ln., Annandale, VA

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703-713-3332

13625 Eds Dr., Herndon, VA

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2018: Dec. 13

2019: Jan. 24, Feb. 21

PINECREST SCHOOL

pinecrestschool.org; admissions@pinecrestschool.org

703-354-3446

7209 Quiet Cove, Annandale, VA

Ages: 3-12

Open House

2018: Dec. 9

2019: Jan. 13, Feb. 10 (School & Summer Camp), Mar. 10

CONTINUED ON PG. 21



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540-636-5484
200 Academy Dr., Front Royal, VA
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Open House:
Dec. 2

RESTON MONTESSORI SCHOOL

restonmontessori.com; office@restonmontessori.com
703-481-2922
1928 Isaac Newton Sq. West, Reston, VA
Grades: 3 Mths.-9 Yrs.
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2018: Dec. 6

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980 North Frederick St., Arlington, VA
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WESTMINSTER SCHOOL

westminsterschool.com; admissions@westminsterschool.com
703-256-3620
3819 Gallows Rd., Annandale, VA
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Open House:
2019: Jan. 15 (Preschool), Jan. 29 (Grades 5 & 6)

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12 NEWLY RELEASED Children's Holiday Books

There's something particularly special about reading a holiday story aloud together as a family. And it's one of the easiest ways to get into the holiday spirit! So grab some hot cocoa, snuggle up by the fire and enjoy one of these newly released children's Christmas and Hanukkah books.

AGES INFANT-2

"D is for Dreidel: A Hanukkah Alphabet"

by Greg Paprocki

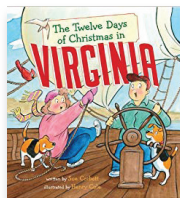
Introduce your young one to the Festival of Lights in this fun collection of 26 illustrations featuring Hanukkah-themed concepts, such as latkes, gelt, the menorah and dreidels.



"The Twelve Days of Christmas in Virginia"

by Sue Corbett

With a fun take on the classic Christmas song, this new board book celebrates the holidays in Virginia with some special local gifts—



including 12 plovers looping, 11 ponies racing, three tall ships and a cardinal in a dogwood tree!

AGES 3-5

"A Unicorn Named Sparkle's First Christmas"

by Amy Young

It's Sparkle's first Christmas, and Lucy is showing him how to celebrate. They make a unicorn snowman, hang

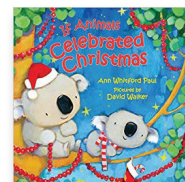


stockings, bake holiday cookies and buy presents—but in typical Sparkle fashion, nothing goes as planned! Yet Lucy ends up learning that love, not presents, is what Christmas is all about.

"If Animals Celebrated Christmas"

by Ann Whitford Paul
and David Walker

If animals said "Merry Christmas," how would they say it? Beaver would gnaw down trees with his teeth, Koala



would decorate with Mama and Papa and, of course, Polar Bear Santa would fly through the night! Following the success of "If Animals Kissed Good Night," this new installment is a celebration of the Christmas season.

"Meet the Latkes"

by Alan Silberberg

Lucy Latke's family is just like any other family, except that they're potato pancakes. And they are completely clueless. After lighting the menorah and gobbling the gelt, Grandpa Latke tells everyone the Hanukkah story, complete with mighty "Mega Bees" who use a giant dreidel to fight against the evil alien potatoes from Planet Chhh. It's up to the Latke family dog to set the record straight ... starting first with letting them know that they were "Maccabees," not "Mega Bees."



AGES 6-8

"Tough Cookie: A Christmas Story"

by Edward Hemingway

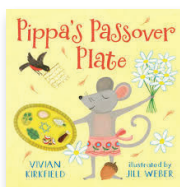
Once upon a time, while Fox was visiting the land of Holiday Treats, a freshly baked little cookie burst out the front door looking sweet and ready to be devoured. But, Cookie is not as fast as he thinks. When Fox finally catches him, they're both in for a big surprise: Sugar Cookie does not taste delicious—and he's certainly not fit to be eaten. What's an unsavory cookie to do? This story celebrates the joy of being accepted for who we are.



"Pippa's Passover Plate"

by Vivian Kirkfield

An enchanting mouse scours her cozy, miniature home for her Passover Seder plate with no luck. Sundown is near and the Passover celebration will begin soon. Pippa Mouse must venture out



and be brave to ask a cat, a snake and an owl for help. To her surprise, not only are the animals helpful in tracing her plate to the pond, they become her Passover Seder guests.

"Merry Christmas, Little Elliot"

by Mike Curato

Elliot isn't quite sure what Christmas spirit is, but he suspects he doesn't have it. Not even a visit with Santa Claus can put Elliot in the right mood. But when chance blows a letter for Santa into Elliot and Mouse's path, the two friends discover what Christmas is all about—and make a new friend, too.



"The Best Four Questions"

by Rachelle Burk

Marcy is finally old enough to ask The Four Questions at her family's Passover Seder. She's sure when it's her time to shine, her questions will be the best ever. Though her four (funny) questions are not the ones in Haggadah, her family gently humors her with the answers before she and her brother go on to read the real Four Questions.

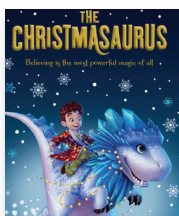


AGES 9-12

"The Christmasaurus"

by Tom Fletcher

Back when dinosaurs roamed the Earth, an egg rolled away from its mother and landed in the ocean, where it froze solid and stayed peacefully for thousands of years. But then, one day, Santa and his elves

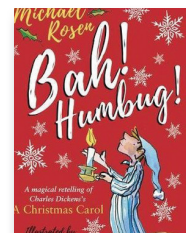


discover the frozen egg. After getting it to hatch, they are shocked to discover it's a dinosaur! Meanwhile, a young boy named William has only ever wished for one thing for Christmas: a dinosaur, of course. So when Santa accidentally gives William the real Christmasaurus instead of a stuffed replica, it's the best Christmas ever ... until an evil man known as Hunter wants the dinosaur for himself.

"Bah! Humbug!"

by Michael Rosen

Harry Gruber gets to play the role of Scrooge in his school's production of "A Christmas Carol," but he is extra nervous about tonight's performance because his smartphone-obsessed father is in the audience—not away for business, as usual. Will the story's message of Christmas cheer and the redemptive power of love reach his father's distracted Scrooge heart?



"Race Up Mount Ram: A Hanukkah Story"

by Melissa Berg

Meet Rimon, the most popular and confident boy in school. Then meet Chaim, a small and lonely boy with few friends and even less confidence. At Hanukkah, these two unlikely competitors must face off in a race up the cliffs of Mount Ram for the title of Champion of the Maccabees, and everyone is certain of the outcome. But the contestants soon learn this is no standard race! The boys are confronted by extreme obstacles that end up testing more than their speed—but the strength of their inner character.





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HOW TO GET YOUR CHILD TO DO HOMEWORK **WITHOUT A FIGHT**

BY CAROL TUTTLE

When it comes to your child's homework, do you beg, plead or bribe? Do you threaten consequences? You can make homework easier for both you and your children with some simple tips that honor their natural energy.

Most children have a dominant "energy type" that determines the way they move through life. It affects everything they do — playing, talking, eating, sleeping. And yes, it even shows up in the way they do homework!

Ready to take the struggle out of homework? Here are a few homework tips for the four most common types of children:

THE FUN-LOVING CHILD

These bright-minded children think quickly and like to move. Their thought process works like snapshots of ideas, so engaging in a linear experience can be challenging for them. *Homework tips:*

Pre-homework playtime. If your child attends a traditional school, they need time to do something light and free before jumping into homework. Let

them come up with ideas of what they'll do. This will give them something to look forward to during the structured experience of school.

Homework jumping. Allow them to jump from one activity to another. That's how their brain works anyway. Extra movement of things going on in the background is actually helpful for them because it allows them to disconnect from

their homework — and then connect again.

THE SENSITIVE CHILD

These subtle children work methodically and are great with details. They are naturally quieter, so speaking up about what they might need can be a challenge for them.

Homework tips:

Planned routine (one that they plan). These children do best when they have a plan that they have made themselves. Which steps will they follow to get things done? You can ask this very young (5 or 6 years old) as this type of child is already thinking this way.

Invitation to connect. These children often want their parents to recognize the work they're doing without knowing how to ask for it.

Take a second to connect with them while they're working and invite them to share with you.

THE DETERMINED CHILD

These active children move swiftly and like getting things done. Their natural speed can be a challenge when it comes to detailed tasks they feel are tedious or pointless. *Homework tips:*

Help them see the point of it.

These children will do homework when they see the point. If they don't see it, they'll try to get around it somehow. They'll pick the grade they want and do as much as they have to do to get it done. Help them see the practical purpose.

Make homework part of the

extracurricular fund. Money is a great motivator for this type of child. If you plan to pay for extracurricular activities, you could attach a money

value to finishing homework. Then, that money goes to a sport or lesson they really want. You'll be spending the money anyway, and they'll enjoy the feeling of accomplishment as they work toward an activity they really want.

THE MORE SERIOUS CHILD

These focused children are self-motivated. But if they're not respected for who they are at school, they'll buck the system. It will look like rebellion, but it's really just their attempt to stay true to their nature. *Homework tips:*



The respectful phrase.

These children feel offended when you tell them what to do because they're aware of their responsibilities. Try this phrase: "Looks like you're doing great. Let me know if you need help." Let them come to you, which they will, if

they think they need help.

Ownership of a space. Set aside one consistent place (not the kitchen table) that they can take ownership of at the same time every day to do their homework. If possible, get them their own desk or a place that's separate from where everyone is moving around.

Parents, here's your homework assignment to end the homework struggle for good: Set the intention that you and your child are experiencing ease and enjoyment as you support them in their homework. It's possible, and you can start today!

Carol Tuttle is the CEO of Live Your Truth, LLC and author of the best-selling parenting book, "The Child Whisperer: The Ultimate Handbook for Raising Happy, Successful, Cooperative Children." Visit thechildwhisperer.com for more info.



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LET IT GROW!

Growing Microgreens Indoors this Winter

BY **PEGGY RICCIO**

Now that winter is coming, you can still grow your veggies—just indoors. Growing microgreens is a fun, cheap way to grow highly nutritious vegetable seedlings for sandwiches, wraps, soup and salads.

What are Microgreens?

Microgreens are the shoots of edible, tasty plants, requiring very little space and minimal cost. Microgreens differ from sprouts. With microgreens, the seed germinates in a growing medium and after one or two weeks, the “micro” stems and leaves are cut down to the soil level and eaten. Sprouts are seeds grown in a moist container and after a few

days, the entire sprout—root and seed—is harvested.

How to Grow Microgreens

You only need to purchase the growing medium and the seed. You should be able to reuse plastic containers commonly found at home such as grocery store clam shells for berries or Chinese food containers.

- **Step 1:** Poke a few holes in the container for drainage.
- **Step 2:** Fill the container with 2 inches of bagged, sterile, soilless growing medium, not soil from the garden. (The mix specifically made for starting seeds works best.)
- **Step 3:** Once the container is filled, water thoroughly.



Radish seeds before



Radish after 5 days

Now, it's time for the seed. The best seed for microgreens germinate quickly and produce tasty shoots and leaves. There is no such thing as a microgreen seed; microgreen is really a stage in which you harvest the plant. However, you may find seed packages sold as "microgreens" because the package is a mix with similar germination rates. Popular seeds are kale, mizuna, mustard, radish, carrot, cress, arugula, basil, onion, chive, broccoli, fennel, sweet pea, celery, bok choy and Asian greens. Individual packets are available at the local nurseries, but for bulk orders and a wider variety, search online for providers like High Mowing Seeds, Johnny's Selected Seeds, Kitazawa Seed Company or Botanical Interests. Because plants germinate and grow at different rates, it is best to use one type of seed per container.

- **Step 4:** Cover the surface with your chosen seeds and press the seeds down with your fingers to put them in direct contact with the moisture.
- **Step 5:** Place the container on top of a tray to catch the excess water. Cover with another

container to increase the humidity level and warmth. (Tip: Always label containers with the plants' names and keep records so you learn how soon you can harvest and what you like to eat.)

- **Step 6:** After the seeds germinate, remove the cover and provide light via grow lights, fluorescent tubes or a south facing window. If you do not have a very sunny window, you may have to rotate the container for the stems to grow straight. If the top level of the soil dries out, water by either misting the top or putting the container in a pan of water so the water is absorbed via the bottom drainage holes.
- **Step 7:** When it's time to harvest, hold a section and cut straight across with scissors a centimeter above soil line. You can cut what you need, wash and use right away. Or, you can cut all of it, wash, dry and refrigerate in a plastic bag for a few days.

Keep in mind that the first set of "leaves" you will see will not be the true leaves. They will be the cotyledons or the seed leaf within

the embryonic seed. If the plant grew outside for the mature fruit or vegetable, these would eventually shrivel and disappear. For many microgreens, you can harvest at this stage because there is plenty of flavor in these "leaves" and stems. For example, you can harvest radishes at this stage because you will taste plenty of spice and the stems will be crisp.

With some plants, you might need to wait until the second set of "leaves" appear, which will be the first set of true leaves. For example, you will want to harvest cilantro at this stage because you get more flavor in the true leaf.

Growing microgreens is fun and easy. The more you determine the flavors you like, the more you can set up a system where you are sowing seeds on a weekly basis to feed your family nutritious and colorful vegetables year-round.

Peggy Riccio is a horticulturist and garden communicator who manages a website for people interested in gardening in the D.C. metro area. Visit her website at pegplant.com and follow her on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook at [@pegplant](https://www.instagram.com/pegplant).

GUIDES & RESOURCES

PRESCHOOL AND CHILD CARE

District of Columbia

AIDAN MONTESSORI SCHOOL

aidanschool.org
admissions@aidanschool.org
202-387-2700
2700 27th St., N.W., Washington, D.C.
Ages: 18 months-Grade 6

Aidan Montessori School is a co-ed independent school located in Woodley Park. Aidan has served children's natural development, innate curiosity, and pursuit of independence since its founding as one of the nation's first Montessori schools in 1961.

BEAUVOIR, THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

beauvoirschool.org
margaret.hartigan@cathedral.org
202-537-6493
3500 Woodley Rd., N.W., Washington, D.C.
Grades: PreK-Grade 3

Beauvoir's program encourages creative, courageous learners and builds an enduring foundation for a lifelong spirit of inquiry and joy in learning.

SMITHSONIAN EARLY ENRICHMENT CENTER

si.edu/seec
mcmahonm@si.edu
202-633-1395
10th and Constitution Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C.
Ages: Preschool and Kindergarten

The Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center (SEEC) provides a rich school experience in a unique museum setting, offering a balance between academic readiness and social/emotional development.

WASHINGTON INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL - PRIMARY SCHOOL CAMPUS

wis.edu
202-243-1700
1690 36th St. N.W., Washington, D.C.
Ages: Preschool-Gr. 5

Washington International School (WIS) is a coeducational independent school (private school) offering 900 students a challenging international curriculum and rich language program from Preschool through Grade 12.

Maryland

BARRIE SCHOOL

barrie.org/preschool
admission@barrie.org
301-576-2800
13500 Layhill Rd., Silver Spring, MD
Ages: 18 mths.-Gr. 12

Innovative Montessori education for Toddlers through grade five. Our experienced faculty, individualized attention, wooded campus with fields, streams, and stables, provide an exceptional hands-on learning environment for all students.

FEYNMAN SCHOOL

feynmanschool.org
info@feynmanschool.org
301-770-4370
11810 Falls Rd., Potomac, MD

The area's leader in educating academically gifted children, Feynman School features extraordinary programs in science, math, language arts, theater and music designed to maximize your young child's potential while at the same time providing opportunities for unstructured play. We offer both half- and full-day preschool programs.

SPRING BILINGUAL MONTESSORI ACADEMY

spring-bilingual.org
sbmaoffice@yahoo.com
301-962-7262
3514 Plyers Mill Rd., Kensington, MD

Founded in 1967, Spring Bilingual Montessori Academy has innovated and refined the concept of integrating a Montessori education with the acquisition of proficiency in a second language. We are open year-round for academic programs and summer camps.

WINCHESTER SCHOOL

thewinchesterschool.org
winchesterschool@verizon.net
301-598-2266
3223 Bel Pre Rd., Silver Spring, MD
Ages: PreK-3 thru Gr. 2 (3-8 yrs.)

By partnering with families, we provide a structured, nurturing, academic-rich environment in which our students can acquire the skills, knowledge and values that will help them develop as life-long learners.

Virginia

BASIS INDEPENDENT MCLEAN

mclean.basisindependent.com
mclean-info@basisindependent.com
703-854-1253
8000 Jones Branch Dr., McLean, VA
Ages: 2 & 3 yrs.

The Twos Program at BASIS Independent McLean provides children between the ages of 2 and 3 years old with a supportive

environment that nurtures growing minds and inspires a love of learning, led by caring, thoughtful teachers.

BEANTREE ASHBURN CAMPUS

beantreelearning.com

571-223-3110; 43629 Greenway Corporate Dr., Ashburn, VA

BeanTree Learning in Ashburn provides unparalleled care and nurturing for infants through PreK.

BEANTREE WESTFIELDS CAMPUS

beantreelearning.com

703-961-8222; 5003 Westfields Blvd., Chantilly, VA

Offering unprecedented educational offerings for your child in every stage of academic development, BeanTree offers Infant care through Full Day Private Kindergarten, Before/After School, and Summer Camp.

BROOKSFIELD SCHOOL

brooksfieldschool.org

info@brooksfieldschool.org

703-356-5437

1830 Kirby Rd., McLean, VA

Ages: 2-6

Spanish, organic gardening, art, dance, music, mindfulness and summer camp.

CHI AU PAIR

chiaupairusa.org

chichris@chinet.org

703-528-5152

CHI Au Pair USA offers safe and affordable childcare in your home. Approximately \$345 per family, per week. Carefully screened and trained au pairs ages 18 to 26 available from many different countries. Au pairs can stay up to two years, have legal visa, medical and liability insurance and childcare experience. U.S. Government-designated cultural exchange program. Local support provided in your community. Discounts and special promotions available.

THE GRIFFIN ACADEMY OF WESTMINSTER SCHOOL

westminsterschool.com

campgriffin@westminsterschool.com

703-340-7268

3819 Gallows Rd., Annandale, VA

Ages: 3-4

7:1 student-to-teacher ratio; lead teacher and aide; equal balance of play and structure; daily recess; camp programs; full-time and part-time school options; morning and afternoon care available.

MONTESSORI SCHOOL OF CEDAR LANE

preschoolmontessori.com

info@cedarlanemontessori.com

703-560-4379

3035 Cedar Ln., Fairfax, VA

Ages: 3-6

Montessori School of Cedar Lane has been providing over 45 years of Montessori tradition to Northern Virginia. We offer a complete educational and social environment and utilize the discoveries and methods of Dr. Montessori to help the child develop more fully the potential within him.

MONTESSORI SCHOOL OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

msnv.org; info@msnv.org

703-992-0255

Valleybrook Campus, 3433 Rose Ln., Falls Church, VA

At the Montessori School of Northern Virginia (MSNV), we want the delight of discovery to last a lifetime. MSNV provides authentic Montessori education for children ages 2 through 12. From preprimary through elementary, our learning environment is designed to directly benefit social, emotional, physical and intellectual development.

NYSMITH SCHOOL FOR THE GIFTED

nysmith.com

ebalberde@nysmith.com

703-713-3332

12625 EDS Dr., Herndon, VA

Ages: 3 yrs.-Gr. 8

Family owned and operated since 1983, 620+ children. 1:9 teacher-student ratio, award winning. Daily individualized reading and math, science, computers, logic and foreign language. Loving atmosphere with an exciting curriculum.

PINECREST SCHOOL

pinecrestschool.org

admissions@pinecrestschool.org

703-354-3446

7209 Quiet Cove, Annandale, VA

Ages: 3 & 4 yrs.

Stimulating preschool program that includes Spanish, music and P.E. enrichment classes. Special presentations and field trips, too. Before- & after-care until 6 p.m. Nurturing curiosity, confidence and a love of learning since 1957.

RESTON MONTESSORI SCHOOL

restonmontessori.com

office@restonmontessori.com

703-481-2922

1928 Isaac Newton Sq. West, Reston, VA

Ages: 3 mths.-Gr. 6

Established in 1986, Reston Montessori School is a private, co-educational school for children from 3 months through 6th grade.

SAINT ANN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

stann.org

stann@stann.org

703-5257599

980 North Frederick St., Arlington, VA

Ages: 3-4 yrs.

Saint Ann Preschool provides the opportunity of learning through play, exploration, creation and imagination. Our community is bound together by a dedication to BELIEVE, ACHIEVE, and INSPIRE. Open House Jan. 27th 10:00am-1:00pm & 29th 9:30am-11:30am.

ROCHAMBEAU - FRENCH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

rochambeau.org

admissions@rochambeau.org

Bradley Campus (Maternelle, Preschool):

7108 Bradley Blvd., Bethesda, MD

301-767-1683



Ready to celebrate the most wonderful time of the year? Whether your perfect day of holiday cheer involves latkes, yuletide carols, dazzling light displays or dances with Sugar Plum Fairies, there are a ton of ways to enjoy the magic of the season around the DMV. So grab your family, your friends and your best holiday sweater and head out to one of these top local spots for holiday fun!

TWINKLING LIGHTS

FREDERICK FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Dec. 14, 7 p.m.; City Hall Courtyard, Downtown Frederick, MD

Enjoy holiday greetings, carols and inspirational messages that highlight the true meaning of the holiday season. Attendees also get to join in for a moving candle lighting ceremony.

WINTER LIGHTS FESTIVAL

Through Dec. 31, Sunday-Thursday: 6-9 p.m.; Friday-Saturday: 6-10 p.m. Seneca State Park, Gaithersburg, MD

Winter Lights features more than 450 illuminated displays and enchantingly-lit trees in a 3.5-mile drive through beautiful Seneca Creek State Park.

ZOOLIGHTS AT THE ZOO

Through Jan. 1, 5-9 p.m. National Zoo, Washington, D.C.

Head out to ZooLights for a night of live music performances, delicious treats, a

dazzling light show and tons of holiday shopping. More than 500,000 captivating lights transform the Zoo into a winter wonderland!

BULL RUN FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Through Jan. 6; Bull Run Regional Park, Centreville, VA

Experience the magical 2.5 miles of holiday light displays. After viewing the lights, head to the holiday village to enjoy rides, refreshments and photos with Santa Claus.

GEORGETOWN GLOW

Through Jan. 6, 5-10 p.m.; Georgetown's Commercial District, Washington, D.C.

Experience the magic of the season with Georgetown GLOW. This outdoor public light art exhibition is one-of-a-kind. With D.C.'s oldest neighborhood as its background, it's one of the most unique exhibits in the D.C. area.



SOUNDS OF THE SEASON

JINGLE BALL

Dec. 10, 7:30 p.m.; Capital One Arena, Washington, D.C.

The iHeart Radio Jingle Ball Tour is back with another fantastic lineup. Artists including Shawn Mendes, The Chainsmokers, Meghan Trainor and

more will be performing at this year's biggest D.C. holiday concert.

CATHEDRAL CHORAL SOCIETY: JOY OF CHRISTMAS

Dec. 15, 2 p.m. & 7 p.m., Dec. 16, 4 p.m.; Washington National Cathedral, Washington, D.C.

This beloved annual concert includes Christmas favorites and a carol sing-along in one of the District's most majestic settings. This year's performance will include a new carol by composer Paul Moravec.

MISS ELLIE'S HANUKKAH SONGFEST

Dec. 1, 11 a.m.; The National Theatre, Washington, D.C.

Come sing and dance to the story of Hanukkah with Ms. Ellie! Kickoff the beginning of the Festival of Lights and be ready to join in on the fun — march like a brave Maccabee, spin like a dreidel and wiggle like a latke!

HOLIDAY SING-A-LONG

Dec. 1, 4 p.m.; Wolf Trap, Vienna, VA

This annual musical celebration includes a free performance by the United States Marine Band and a sing-a-long of Christmas carols and Hanukkah songs with local choir and vocal groups. Don't forget to bring a candle and join the tradition of exiting the Filene Center with a candlelight processional during the last verse of "Silent Night."



BY BRITNI PETERSEN

HANUKKAH YOUTH CHOIR FESTIVAL

Dec. 9, 4 p.m.; Temple Beth Ami, 14330 Travilah Rd., Rockville, MD

Come celebrate the 8th night of Hanukkah at Temple Beth Ami with youth choirs from 10 congregations in the area. Enjoy a candle lighting service, choral presentation and special guest appearances.

VILLAGE AT LEESBURG INTERNATIONAL TUBACHRISTMAS CONCERT

Dec. 9, 2-3 p.m.; Village Market Blvd. SE and Balch Dr. SE, Leesburg, VA

Experience an international holiday tradition when tuba players gather at the Village at Leesburg to play the sounds of the season!

ICY SPLENDOR

BETHESDA'S ANNUAL WINTER WONDERLAND

Dec. 1, 1-4 p.m.; Veterans Park, Woodmont and Norfolk Ave., Bethesda, MD

Watch blocks of ice transform into wintry works of art during a live ice sculpting presentation! Then, listen to choral performances from local school groups, munch on some tasty treats and take pictures with Santa Claus.

CHANUKAH ON ICE!

Dec. 8, 6-8 p.m.; Pentagon Row Outdoor Ice Rink, 1201 S. Joyce St., Arlington, VA

Hosted by Chabad Lubavitch of Alexandria-Arlington, this family-fun ice-skating event also includes a free raffle, the lighting of a 6-foot Menorah, hot latkes, Kosher hot dogs and more.

GAYLORD NATIONAL'S ICE!

Through Jan. 1, 2019; Marriott Gaylord National Harbor, National Harbor, MD

Enjoy a winter wonderland created from two million pounds of ice sculptures and displays.

This year's theme is A Charlie Brown Christmas!



HOLIDAY STAGE

THE SECOND CITY'S LOVE, FACTUALLY

Dec. 4-Dec. 31; The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C.

Come out for a fast-paced performance that mingles the classic movie's most beloved characters and moments in an original take sure to warm your icy heart. Love, Factually's mashup of parody, original comedy, music, improv and audience participation will have you laughing out loud.

THE CENTER FOR BALLET ARTS PRESENTS: NUTCRACKER IN A NUTSHELL

Dec. 15, 3 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.; Dec. 16, 3 p.m.; Rachel M. Schlesinger Concert Hall and Arts Center, Alexandria, VA

Bring the family out to enjoy an abridged version of the beloved classic tale! The Center for Ballet Art's annual performance is sure to get everyone in the holiday spirit.

KWANZAA CELEBRATION AT DANCE PLACE

Dec. 15, 8 p.m.; Dec. 16, 2 p.m. & 6 p.m.; Dance Place, 3225 8th St., N.E., Washington, D.C.

Celebrate the seven principles of Kwanzaa at Dance Place's annual Kwanzaa Celebration! Watch special performances by Coyaba Dance Theater and Coyaba Academy.

THE HIP HOP NUTCRACKER

Dec. 18, 8 p.m., Dec. 19, 8 p.m.; The Music Center at Strathmore, North Bethesda, MD

By popular demand, The Hip Hop Nutcracker is back! Experience a unique Nutcracker show that takes Tchaikovsky's classic score and mashes it up with explosive hip-hop choreography. All-star dances, a DJ and an electric violinist bring this story to life.



DISCOVERY THEATER'S SEASONS OF LIGHT

Through Dec. 21, 10:15 a.m. &
11:30 a.m.; Ripley Center,
Washington, D.C.

This seasonal show celebrates the warmth of many holidays filled with light. Learn the history and customs of Devali, Ramadan, Sankta Lucia, Chanukah, Kwanzaa, Christmas and the First Nations' tradition of the Winter Solstice at this fun, interactive event.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Through Dec. 30; Ford's Theatre,
Washington, D.C.

This music-infused production captures the magic and joy of Dickens' classic tale. Join the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future as they lead the miserly Ebenezer Scrooge on a journey of transformation and redemption.



THE WASHINGTON BALLET PRESENTS: THE NUTCRACKER

Through Dec. 28; The Warner
Theatre, Washington, D.C.

In its 15th year of production, Septime Webre's The Nutcracker is back again to captivate both young and adult audiences with a magical performance. The production takes on a D.C. twist, with historic 1882 Georgetown as the setting and

additional characters like George Washington and King George III.

FESTIVE CHEER

73RD ANNUAL MANASSAS CHRISTMAS PARADE

Dec. 1, 10 a.m.; Historic Old Town
Manassas, VA

One of the most beloved Manassas Christmas traditions is back! With around 2,000



participants, 300 volunteers and over 100 marching bands, floats and high-flying balloons, the parade truly sets the mood for the holiday season.

HOLLY TROLLEYFEST: RIDE THE STRETCARS WITH SANTA

Dec. 1-2, 8-9, 15-16 and 22-23,
noon-5 p.m.; National Capital
Trolley Museum, Colesville, MD

Train lovers will have a blast celebrating the holiday season at the Holly TrolleyFest! Have fun with toy trains and hang out with Santa aboard the streetcars all afternoon.

NATIONAL HANUKKAH MENORAH GRAND LIGHTING CEREMONY

Dec. 2, 4 p.m., The White House
Ellipse, Washington, D.C.

Festivities at the lighting ceremony include musical performances, hot

latkes, donuts and free dreidels and menorah kits. This year's celebration will feature a special performance by the U.S. Army Band.



BENDER JCC CHANUKAH PARTY

Dec. 3, 5:30 p.m.

Celebrate the second night of Chanukah with a candle lighting ceremony, Chanukah storytime, latkes, arts and crafts, open gym and more!

2018 ANNUAL HANUKKAH PARTY

Dec. 6, 6:30 p.m.; National
Museum of American Jewish
Military, Washington, D.C.

Join in for an evening of latkes, jelly doughnuts, gelt and song! Explore the museum, grab some sweet treats, play games, sing and learn about all the ways Jews in the American military have continued the tradition of the Maccabees. Don't forget to bring your own menorah for a group lighting!

VILLAGE AT LEESBURG HANUKKAH CELEBRATION

Dec. 9, 4-5 p.m.

Come take a look at the marvelous Menorah in the Village Plaza and celebrate the upcoming miracle of Hanukkah with Rabbi David Greenspoon of Congregation Sha'are Shalom in Leesburg.



WATERSKIING SANTA

Dec. 24, 1 p.m.; Old Town Alexandria, VA Waterfront

A Christmas tradition since 1986, watch Santa waterski along the Potomac River between Old Town Alexandria and D.C. Enjoy this unusual event completed with flying elves, Frosty the Snowman and Christmas music!

CHRISTMAS AT MOUNT VERNON

Through Dec. 31, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; Mount Vernon, VA

Visit George Washington's estate during the Christmas season and see sparkling holiday decorations, tour the Mansion, learn about Virginia's holiday traditions in the 18th century and watch historic chocolate-making demonstrations.

HOLIDAY FUN AT RESTON TOWN CENTER

Through Dec. 31.; Reston Town Center, Reston, VA

Looking for multiple activities to do this holiday season? Reston Town Center is the perfect spot. Between ice-skating, gift shopping and carriage rides, Reston Town Center is a great place for a fun night out. Check out restontowncenter.com for specific events.

BREAKFAST WITH SANTA

Let your kids experience a little Christmas magic by spending the morning enjoying a tasty breakfast with Santa! Check the list below for a Santa Breakfast near you.

D.C.

Dec. 8, Maggiano's Little Italy Chevy Chase-DC, 8:45-11 a.m.

Dec. 8, Hard Rock Café, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

MD

Dec. 8, Greenbelt Volunteer Fire Department & Rescue Squad
Greenbelt, MD, 8:30 a.m.-Noon

Dec. 15, Adventure Park USA, Monrovia, MD, 8-10 a.m.

Dec. 15, Roger W "Pip" Moyer Community Recreation Center
Annapolis, MD, 9 a.m.-Noon

Dec. 16, Mt. Airy Volunteer Fire Company Reception Hall
Mount Airy, MD, 7:30-11 a.m.

VA

Dec. 1, Fairfax Volunteer Fire Department, Fairfax, VA 8-11 a.m.

Dec. 1, West Belmont Place, Leesburg, VA, 8:30-11:30 a.m.

Dec. 1, 8, 15 & 22, Salamander Resort & Spa,
Middleburg, VA, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Dec. 1, The Carlyle Club, Alexandria, VA, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

Dec. 2, Tysons Corner Center, McLean, VA, 8 a.m.-10 a.m.

Dec. 2, 1757 Golf Club, Dulles, VA, 10 a.m.

Dec. 2, Restoration Church, Reston, VA, 9 a.m.-11 p.m.

FRESH Holiday EATS

Add tasty, crunchy grapes to seasonal dishes

The holiday season is typically marked by gatherings of friends and family. Whether you're hosting overnight guests, drop-in visitors or an important seasonal meal, taking a fresh approach to the menu can make the get-together more special.

As you prepare for the festivities, consider recipes that feature healthy ingredients such as grapes—which can pair with both savory and sweet dishes. Heart-healthy grapes are also perfect on their own as a snack and their natural beauty can help enhance any table as an edible garnish or fresh centerpiece.

Using grapes as a featured ingredient in your holiday dishes can provide a fresh twist on seasonal dishes, such as this Grape Dutch Baby or these Roasted

Brussels Sprouts with Grapes and Balsamic Glaze. For dessert, use the natural sweetness of grapes to create a smooth Grape Caramel Sauce that can be served as a topping for ice cream or other seasonal desserts.

ROASTED BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH GRAPES AND BALSAMIC GLAZE

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 20 minutes

Servings: 4

1 pound Brussels sprouts,
trimmed and halved
lengthwise

2 tablespoons extra-virgin
olive oil

pinch of salt

freshly ground black pepper,
to taste



1 cup red California grapes

2 tablespoons ready-to-use
balsamic glaze

Heat oven to 450 F.

On baking sheet, toss sprouts with olive oil, salt and pepper, to taste, until sprouts are well-coated. Roast until deep golden brown, about 17-20 minutes, turning sprouts halfway through roasting. Stir in grapes and roast 3-5 minutes. Transfer to bowl and drizzle with glaze or drizzle platter with glaze and pile sprouts on top.



GRAPES: ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES/PLUSUHLAI; FOOD PHOTOS PROVIDED

GRAPE CARAMEL SAUCE

Prep time: 5 minutes

Cook time: 15 minutes

Servings: 6

- 1 pound green or red California grapes, divided
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup heavy cream (optional)
- large pinch of salt
- ice cream

In blender or food processor, combine 12 ounces grapes with lemon juice and puree. Set aside. Coarsely chop remaining grapes.

In medium saucepan, combine sugar and water then bring to boil, stirring a few times. Simmer without stirring, brushing down sides of pot with brush dipped in water if crystals start forming. When mixture has turned deep, golden brown, remove from heat and whisk in pureed grapes until smooth sauce has formed. Turn on heat and simmer until mixture has reduced by one-third and forms smooth caramel sauce. Whisk in cream and salt; stir in chopped grapes and serve over ice cream.



GRAPE DUTCH BABY

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 20 minutes

Servings: 4

- 3 large eggs
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup all-purpose flour
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup low-fat milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon vanilla
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
- 2 cups red California grapes, halved
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon cinnamon (optional)

confectioners' sugar

Heat oven to 450 F. Put large (10-inch) cast-iron or ovenproof skillet in oven.

With electric mixer on high speed, beat eggs until frothy then beat in flour, milk, vanilla and salt, and beat until smooth, about 1 minute (batter will be thin). Remove skillet from oven and



add 2 tablespoons butter, swirling to cover pan. Pour in batter and return to oven. Bake until puffed and golden brown, 14-19 minutes.

While pancake is baking, in another skillet over high heat, melt remaining butter and add grapes, brown sugar and cinnamon, if desired. Cook until grapes are heated through and sugar has melted. Spoon grapes over pancake, sprinkle with confectioners' sugar and serve. — Family Features

Find more holiday recipes at GrapesfromCalifornia.com.

SEASONAL ENTERTAINING WITH GRAPES

While the beautiful, vibrant colors of grapes can add visual interest to recipes, they can also serve a variety of purposes when hosting:

- Grapes can make for easy decorations when placed in bowls, on platters or draped from a cake plate.
- Grapes can be "frosted" with sugar, spices and chopped nuts then served as a finger food or used as a garnish to decorate cakes, cookies, puddings, mousses and other seasonal desserts. Simply dip grape clusters in liquid gelatin then roll in your desired mixture.
- Grapes make for a quick and easy hostess gift. Wrap multi-colored grape clusters in tissue paper then place them in a basket or tin tied with ribbon.

Reston Montessori School



"Free the child's potential, and you will transform him into the world"
- Maria Montessori

Open House: December 6th from 6:30pm-7:30pm.

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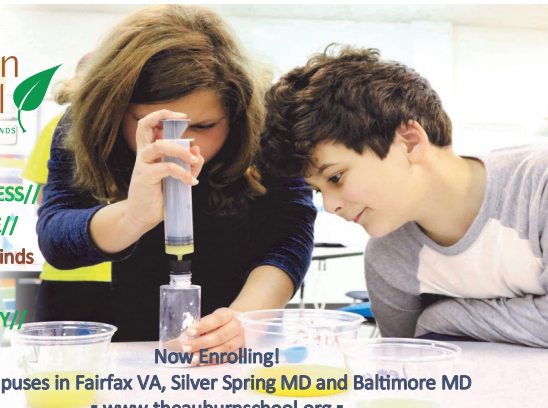
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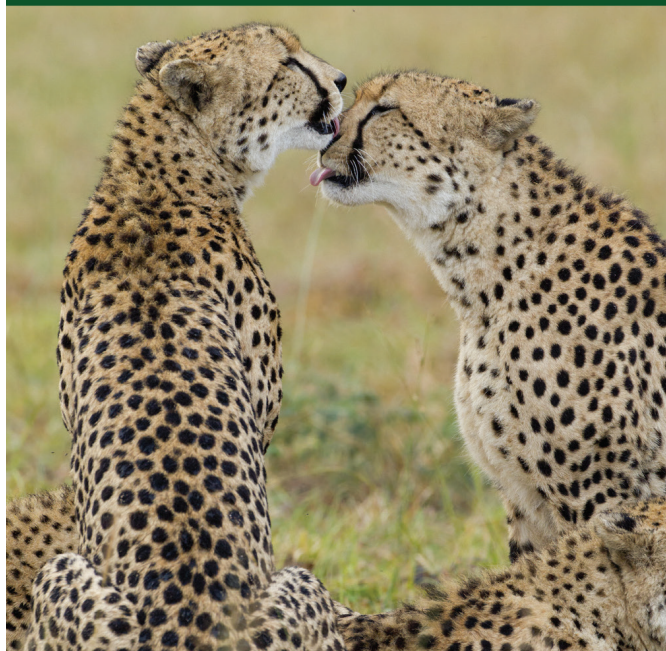
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Hot Toys

By Melissa Erickson

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The smart shopper knows not to wait until the last minute to buy toys and games, because those who wait will miss out on the most anticipated gifts. Here are a few of the hottest toys for Christmas 2018.

Lego Creator

Pirate Roller Coaster

\$89

Shop.lego.com

With pirates, a cannon, a skeleton minifigure, a three-legged octopus and a working roller coaster, there's lots to love with Lego's 3-in-1 Pirate Roller Coaster building set. It's easy to modify and rebuild with either a skull ride or a ship ride, so it's great for creative play, plus there are neat and unusual pieces: 923 in all. For ages 9 to 14.

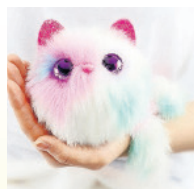


Pomsies

\$14.99

Various retailers

Adorably cute, Pomsies are loveable, wearable pom-pom pets. Kids can interact with these small, personal pets in a variety of ways. Each Pomsie has its own personality and light-up eyes. They react when you cuddle and pet them, grumble when they're hungry and even feature a dance-and-song mode. With their wrappable tails, they become a fashion accessory to wear on the wrist, a backpack or anywhere else.



Unstable Unicorns

\$20

unstableunicorns.com

Quick, intuitive and fun, Unstable Unicorn combines sabotage, goal-setting and a bit of luck into a strategic card game. The goal is to build your own unicorn army — mostly by betraying your friends. It's competitive and fun for two to eight players. Aimed at kids 14 and up.



Paw Patrol Ultimate Rescue Fire Truck

\$59.99

Various retailers

Kids 3 and up can save the day with Marshall's Ultimate Rescue Fire Truck. This big truck is equipped with a 2-foot-tall extendable ladder and claw arm, mini fire cart and fire hose, flashing lights and sounds. Water cannons on the front and back launch three water bombs to put out fires. Marshall figure is included, but truck has room for all six pups (others not included). For kids 3 and up.



Fisher-Price Think and Learn Rocktopus

\$59.99

fisher-price.mattel.com

For the budding musician, Fisher-Price's Think and Learn Rocktopus includes 15 musical instruments with three play modes and five musical styles. Kids control the musical creation by bopping the instruments, adjusting the tempos and adding sound effects. In math mode kids can practice their adding, subtracting and patterning skills as they follow prompts. The toy also works with an app that allows kids to compose music and create videos to accompany them. For ages 3 to 6.



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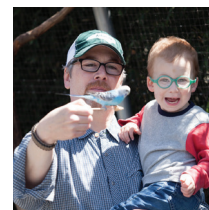
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HOLIDAY PARTIES

getting your kids involved

Holidays guarantee entertaining, in one form or another. It's easy to get overwhelmed with the chaos of hosting, cutting dramatically into family time during a season which should be above all, family-centric.

I countered this once by asking our son and daughter to be servers at a small dinner party we hosted. To my surprise, they took on the task with creative fanfare, devising a plan to emerge dressed "alike." Our petite daughter stuffed herself into her younger brother's khakis and plaid shirt, and with a mustache drawn on her face, appeared side-by-side with her khaki, plaid-shirted and mustached brother to greet guests, take drink orders, hand out water glasses and clear appetizer plates as needed. They called themselves "Bob and Bob" and ended up stealing the show. They enjoyed their popularity, and my husband and I appreciated their helpfulness, since we were stretched with finishing the meal and welcoming our guests.

This positive experience reinforced my commitment to invite the kids into the process of planning and executing a dinner party so they participate in a meaningful way. After all, we want our kids to get excited about hosting friends. And we want them to take pride in their contribution. But, we probably also need to broaden our definition of involvement. Your kids may be little performers reminiscent of "Bob and Bob," but here are many other fresh ways to pull kids into the experience of hosting.

PREPARING FOR THE DINNER PARTY

- » Under your supervision, have children help create guest invitations, address envelopes and attach stamps.
- » Design the menu with your kids. Make a grocery list. For your child who loves to cook, assign parts of the meal to do solo or participate in.
- » Let them get crafty. Appoint a child to make decorative nametags for guests and cards identifying food items for a buffet-style meal. Fancy name cards designating where each guest is to sit also adds a nice touch. Also, consider a poster for the front door welcoming guests and another poster labeling the guest bathroom door. Ask kids to research holiday quotes and write them out on heavy paper using their best handwriting. Display artistically around the house.

THE DAY OF THE DINNER PARTY

- » Assign a child to help set and decorate the table.
- » Task a child to manage a "station" where arriving guests



BY TALIA GREENBERG HUDGINS

can receive prepared nametags. Alternatively, make sharpies and disposal nametags available for guests.

- » If you have a budding DJ in the family, ask him to organize a playlist for the night and keep the tunes coming.
- » If your child is a natural behind the camera, have him or her photograph the evening and offer to send pictures to guests afterwards.
- » For the child who has nonstop energy, name them "coat-runner" to deposit guests' coats to a bedroom.
- » Nominate the child who prefers to be outside to greet and hold the door for guests.
- » If any of your children play musical instruments or sing, challenge them to entertain guests over coffee after dinner.
- » Encourage literary children to recite a piece of holiday poetry like Clement Clarke Moore's "Twas the Night Before Christmas."

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Kathryn Streeter is a D.C.-based mom and blogger.

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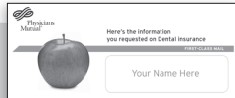
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