

Washington FAMILY

MAY
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PLANNING TIPS
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Summer Camps
SEE PAGE 30

FOOD ALLERGIES
ONE MOM'S FIGHT



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PM Pediatrics in Annapolis
Photo by David Stuck

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Please note we reserve the right to edit or refrain from publishing comments we deem inappropriate.

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Moms: The Real Superheroes

This May, it's all about moms. Moms are warriors and real-life superheroes who provide an endless amount of love, nurturing and support through every age and stage of our lives. While moms deserve to be commemorated every day, we wanted to show some extra appreciation this month in celebration of Mother's Day.

In this issue, we are featuring our 2019 Moms of the Year! After a stream of nominations, six local moms were chosen to be honored. Read their stories and find out what their friends and family had to say about each of these deserving mothers on pg. 12. You'll also discover some wonderful motherly advice along the way.

And, in celebration of moms, we have a great list of local Mother's Day events on pg. 49 to help you treat Mom, or yourself, to a nice day of love and appreciation.

Along with Mother's Day fun, it's also our party issue!

We all know that planning a child's birthday party can be much more stressful than enjoyable. You can check out as many "easy children's birthday party ideas" on Pinterest as possible, but it still takes some

effort, time and often a decent chunk of change to plan your child's birthday party.

We've rounded up some essential birthday planning tips, advice and local resources to make your child's next birthday a success without all the stress. Michelle Ardillo shares some current birthday party trends on pg. 26, and our annual "Party Guide" on pg. 23 includes a bunch of local spots to throw a party.

We also asked local moms to share their tips and tricks on birthday parties as well as their general thoughts on the topic on pg. 20. From ways to save money to more thought-provoking advice like letting go of party planning pressure and expectations, these moms share it all.

Aside from a whole lot of mom love and party readiness, we have other great stories inside like SAT/ACT preparation, self-care techniques and much more.

Happy Mother's Day to all of you superhero moms out there — you're not only appreciated on this special day, but every single day. ■

Britni



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WEDNESDAY 1

Winnie the Pooh

10:30 a.m. | \$20. Recommended for all ages. Bring the whole family to enjoy this theatre production of Winnie the Pooh and his friends as he and Piglet have to find the Heffalump, watch Rabbit scheme to get rid of the forest of Kanga's dreaded bathtub and help Eeyore search for his tail. Pooh's intentions are always the best, but his passion for honey and condensed milk keeps getting him into trouble. **The Adventure Theatre MTC, Rockville, MD.**

Nature Tots Preschool Series

10 a.m. | \$50. Recommended for ages 2-4. This 6-week class invites young children to discover the wonders of nature as we journey through the changing seasons. They'll read stories, make fun crafts and sing songs. Make sure to dress for the weather! Open to ages two to five with a caregiver present. Space limited, advance registration required. **The Howard County Conservancy-Belmont, Elkridge, MD.**

THURSDAY 2

Jack and the Beanstalk

11 a.m. | \$12. Recommended for ages 5-12. Show length time is 45 minutes. A timely version of the classic children's tale about the young lad that doesn't know beans about trading, but still manages to climb his way to the top. Jack finds that happiness lies in helping others rather than mere personal gain. Told with rod puppets and some surprising twists, Jack has long been a favorite of Glen Echo's audiences. **The Puppet Co. Playhouse, Glen Echo, MD.**

FRIDAY 3

Giraffe Encounter

2:30 p.m. | \$5. Giraffe feed cup is included with zoo admission cost. Ever been nose to nose with a giraffe? Well now is your chance. Come feed the zoo's beloved giraffe "Waffles," and

learn more about the conservation status of these amazing creatures. **Roer's Zoofari, Vienna, VA.**

SUNDAY 5

FREE Community Day

Noon. The 1st Sunday of the month is Community Day at **National Museum of Women in the Arts in D.C.** Enjoy free admission to the museum all day. Take this opportunity to explore their current exhibitions, permanent collection and events.

Junie B. Jones

Noon | \$20. Come out and enjoy this theatre production designed for the young at heart. Junie B.'s made it to first grade and is having all sorts of adventures meeting new friends, becoming the boss of lunch, and creating a halftime show for the kickball game. **Olney Theatre Center, Olney, MD.**

MONDAY 6

FREE Jane Franklin Dance: Mouse in the House

10 a.m. A family-friendly performance, Mouse in the House is a lively movement and theatre presentation for the young and young-at-heart. The performance incorporates spoken word, movement, music and an interactive participatory introduction for young children. **Beatley Library, Alexandria, VA.**

TUESDAY 7

Into the Woods

\$20-\$83. Recommended for ages 12 and older. In Stephen Sondheim's imaginative, darkly comical remix of beloved fairy tales, a baker and his wife set out to reverse a witch's curse in hopes of having a child of their own. The couple's quest takes them into the woods, where they encounter Little Red Riding Hood, Jack and his beanstalk, a cautious Cinderella, a sequestered Rapunzel and a couple of lovelorn princes. Peter Flynn returns to direct this fanciful tale about the lengths to which we'll go to get what we wish. **Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C.**

WEDNESDAY 8

Kid Fun Time

10:30 a.m. | \$5. Ages 2-7. Kid-friendly music, beach balls, limbo and skating lessons are just a few of the activities Kid Fun Time has each week. Free coffee bar for moms and dads and free juice boxes for paid children. **Wheels Skating Center, Odenton, MD.**

THURSDAY 9

FREE Freddie Long Band at Alive at Five

5 p.m. Come out and enjoy a live performance from the Freddie Long Band. This part introspective pop/rock singer/songwriter, part bluesy soul man/classic rocker is ALL heart. His music will not disappoint. **Carroll Creek Amphitheatre, Frederick, MD.**

FRIDAY 10

Shrek the Musical Jr.

\$15. Recommended for ages 7 & up. Beauty is in the eye of the ogre

in Shrek The Musical JR., based on the Oscar-winning DreamWorks Animation film and fantastic Broadway musical. It's a "big bright beautiful world" as everyone's favorite ogre, Shrek, leads a cast of fairytale misfits on an adventure to rescue a princess and find true acceptance. Part romance and part twisted fairy tale, Shrek JR. is an irreverently fun show with a powerful message for the whole family. KAT-2nd Stage features youth performers. **Arts Barn, Gaithersburg, MD.**

SATURDAY 11

Snow White

11:30 a.m. | \$9.76. This updated version of the classic Snow White story unveils the villain's perspective, from her tragic childhood to her quest for revenge. So how did the story really go? Join all seven quirky dwarves, a tongue-tied prince, a sassy mirror, a dancing chicken and of course Snow White herself in this Theater for Young Audiences tale about beauty, friendship and happily-ever-afters

SESAME STREET LIVE MAY 4 | \$18-\$75



When magician extraordinaire Justin visits Sesame Street to put on a magic show for the whole neighborhood, Elmo wants to be part of the big event. But there is one problem ... Elmo does not know how to do magic! Elmo teams up with his friends and learns that you can do anything you set your mind to if you just keep trying! Join your favorite Sesame Street friends on this magical adventure when Sesame Street Live! comes to your neighborhood. **Eagle Bank Arena, Fairfax VA.**

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When your kids play for free all year long, it's amazing. Kids ages 3–5 enjoy free admission all season in 2019, which includes family favorites like Soak City, the world's largest PEANUTS themed kids area, Great Pumpkin Fest and WinterFest.

Register online, activate at the park and it's playtime.

Register by May 27th at kingsdominion.com.

with a twist. This show includes a kid-approved lunch. **The Washington County Playhouse Dinner Theater and Children's Theater, Hagerstown, MD.**

SUNDAY 12

You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown

\$18-\$22 | 2pm. The whole gang is here: bossy Lucy is hopelessly in love with piano prodigy Schroeder who doesn't give her the time of day, perfectionist Sally is still mocking blanket-toting Linus, Snoopy is dancing on the doghouse, and "blockhead," himself, Charlie Brown, is in rare form. Whether you're keen to fly with the Red Baron, moon over the Moonlight Sonata, or just do your best to find "Happiness," You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown is a crowd-pleasing classic. **The Performing Arts Factory, Frederick, MD.**

MONDAY 13

Into the Woods

7:30 p.m. | \$20-\$83. Recommended for 12 and older. In Stephen Sondheim's imaginative, darkly comical remix of beloved fairy tales, a baker and his wife set out to reverse a witch's curse in hopes of having a child of their own. The couple's quest takes them into the woods, where they encounter Little Red Riding hood, Jack and his beanstalk, a cautious Cinderella, a sequestered Rapunzel and a couple of lovelorn princes. Peter Flynn returns to direct this fanciful tale about the lengths to which we'll go to get what we wish. **Ford's Theatre, Washington, D.C.**

TUESDAY 14

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11 a.m. | \$15. Recommended for ages 7 and up. Beauty is in the eye of the ogre in Shrek The Musical JR., based on the Oscar-winning DreamWorks Animation film and fantastic Broadway musical. It's a "big bright beautiful world" as everyone's favorite ogre, Shrek, leads a cast of fairytale misfits on an adventure to rescue a princess and find true acceptance. Part romance and part twisted fairy

tale, Shrek JR. is an irreverently fun show with a powerful message for the whole family. KAT-2nd Stage features youth performers. **Arts Barn, Gaithersburg, MD.**

WEDNESDAY 15

Blue Sky Puppet Theatre: Bananas

10 a.m. | \$5. Dr. Broccoli tells Little Yellow and his mom about a talent show and health fair he's sponsoring. Her other two children, Little Blue and Little Red, want to participate in the talent show as well. Audience members learn songs with them for the talent show about healthy living, and then vote on the best performance! Get up, dance, sing and be healthy! One the most popular shows, with plenty of time for a meet and greet afterwards. **Franklin Park Performing And Visual Arts Center, Purcellville, VA.**

THURSDAY 16

FREE Summer Concert Series

6 p.m. Brent and Co. Rock/Country. Thursday evenings in May. Bethesda restaurants will also be a part of the concert fun. **Veterans Park. Corner of Norfolk and Woodmont Aves. Bethesda, MD.**

FREE Jane Franklin Dance: EyeSoar

6:45 p.m. | All ages. Through movement and sound, this outdoor performance by Jane Franklin Dance brings awareness of the physical structure of the Beatley Central Library portico and surrounding green areas. A diverse collection of library users, who state their connection to the City of Alexandria and its resources are heard in brief audio interviews incorporated in the sound score. **Beatley Library, Alexandria, VA.**

FRIDAY 17

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang

7 p.m. | \$750. Take a fantastic musical adventure with an out-of-this-world car that flies through the air and sails the seas. Based on the beloved 1968 film version of Ian Fleming's children's

book and featuring an unforgettable score by the Sherman Brothers (Mary Poppins), Chitty Chitty Bang Bang Jr. is one family-friendly blockbuster that audiences will find "truly scrumptious." Join the fun and take a ride at the **Children's Theatre of Annapolis, Annapolis, MD.**

SATURDAY 18

FREE Walkersville Day

8 a.m. Come out to Walkersville for this town wide annual event. There will be yard sales and flea markets throughout the town. Food will be for sale at various churches throughout the town along with activities and events for the whole family to enjoy. **Walkersville, MD.**

FREE Healthy Kids Day

10 a.m. The YMCA of Frederick County host its national initiative to improve the health and well-being of kids. Come out for a fun time! There will be different exhibitors, entertainment and games for kids to play along with crafts. There will also be samples of healthy foods to try! **YMCA of Frederick County, Frederick, MD.**

SUNDAY 19

Yoga "Down of the Farm"

1 p.m. | \$3-\$8. Join in for a Sunday afternoon family yoga class. Adults and children ages 10 and older are welcome to participate in this basic yoga class led by Susan Kain, instructor at the Glenwood 50+ Center and Yoga Center of Columbia. Bring your yoga mat or a towel and gather at the barn! They will have a separate area where younger siblings with a parent can watch and participate in their own way. Following yoga, please feel free to stay and enjoy a picnic lunch by the pond, feed the farm animals, tour the greenhouses for your garden needs or venture out on a nature walk. **Sharp's at Waterford Farm, Brookeville, MD.**

MONDAY 20

FREE Mr. Jon

8:45 a.m. Get your move on! This energetic family music is all about fun, movement and laughter! Mr. Jon is a

top seller CDbaby.com, and also won a Parents' Choice Award, and he now plays over 100 shows a year. Mr. Jon & Friends makes music for kids and their families that inspire fun, laughter and dancing. The music of Mr. Jon & Friends is sure to bring a smile to your face! **St. John Regional Catholic School, Frederick, MD.**

TUESDAY 21

FREE Preschool Story Time

10:30 a.m. 3-6 year olds. Story times are more than just books! They're interactive experiences that engage children with short stories, action rhymes, songs, and fingerplays. Our story times focus on pre-reading skills that all children need to become good readers, and they help parents practice these skills at home. First come, first served until capacity is reached. **Prince William Public Library, Woodbridge, VA.**

WEDNESDAY 22

FREE Baby and Toddler Story Time

11 a.m. Join in for stories, songs and rhymes. Please include all attendees (caregivers and children) in your ticket count. Sign up Tuesday, May 21 at 9:30 a.m. **Southeast Neighborhood Library, Washington, D.C.**

THURSDAY 23

FREE Summer Concert Series

6 p.m. Moxie Blues Band Blues/Rock. Thursday evenings in May. Bethesda restaurants will also be a part of the concert fun. **Veterans Park. Corner of Norfolk and Woodmont Aves. Bethesda, MD.**

FREE Tony M. Music

10:30 a.m. Sing, play and learn along with the Adventure Kids Club performers. The first 60 club members receive a **FREE** giveaway and craft. Join the fun at the **JC Penny Court. Lakeforest Mall, Gaithersburg, MD.**

FRIDAY 24

FREE Gardens Across America

All day. From rare and endangered

plants to historic estates to modern oases, the collections and stories of 21 different gardens will be showcased throughout the grounds of the **U.S. Botanic Garden. U.S. Botanic Garden, Washington, D.C.**

SATURDAY 25

Winnie the Pooh

11 a.m. | \$20. Recommended for all ages. Bring the whole family to enjoy this theatre production of Winnie the Pooh and his friends as he and Piglet have to find the Heffalump, watch Rabbit scheme to get rid of the forest of Kanga's dreaded bathtub and help Eeyore search for his tail. Pooh's intentions are always the best, but his passion for honey and condensed milk keeps getting him into trouble. **The Adventure Theatre MTC, Rockville, MD.**

SUNDAY 26

FREE Wonder Room Create Date

Activities for children and their adult friends or family. The Wonder Room is a dedicated space filled with free, experiential, hands-on, family-friendly activities that inspire creativity through design-based problem-solving challenges. Designed for children ages 5-11. **Sandy Spring Museum, Sandy Spring, MD.**

MONDAY 27

Memorial Day Weekend

10 a.m. | Free admission (normally \$7 per person) for all active duty military and their immediate family. We honor you and appreciate your service. Come visit the farm any day during the weekend — Saturday, Sunday or Monday. **Clark's Elioak Farm, Ellicott City, MD.**

TUESDAY 28

Dance Africa, DC 2019

All day | \$15 - \$30. Dance Place's 32nd annual dance and music festival that celebrates the African diaspora with free dance performances, master classes and other outdoor activities. **Dance Place, Washington, D.C.**

WEDNESDAY 29

FREE Herndon Festival

6 p.m. The event features a carnival all four days, two stages of entertainment, a 10K/5K Race & Fitness Expo, children's hands-on art area, kids alley, business expo, arts and crafts vendors and an assortment of food vendors. Hosted by the Town of Herndon Parks and Recreation Department. Free shuttle bus service available. Takes place at the **Northwest Federal Credit Union, Herndon, VA.**

THURSDAY 30

FREE Summer Concert Series

6 p.m. 19th Street Band Folk/Rock. Thursday evenings in May. Bethesda restaurants will also be a part of the concert fun. **Veterans Park. Corner of Norfolk and Woodmont Aves. Bethesda, MD.**

FRIDAY 31

FREE Bull Run Scrabble and Chess Club

1 p.m. Teens and adults. Meet up at the library to play scrabble or chess with a small group of dedicated players. We will provide the boards, you bring the words! **Bull Run Regional Library, Manassas, VA.** ■



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Mama of the year



Meet These Six Powerhouse Mothers

BY WF STAFF

When it comes to motherhood, there's no denying that it's a tough role. Moms are the nurturers, leaders, givers, listeners, providers, role models, first hand holders, warm-hug givers and the ones on whom we can always rely. Moms are the first to offer a shoulder to cry on and the first to cheer on their loved ones during all of life's monumental moments.

Moms are not only incredible pillars of strength within their families but in their communities and workplaces as well. There are not enough ways to truly give moms the recognition they deserve for their lifetime of dedication, love and hard work.

Washington FAMILY is honoring local mothers with our fourth annual Moms of the Year issue. We asked readers to nominate a special mom deserving of this recognition. After numerous entries, all describing incredible local moms, six powerhouse mothers were selected to be honored. These deserving and remarkable women have unique stories to tell and great motherly advice to share. Meet our Moms of the Year!

Rachel V. Brenke

Fredericksburg, Virginia

Mom to Joshua, 13, Olivia, 9, Caleb, 6, Micah, 5, Evelyn, 4

Nominated by Nathan Brenke

As a mom of five, cancer survivor, multi-business owner and Team USA athlete, my wife deserves to be Mom of the Year. She also has set up a non-profit to raise awareness and change for animal rights laws. She was recently featured on NBC sports and various international magazines for her skills and efforts. She's an example to all women to have something for themselves (self-care) no matter the circumstances.



Occupation:

Business consultant and lawyer

Favorite "mom-ism:"

"Figure it out!"

Three fun facts about you and your family:

We love to geocache, go to Disney and watch movies.

What advice would you give to new or expectant moms?

Ignore the judgment and shame. You do you. You're the one tucking them in and carrying them the rest of their lives — not anyone else.

What goals do you have for yourself?

Continue to compete with Team USA and qualify for the World Championships in triathlon.

How has motherhood changed your outlook on life?

Priorities become true priorities. I don't get so upset about the little things anymore.

Describe a favorite mom moment.

My favorite moments are the way they fly down the stairs and into my arms when I come home, whether I've been gone to the store, to work or have been gone on a trip.

What's your superpower?

Managing my time and everyone's hectic schedules.

What are three things you use everyday that you can't live without?

My Apple calendar to manage all of our schedules, a coffee pot to keep me lively and my smart phone to keep tabs on everyone!

What's the best thing you are listening to right now?

Different crime podcasts that present evidence and psychological information to help me, the listener, solve the mysteries in my head. This keeps my brain active.

What is your secret to balancing life/family/work/motherhood?

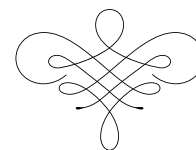
Fill the rocks first. Always put the priorities into the schedule first, including self-care and each person's individual goals (track, soccer, etc). Then, you put in all your other obligations.

Favorite local spot?

Vivify Burger in downtown Fredericksburg.

“Ignore the judgment and shame. You do you. You're the one tucking them in and carrying them the rest of their lives – not anyone else.”

[RACHEL V. BRENKE]



Jasmine Hill

Manassas, Virginia

Mom to King, 9

Nominated by Armelia Hill

My daughter should be Mom of the Year because she is an awesome mom caring for a nine-year-old autistic son. She works very hard at making my grandson's life as normal as possible. She has him traveling and racing at our local Autobahn speedway because she knew he could excel, and he does. She doesn't let anyone treat her son like he's different or less than because he's not. They bake, sing and dance together, and she has made a wonderful life for him as a single parent. She works a full-time job as well as a part-time job to make sure all his needs are taken care of. She knows that being a mom isn't just about what she can provide for him, it's about being loving, caring, supportive and flexible, and she has the patience of a saint. It's amazing for me to see just how much compassion she has for her little boy. She has raised him to be a leader, and that is what he is at school and at home. His teacher always sends home notes about how he leads his class in different activities. It's amazing how far he has come, and it's all because of his supportive mom. God blessed my daughter with an awesome son, and I've been blessed beyond measure seeing the mom God made her to be.



Occupation:

Apartment leasing consultant

Favorite "mom-ism:"

"You want Legos? You have Lego money?"
My parents used to say, "Want Taco Bell? Get a job!"

Three fun facts about you and your family:

I volunteer at Serve Homeless shelter once a week helping watch kids while their parents work on being their best. Also, my younger brother's name is "H," and we have a dog named Kevyn.

What advice would you give to new or expectant moms?

Love, accept and raise your child the same no matter how they come out. And appreciate being able to have a child because there are people that are unable to.

What goals do you have for your family?

Our goal, which we just recently met, is living in our own apartment without King's grandma (Bibi), "Pop Pops" or uncle H. It's been a difficult transition, but like everything, we'll get through it!

Describe a favorite mom moment.

This year, my son was nominated and won for a "Kindness Award" for fourth grade overall. I can't even describe how proud I was, especially knowing he is a bit bossy at times (the name King sure doesn't help), but he is a big softy when he sees anybody in pain.

What's your superpower?

Humor and optimism. So many things can be stressful or not funny at all when you have a child on the spectrum. You must always find the "good" in everything and learn to laugh a lot off.

What's the best thing you are watching right now?

We are always watching whatever movie King wants to since he doesn't do TV. Presently, his go-to is "All Dogs Go to Heaven." It's absolutely a classic.

What would you say your secret is to balancing life/family/work/motherhood?

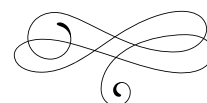
Focusing on my breathing, and taking everything a task at a time and every day a day at a time. There is no sense in overwhelming yourself trying to do too much. It will all get done!

Favorite local spots?

Uptown Alley at The Manassas Mall (wonderful restaurant, easy time killer and bowling!) and Crossroads Tabletop Tavern in Old Town Manassas. I mean come on ... they have every board game ever made. It is an easy family-fun night and weekdays are more chill. Also, Centreville Multiplex. You just can't beat those \$2 Tuesdays!

"Love, accept
and raise your
child the same no
matter how they
come out."

[JASMINE HILL]



AJ Jones

Leesburg, Virginia

Mom to Prince, 16

Nominated by Prince Parker

I nominate my mom, Ashley “AJ” Jones, for Mom of the Year for her nonstop dedication to me and her community. For the past 12 years, my mom has been my sole provider and has constantly exhibited her love for me and our great nation. My mom proudly served in The United States Army for 10 years, but this dedication to her country never got in the way of her love for me, her only son, as we moved from state to state with several permanent changes of station (PCS). Nine years after retiring, she is still today very much involved with her community and those that live within it. My mom currently participates in volunteer efforts for 89 Ways to Give, Lambda Beta Alpha Military Sorority Incorporated and Socialites of Loudoun, a group of Loudoun County residents who strive for greatness in their community. In addition to volunteering, helping others and her full-time job as a contractor, my mom has also been able to expand her brand and branch out, following her dreams. Today, she trains with NOVA Roller Derby in hopes of being accepted into the league (one of her longtime dreams) and is the founder of AJ’s Tasting Room, where she reviews Northern Virginia wineries, breweries and distilleries. All of these reasons contribute to why my mom, Ashley “AJ” Jones, does not only deserve Mom of the Year (and I may be a little biased), but “Mom of the Past Decade.”



Occupation:

Intelligence analyst, owner of AJ’s Tasting Room, freelance writer

Three fun facts about you and your family:

My son and I love to travel! We try to go somewhere special every spring break. We have our own “accent” when conversing at home, and there is an inside joke or dance that applies to most situations.

What advice would you give to new or expectant moms?

Stop. Take five to 10 deep breaths (depending on the severity of situation).

What goals do you have for your family?

Our goal for the near future is to further our role in giving back to the community. My son, Prince, is currently a junior at Tuscarora High School and is preparing to go to college. He aspires to major in journalism/communications.

How has motherhood changed your outlook on life?

Motherhood changed my outlook on life dramatically. The ability to put your children’s needs before your own without a thought is beautiful.

Describe a favorite mom moment.

My favorite mom moment is my son nominating me for this honor.

What’s your superpower?

Hearing. I can tune in or tune out. When tuning in, I have the ultra-high frequency hearing. When tuning out, all I hear is, “Have you heard anything that I’ve said?”

What are three things you use everyday that you can’t live without?

Kombucha, the Amazon app and music.

What’s the best thing you are reading/watching/listening to right now?

“This is Us,” “The Enemy Within,” and I’m addicted to the “Hamilton” soundtrack.

What would you say your secret is to balancing life/family/work/motherhood?

A calendar and the ability to say “no.” A calendar helps keep me organized, and it also shows me when I need to say “no” and take time to recoup.

Favorite local spot?

AJ’s Tasting Room takes me to the best wineries, breweries and distilleries in the area! I can’t say that I have one favorite local spot, but as long as I’m out doing what I love, I’m in my comfort zone.





Holly Kammerer

Chevy Chase, MD

Mom to Kenton, 12, Cally, 9

Nominated by Krysten Jenci

Holly Kammerer is an amazing mother and truly spectacular advocate for all the kids in our community. Holly has two children who she supports with all her heart and soul. Through all the ups and downs of motherhood, Holly faces each challenge with courage, love, strength and persistence. She is honest, generous and kind to other mothers who can feel overwhelmed and overly taxed during the course of a school year. She is an inspiration to all of us.

As continually recognized by the leadership at both Chevy Chase Elementary School and Silver Creek Middle School, Holly takes almost every opportunity to answer the call for parental support. For years, she has volunteered to be the classroom parent, creating once in a lifetime memories for the kids in class. Holly has organized numerous school-wide fundraising activities, and recently chaired the school's 100 year anniversary. Holly's passion for children – both her own and those in the community – underscores why she should receive this award. She embodies what it is to be a Mom in this day and age.

Occupation:

Full-time Mom, community volunteer, real estate

Fun fact about you and your family:

My husband, Doug Kammerer (Chief Meteorologist at WRC NBC4) and I met at our first jobs after college in TV news. We worked in Macon, Georgia at a Fox station where I was a news reporter and fill-in anchor. It was a small market, and sometimes (on days I was lucky enough to not one-man band with a tripod and a 20 pound VHS camera), he would act as my camera man after forecasting the weather for the morning show. He would help me shoot my stories and offer advice on my stand ups and live shots. In exchange, I would edit his stories and give him writing tips. He is so comfortable on camera, while writing is my strong suit. We filled in each other's gaps pretty well and had a lot of fun laughing and working together. We were just co-workers for a long time, eventually became friends and started dating. We moved around to several TV markets, Macon, Jacksonville, Orlando and Philly before making D.C. home. Turns out we ended up making a pretty good team for life!

What advice would you give to new or expectant moms?

Don't worry about perfection. Perfection is the present. Who cares if there are

dishes in the sink? Drink it all in. Take care of yourself. Laugh. Sleep. Create as many memories as you can. Cherish your female friendships and create new ones. Savor every moment with your children, love and kiss them until they turn away and beg for mercy. As they get older, listen carefully to what they have to say. Always make eye contact when they are talking to you. Get down on their level and play. Enjoy this exact moment in your life ... blink and you'll miss it!

What goals do you have for yourself and your family?

As my children get older, I miss the challenge of work. The old drive is back. My husband and I had always talked about doing real estate together because we are fascinated by houses and neighborhoods. How do you find your neighborhood? I am the first one to dive in. My goals for my children are much simpler. Doug and I are strong believers in character. We want to raise good contributing members of the community. We want them to have a positive outlook on life, find joy all around and do their best at whatever they want to accomplish, but to be resilient. Resilience is the key. Not everything will always be perfect in life. The key is to keep trying.

Describe a favorite mom moment.

There are so many, but my favorite times are when we are all together. No one else.

Just the four of us. Either playing games or snuggled up in bed or on a road trip. When we can just shut the world out and be together. It's so simple and yet, it is everything.

What's your superpower?

My superpower is my connections with other moms in our community. I am so honored to be included in Moms of the Year, but the truth is, I am surrounded by incredible selfless moms. These dynamic, awe-inspiring women encourage and support each other every single day. They are all Moms of the Year. I can think of dozens of women who somehow do it all. They support their communities, their schools, their friends, their children, other people's children. I feel so lucky to have these women in my life. I don't ever complete any endeavor alone. It takes a team of women and girlfriends. They inspire me.

Favorite local spots?

Maki Bar is our go-to Mommy & Me spot. The Tournedos at Duck Duck Goose is my all-time favorite meal! Our favorite museum is The Renwick. And I love to go dancing with my Mom friends to live music at Villain & Saint.



Lauren Lawson-Zilai

Potomac, MD

Mom to Kiley, 5

Nominated by Justin Zilai

Lauren is someone who believes in social impact and is tireless in her efforts to make a difference in the community. As the senior director of PR for Goodwill Industries International, Lauren leads the external communications strategy for North America's nonprofit leader in workforce training for people looking for employment or career advancement. Lauren serves as a Stephen Minister for our church where she provides caregiving to people facing crisis in life. Lauren also utilizes her skills to provide pro bono PR services for numerous D.C. nonprofits, including Mary's Center, a D.C.-based community center that provides social services to individuals whose needs are unmet by the public and private systems. Lauren is selfless with her time from mentoring others to guest lecturing at local universities. She volunteers with our daughter and ensures that she is enriched with activities from learning multiple languages to embarking on educational outings and taking classes such as yoga. For Lauren, volunteering is a genuine and demonstrated passion, and one that she has instilled in our five-year-old daughter.



Occupation:

Senior director of public relations and national spokesperson, Goodwill Industries International

Favorite "mom-ism:"

"Mommy gets cranky after 8:30 p.m. I'm tired. Please go to bed."

What advice would you give to new or expectant moms?

Find your support group of moms. I feel very fortunate to work for an organization where one of my colleagues started a private email listserv to share tips, articles, frustrations and the like with each other. It's also important to find your tribe of moms who can serve as a peer support group, identify with your struggles and triumphs and share experiences, friendship, resources and comfort.

What goals do you have for your child?

I want my daughter to be intentional about helping others and being aware of other's feelings — treating others as they want to be treated, as everyone has their own standards and beliefs. I'm encouraged by the fact that we live in a society where it's "cool to be kind" and there is more of a focus on anti-bullying. My daughter and I always talk about "girl power." As she enters elementary

school, I will continue to encourage and celebrate women's empowerment, independence and confidence so that she knows there are no limits or boundaries based on her gender.

How has motherhood changed your outlook on life?

After giving birth, your priorities change. Different issues take different precedence.

You no longer have the physical or emotional energy for the things that used to occupy all your time. For me, the biggest shift has been the energy that I used to spend worrying about anything and everything. There is simply no capacity for that.

Describe a favorite mom moment.

My daughter came home one day and told me her teacher was complaining of back pain. She wanted to provide comfort to her teacher, so she took one of our big throw pillows, wrapped it up with tissue paper in a bag, and presented it her teacher the next day. She has these innate compassionate moments where she wants to care for others. I was really touched by her kind act as was her teacher.

What are three things you use everyday that you can't live without?

A large latte, listservs like Beltway Bambinos that provide recommendations on weekly

adventures for families and a GPS so my directionally-challenged self can find my way to all of my daughter's classes and activities across the greater metropolitan area. A purse with crayons, toys, wipes, tissues, hair bands and the like also helps.

What's the best thing you are listening to right now?

Simon Sinek. He is the author of "Start with Why" and also has a TED talk called "How great leaders inspire action." He emphasizes focusing on your why — your purpose, your cause, your motivation and your beliefs. Why do you get out of bed in the morning? And why should anyone care? As a result, the way we think, act and communicate is from the inside out. It is a great lesson both professionally and personally to put priority on why you do, not what you do, and to follow individuals who inspire those around them or find others who inspire them.

Favorite local spot?

National Harbor. We love all the activities at the Gaylord during the holidays; the family-fun destinations during the summer from the carousel to the boat rides, the beach and the park as well as the seasonal displays at MGM.



“ Savor every moment, take time for you, do your best and release the rest. ”

[KELLYE LYNN]



Kellye Lynn

Frederick, Maryland

Mom to Austin, 16, Chloe, 14

Nominated by Meena Bhinge

Kellye is mother who brings tremendous mommy wisdom to her work. We were very impressed how she worked with our children to get the best out of them. A few days after the shoot, I had contacted Kellye to brainstorm for another student community project and she gave me excellent input and also asked her children to substantiate her thoughts. She has a tough schedule while balancing her family life, and she works hard to showcase children, families and educational organizations through her work. When I read the announcement for the Moms of the Year, she was the first person that came to my mind. I think she deserves every bit of this recognition.

Occupation:

Anchor/reporter

Favorite “mom-ism:”

“Shine your light today.”

Three fun facts about you and your family:

We bike ride every Mother’s Day, we go to Disney World annually, and we like to hand out care packages to the homeless.

What advice would you give to new or expectant moms?

Savor every moment, take time for you, do your best and release the rest.

How has motherhood changed your outlook on life?

I measure my success differently. My family and their well-being are now my priorities.

Describe a favorite mom moment.

When my daughter was about three-years-old and got lost in a crowd. Upon being reunited with me, she confidently stated, “Don’t worry, Mommy, God was watching over me.”

What’s your superpower?

Faith plus determination.

What are three things you use every day that you can’t live without?

Patience, wisdom and forgiveness.

What’s the best thing you are reading and watching right now?

I love HGTV and inspirational books and movies.

What would you say your secret is to balancing life/family/work/motherhood?

Regular exercise, eating healthy, resting and appreciating the simple things.

Favorite local spots?

I love the local library, any space with flowers and parks or trails where I can take in nature. ■



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"Parties are great and all, but let's stop impressing people with who did it best and start celebrating the child."

— LYSSA P.

Birthday Party Tips & Tricks

BY WF STAFF

We asked our readers to share their best birthday party planning tips along with the best parties they've either thrown or attended. Check out what they had to say for some instant birthday party inspiration!

TIPS

1 "For my daughter's fifth birthday, she has a huge soft spot for homeless animals and asked if her guests could bring gifts for the animals at Fairfax Animal Shelter. It was a huge success and saved me from clutter from unused toys." —Catherine F.

2 "I feel like parties should stop focusing on the 'party' and start focusing more on the child. We stopped throwing extravagant Pinterest parties and instead spent the money on our child. They get to decide on a large gift, vacation or choosing a special friend to take on a day adventure. Parties are great and all, but let's stop impressing people with who did it best and start celebrating the child." —Lyssa P.

3 "We've done big parties, small parties, combined parties and even some years with no party. The best one ever was a combined party for our two youngest a couple of years ago. We rented an inflatable movie screen, ordered tons of pizza, filled the coolers with drinks and invited everyone and their families to bring blankets and chairs. Everyone was outside, kids were running around laughing, even the neighbors came over to say how great it was to see kids outside playing." —Jaclyn D.

PARTIES

1 "We had a great birthday party experience at Bach to Rock Music School. We chose a rock band theme. The kids picked an instrument and a popular rock song, and within a couple of hours, they learned the music and had a studio recording. Each kid left with a CD. In between jamming, there was time for pizza and cake. The kids had a blast!" —Julia G.

2 "We just did a really cool birthday party at River-Sea Chocolates in Chantilly. My fifth-grade daughter and 10 of her friends got to learn how chocolate is farmed, harvested and made. They got to temper chocolate. And then they got to make/embellish

four chocolate bars of their own. It was a nice change from all of the bounce/laser tag/trampoline parties." —Abbie B.

3 "For our daughter, who is 2 1/2 years, we decided not to do parties, but to always plan some sort of an outing/trip for her birthday so that she would have some sort of an experience that is special for that day. This is mainly because her birthday is in the middle of summer, and also because we just are unsure whether we want to put together something that we will remember and she really won't, if that makes sense." —Marija B.

4 "Anything that gives the guests fun things to do or explore. We've had fun with decorating your own mini-cakes, a foil fashion show (pair up kids with a roll of foil and they create outfits), scavenger hunts and mini science experiments." —Jane M.

5 "There are so many options in the area for easy but awesome local parties, but the most encouraging thing parents need to hear is that it's just as fun for the kids to 'go simple.' You don't have to go big to give your kid a great birthday. Our kids and their friends seem to love the old-fashioned playdate-style party in the basement or back yard with group games (like stacking cups, dance competition, etc.) just as much as the big blowout parties." —Tricia R.

6 "We switch it up each year ... swim party, home sprinkler party, monster golf (glow in the dark) party, and she gets a say in the planning. This year, she is thinking about a rock climbing party for her tenth birthday. My main mantra is that they need to be fun and for her. And if she wants a not-so perfect cake made by Mom, then I am not going to be embarrassed and make it for her!" —Pam M.

7 "Harris Teeter does a free smash cake for first birthdays. I'm glad we did this. My daughter was so dainty with tasting it. There certainly wasn't any smashing happening. We did a brunch and donut theme. It was 'Donut grow up sweet one.' Birthdays are like weddings, you spend all this time planning, the day comes and you are too busy entertaining to even enjoy it. Take the time to reflect on the day and what's important about it." —Shaelyn M. ■

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Roadmap to SAT/ACT Success

Strategies for Ninth, Tenth and Eleventh-Graders

BY ANN DOLIN



Why practice tests matter

- Taking a practice test, especially in a test-taking environment, helps students get familiarized with the structure, content and actual real process of the SAT/ACT.
- The practice scores are only shared with the student, so the student can get an idea of where they stand so far without the pressure.
- Because a student's first scores don't always match up to their expectations, getting their first scores from a practice test rather than the real one is less damaging to a student's self-confidence.

As soon as your son or daughter begins high school, the reality of them heading off to college comes into focus pretty quickly. Not only are classes beginning to get more "college-like," they're actually beginning to count for something.

And as your high schooler marches towards college applications, you are most likely flooded with questions. Where does my child want to attend? What do they need to do in order to get in? When should we start thinking about the SAT or ACT? Of all these questions, the latter is often the first most stressful in the college planning process.

Read on for some helpful advice on what the SAT/ACT preparation roadmap looks like for ninth, tenth and eleventh-graders, and how to best approach and plan for this new milestone.

Grade 9: Early Practice Is Good Practice

Considering there's plenty of time at this point, ninth-graders don't have to stress out too much about SAT/ACT preparation. But, it's also the year things start to count. Have your student register for a mock test if they'd like to get a head start on preparing. Although it's not necessary at this stage, sometimes the earlier kids start, the more their scores improve over time.

As for the PSAT, not all schools offer it to ninth-graders. However, if it is offered, kids should take advantage of it. Getting lots of practice early is important for future success!

Grade 10: The New Junior Year For Test Prep

Many years ago, students almost always took the SAT or ACT test in the spring of their junior year and the fall of their senior year. However, there has been a huge shift in the last couple of years where kids are taking the tests sooner. For that reason, it's important for tenth-graders to start with the PSAT if their school offers it.

Now, the PSAT is really valuable because nobody sees it. It doesn't get sent to colleges; meaning there's no disadvantage of taking it several times. Taking the PSAT allows parents and students to get a better understanding of how they might score on the actual exam. And if they took it in ninth grade already, it will be a great opportunity to get another practice score in and see where they stand.

For students who plan on taking the real test in their junior year, it's particularly beneficial for them to start studying the summer after their sophomore year. For example, if a student who is going into their junior year plans on playing a sport in the fall semester, they may not be left with much time during the fall semester to prepare for the test. By prepping during the summertime, this allows the student the option to take the fall off from SAT studying to focus on their activities. Then, once the sport season is over, they can resume prepping.

Grade 11: It's Crunch Time

Eleventh grade is a crucial year since this is the time students register for and take their SAT/ACT tests. At the beginning of junior year, it's important for students to decide on whether they will focus on the SAT or ACT before registering. While it is common for students to take both tests, taking a practice test in ninth and tenth grade allows students to focus their time on the one test that they perform the best.

After deciding, have your child register for their first SAT/ACT for winter or spring of their junior year. Get a test scheduled on the books so that they have something to plan around. This will ensure more time to take the test more than once. And then make a test prep plan and commit to some form of practice. There are plenty of independent study options out there which are helpful once you know what your child needs to work on, as well as many test prep services.

Often, students reach their desired score prior to their senior year, after having taking it a few times. A great schedule for students is to take the first test in the late winter or early spring of junior year, the second test by the end of spring semester during junior year, and then finally, if needed, one in the early summer before the start of senior year. This plan helps students feel more prepared while also giving them enough opportunities to build up their scores.

This can be a stressful time, but if you take the appropriate steps, your child can be prepared, confident and ready to achieve a score that will help them put their best foot forward on college applications. ■

Ann Dolin is a former Fairfax County teacher and current founder and president of Educational Connections Tutoring, serving the D.C. area.



2019 Party Guide

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Whatever you're celebrating — birthdays, graduations, anniversaries — Washington FAMILY's Party Guide has all of the resources you need to make your party memorable. From fantastic locations and party planners to entertainers and musicians, you're sure to find that special something to make your party spectacular.

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**What
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PART-A-Y

**Birthday Party
Trends Your
Kids Will Love**

BY MICHELLE BLANCHARD ARDILLO

A child's first birthday party was once a small celebration at home with immediate family, grandparents, neighbors, and a few close friends of the parents. There would be cake, ice cream and presents, but times have changed, and the sky's the limit now when planning a child's birthday party.

As with real estate, the first big step to planning is: location, location, location. Will the party be at home, at a public venue with a party room or at an indoor entertainment destination specializing in group parties?

Parties at home are still very popular, especially with the resources of Karen Carbone of Carbone Entertainments readily available. Under her website's "birthday party" tab, there are nearly 50 ideas for theme-based birthday celebrations that can be scaled to the age range of your child. Her company will bring two ponies to your front yard for pony rides, or intrigue your party guests with reptiles, exotic birds or a petting zoo. Party mascots are very popular, and Carbone has a large selection: from princesses and superheroes to nursery rhyme characters and walking-talking animals.

Carbone says that among her most popular parties, for all ages, is anything that allows the creative side of the party guests to emerge. Cupcake decorating and cookie decorating are as popular as ever, but so are the "paint and juice boxes" parties where guests create a painting to take home as their party favor. "Everybody loves painting, whether it is with icing to create an edible keepsake" or with acrylics and canvas, sipping a juice box and "becoming the next Picasso." Carbone says that hands-on activities are great for children of all age ranges. Her "fill a friend" parties are a big hit, where party guests create their own stuffed animal. The "fill a friend" concept is also popular, with companies wanting to combine a fun team experience with a charitable act, making stuffed animals to donate during the holidays or to children's hospitals.

Destination parties are just the ticket for tweens and teens. There are many options available in the

the D.C. area, with everything from laser tag to bowling and bocce ball to ropes courses. ZavaZone's website, with locations in Sterling and Rockville, describes the experience: "Kick boredom to the curb and create your own adventure at our active indoor parks — perfect for guests, ages five to 105. Adventure awaits you!" Pinstripes, part restaurant/part modernized bowling alley that offers bocce ball lanes as well, entered the D.C. market in 2014, initially in Georgetown but now in North Bethesda as well. Laser tag spots give kids the opportunity to play a live-action video game, and trampoline hubs like Sky Zone take jumping on a trampoline to a whole new level.

Sara Raak of SKG Designs says that destination parties are great because "they offer complete packages of food, favors and the best of all, they clean up!" She says that home parties are still really popular, with parents serving up pizza and cupcakes for the kids, and cheese-grazing boards and sparkling water for the adults who stay to celebrate. Raak says that a new trend in home parties is "a breakfast birthday party, starting with pancakes and a topping bar and ending with birthday donuts instead of birthday cake." Raak has at-home theme party ideas for kids of all ages: Disney and Paw Patrol themes for the younger kids, and Fortnite and Nerf guns promise a blast of success for older boys. Older girls enjoy slime-making parties or spa parties complete with a spa truck parked outside! If parents want to book their own entertainment for an at-home

party,

R a a k

said that The

Great Zucchini is a local treasure who entertains kids ages two to seven with a 40-minute magic show guaranteed to bring the house down with laughter.

With so many options and price points, planning a child's birthday party doesn't have to be stressful or time-consuming. Whether you go for a low-key party at home with or without professional entertainment, or invite friends to an indoor activity center for a party package, remember your child's birthday comes around only once a year, so make it special! ■

Michelle Blanchard Ardillo is a freelance writer and middle school language arts teacher who knows a thing or two about children's birthday parties, having worked professionally as "Giggles the Clown" for two years. Follow her on Twitter or Goodreads @michardillo or visit her website at michelleardillo.com.

TOP THREE trending birthday party themes in 2019, according to Pinterest:

- SCAVENGER HUNTS
- ENCHANTED FOREST
- BACKYARD FUN

Money Smart

FOUR WAYS TO SAVE ON BIRTHDAY PARTY COSTS:

- 1 Choose a budget-friendly time. Parties in the morning or afternoon mean you don't usually have to serve a meal, which can add in extra costs.
- 2 Make your own invitations. Save big on creating your own fun invitations. Print them out on card stock paper. Try using canva.com or fotojet.com.
- 3 Reuse décor and "shop" your house. Any leftover non-theme specific decorations from previous events or parties are perfect to re-use. If you have particular theme, check around your house for items you already have that can work for the theme. You might be surprised at what you can find!
- 4 Make the cake. Bakery cakes can be crazy expensive, so buying a boxed cake mix is always a solid option. Another easier and still Instagram-worthy option is making individual cupcakes and then arranging them on a platter as your child's age.

Source: moneysavingmom.com



TOUGH TOPICS

Last month, we talked to local teens about underage drinking. Now, we've turned to local parents to get their points of view. In collaboration with *Baltimore's Child*, we also conducted a short online survey and some respondents agreed to be interviewed. Here's what they had to say.

Ninety-three percent of surveyed parents said they do not let their children drink, and 97 percent of parents said they frequently talk to their kids about drugs and alcohol. But after talking with some of these local parents, we learned that their stance on underage drinking is not as black and white as these percentages suggest. In fact, there's a lot of gray area when it comes to what parents allow and what they do not.

Fifty percent of surveyed parents said they allow their kids to have supervised parties, for example, and of the 7 percent of parents who let their teens drink, all said they also supply the alcohol.

Beth from D.C., who has two middle schoolers, believes her teens shouldn't drink — but only up to a point. "Our rule in our house for any alcohol consumption is 18 and up," she says. Her reasoning? "If you can fight for our country at 18, then you

should be able to drink a beer." She also adds that she lets her teens drink wine during communion at church.

A., from Arlington, first allowed her kids to drink around 15 and 16 while vacationing abroad as a family. "We traveled a lot to foreign countries, where we did allow them to drink when they were with us," she says. "So, because that happened, it was pretty hard to not let anything happen back here."

For S., a mom from Westminster, her own attitudes about drinking affect the rules that she and her husband have for their two teens, ages 13 and 15. "My husband and I actually don't drink much, just socially every couple of months," she says. "So, it's not something we allow, but we are also not big drinkers or keep [alcohol] in the house."

G., a mom from Towson, says she keeps it "straightforward" with her 14- and 17-year-olds. "Underage drinking is not

LOCAL PARENTS WEIGH IN ON UNDERAGE DRINKING

BY BRITNI PETERSEN



allowed, period,” she says. However, she notes that while she hopes her children wait until they’re 21, she’s also “not naïve to think they won’t start early.”

While these parents were eager to talk about this topic, they also recognized the sensitivity of the issue. And they were concerned about how they might be judged for what they have to say.

“I never said to my kids, ‘Hey, how about you throw a party?’” says A. But she did come home to at least a “handful of parties,” which she or another adult in the household then monitored for safety. “I just got looser by their senior year because by that point, you pretty much know they’re already drinking.”

Many of these parents were also less worried about the laws and more about the social and health effects of underage drinking.

“Teenagers are not ready for the responsibility that comes with drinking,” says Gigi. “They may not have the self-control to avoid addiction, and underage drinking is not safe.”

S. agrees with this concern. “Alcohol really worries me because it lowers inhibitions so much. People get sick, they aspirate on their own vomit and die, or they go get in a car,” she says. She even adds that if she ever had to choose between her child drinking or vaping, she’d choose vaping — the “lesser of two evils.”

“Teenagers are going to try stuff. So is it less dangerous to vape than drink? I don’t know,” she says. “But it’s definitely something I’ve thought about.”

The parents we talked to also knew of instances where other parents had been penalized for underage drinking in their homes and other related problems with parties. A. recalls once dropping her son off at house party and then soon after getting a call from him to come back and pick him up. “He told me that someone had invaded the parents’ liquor cabinet and some girl had passed out, so the police were on their way,” she says. “I was really proud that he called me.”

While parents said they want to be clear with their kids, many were unclear on the laws around underage drinking. In fact, 22 percent said they were unaware of their state’s laws on providing alcohol to minors in their home — and perhaps for good reason as the laws vary from state to state in our region.

Paul D’Amore, an Annapolis-based personal injury lawyer says that in Maryland, there are two laws on this subject, one that addresses alcohol possession by a minor, and one that addresses providing alcohol to a minor. “The former makes it a crime for a minor to possess alcohol; the latter makes it a crime for an adult to provide alcohol to a minor. Both of these laws make exceptions for instances where the alcohol has been provided to the minors by a member of their immediate family for consumption in a private home or during a religious ceremony,” he says. “So, you can give alcohol to your own children but not someone else’s child.”

Yet, that is just the criminal side of the issue, D’Amore cautions. “Two recent Maryland Appeals Court decisions have made it clear that providing alcohol to minors creates civil liability for the adult if the minor is harmed or harms a third party. So, if parents serve alcohol to minors at a house party, or turn a ‘blind eye’ to obvious alcohol consumption, they risk financial responsibility for any harm caused to the children or that the children cause others, say by injuring someone on their way home.”

For those in Virginia, the laws are pretty similar, with the added exception that they also allow those under 21 to drink as a guest in the house if their parent, guardian or spouse who is age 21 or older is present. But for the District? The laws are tight. There are no family or location exceptions for underage drinking.

In the end, when it comes to teenage drinking, the general consensus among parents is that talking to your kids is key.

“We started talking about alcohol and drugs at age 10,” says Gigi. “We talked about the lasting effects of drug and alcohol use. We talked about actions and consequences, and how drugs and alcohol impact individuals, families and futures. We had an open and honest conversation, an ongoing conversation to ensure our teens know where we stand and our expectations.”

Beth agrees. “Our kids are being exposed to a lot of stuff that maybe we weren’t. Whether you can identify if your kids are drinking or using drugs or not is less the point than if your kid feels like you’re going to be there if they have an issue and they need to talk to you.” ■

“
Our rule in our house for any alcohol consumption is 18 and up. If you can fight for our country at 18, then you should be able to drink a beer.
”

– BETH



“
Teenagers are not ready for the responsibility that comes with drinking. They may not have the self-control to avoid addiction, and underage drinking is not safe.
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The Dogfish Inn & Brewery

Parents' Beach & brewery tours = grownup fun

Weekend

BY GINNY LAWHORN

Dogfish Head has taken crisp, cleverly named beers, a truly unique company ethos, three towns in Delaware and in all has created much more than a company: It has created a culture. One sunny, off-season morning, I set out to spend two days immersed in this culture while staying cozy in the Dogfish Inn in Lewes, Delaware.

In 2014, Dogfish Head expanded its craft brewing and spirits kingdom to include this inn. This unassuming, two-building property, formally known as Vesuvio Motel, includes 14 rooms with a mix of double, queen and king options. Adjacent to the main building is a cottage that houses the Cottage SWEET! featuring a king bedroom, a separate living room and a kitchenette. Nearby is the Suite SWEET!, a beach house that provides expanded amenities for visitors who may prefer a bit more room to stretch out for their time at the beach.

Once settled, I decide to start with the obvious fan favorite and head to nearby Milton to check in for a Dogfish Head Brewery tour. There, I meet Kim Koot, a veteran guide. We don our safety glasses and dive into all things Dogfish. Koot starts with an

explanation of the Eureka moment when founder Sam Calagoin added unwashed, over-ripe cherries to a homebrew, adding extra yeast and amplifying flavor. This happy accident would pivot Calagoin's life from pursuing a writing career to blazing a trail in the American craft beer industry.

As we walk the halls of the brewery exploring classic beers and new expressions, Calagoin's literary background shines through in all of the puns and word play that have helped define Dogfish's

identity — and market share. The brand's flagship expressions, the 60 Minute, 90 Minute and 120 Minute IPAs, found their names in the continual hop process, Koot says. Calagoin found inspiration for this process while watching a cooking show that taught viewers to flavor soup through a cycle of continuous seasoning. He then purchased an electric football game at a local thrift store and rigged the board at an angle to shimmy hops throughout the brewing process.

Inn guests have a few more tour options available as part of their stay. The Grain to Glass package opens normally off-limit parts of the brewery to inn guests, and the INNclusive package is available Thursday through Saturday for long-weekend visitors and includes roundtrip transportation from the inn to the brewery and later the to brew pub in Rehoboth Beach for \$45 per person.

Other tips

Not a beer drinker? Dogfish Head has spent the last 16 years cultivating a craft spirit line as unique as its beer. The base for all of its spirits is the same 100 percent brewer's malt and its proprietary "doggie" yeast base used in its beers. This base provides not

"Two days with Dogfish was a dream trip for a beverage writer and business owner like me."

only a link to the beer-based heritage of the brand, but also a unique nose-and-mouth feel for its spirits. These characteristics are most prominent in the Analog Vodka, which makes it an ideal drink for folks who like other beverages, such as whiskey. The spirits line also includes a Roasted Peanut vodka, a Barrel Honey rum, a Compelling gin, and my unabashed favorite, a Sonic Archeology bottled cocktail. Cocktail flights and spirit samples are available in the brewery bar.

There is beer and benevolence here: All tips contributed to tours and at the tasting room are donated to various nonprofits throughout the year. During my visit, the Sierra Nevada Camp Fire Relief Fund was the featured nonprofit.

Later, I head to the Dogfish Head Brewings & Eats brew pub. Brewings & Eats originated as the smallest commercial brewery in the U.S. The company and the location would expand and, as of early this year, employ nearly 500 team members across all of the Dogfish platforms. The current brewpub opened in spring of 2017 and offers a state-of-the-art house mixer and innovative concert space. While the focus is on local music, the venue also hosts national acts such as the Mountain Goats, who will perform there in this month.

I implore you to try the “Dogpile” nachos. While this combination of Flesh & Blood IPA beef chili, mozzarella cheese, spinach and artichoke dip, cured red onion, pickled jalapeño, fired tortilla chips, cilantro crema and cilantro itself may seem daunting and muddled, this combination of comfort foods comes together delectably.

Next door is a finer dining restaurant experience, Chesapeake & Maine. Sourcing seafood exclusively from the waters of the Chesapeake Bay and Maine, this Dogfish restaurant features a raw bar, seasonal sides, decadent desserts and 1¼-pound lobsters every Sunday for just \$10. As a James Beard Award semifinalist nominee for Best Bar Program, the bar is a destination for locals and visitors alike.

Exit through the gift shop: Waggies by Maggie and Friends makes all-natural dog treats with Dogfish’s spent grain and employs persons with intellectual disabilities. Also on tap: beer soap and all the Dogfish-branded personal items and homewares you could want.

Two days with Dogfish was a dream trip for a beverage writer and business owner like me. My only wish is that it hadn’t gone so fast and that I could work for Dogfish when I grow up. Maybe one day. ■

Off-Season Awesome

What else can you do at the beach when it’s not July? A lot, as it turns out. The boardwalks in Rehoboth Beach and Ocean City remain open year-round, although some stores are only open in the summer. However, cyclists can bike on Rehoboth’s boardwalk in the off-season, something strictly forbidden from Memorial Day to Labor Day. Cape Henlopen State Park is also open for hiking and cycling and offers beach scenery like no other Delmarva locale. The Seaside Nature Center has limited hours in the off-season but is open.

Still want more outdoor time? The Cape May-Lewes ferry is one of the oldest operating ferries in the U.S., and offers excursion trips and the chance to see dolphins in the Delaware Bay.

How about shopping? Rehoboth’s main drag has plenty of boutiques and shops that remain open, including the ever-popular Browseabout Books and nearby Bella Luna. Need more? Check out the shops in Bethany Beach and Berlin, Maryland, which is also known for its antiques.

In Ocean City, many restaurants are open, including Crab Bag, The Greene Turtle, Fager’s Island, Hooked and Pickles Pub, among others. In Fenwick Island, Harpoon Hanna’s has year-round hours, as does Twilley’s Willys, the hot dog joint with the funniest name. The owners of popular farm-to-table restaurant One Coastal took some time off in January but reopened last month.

Finally, the Ocean City Life Saving Museum is open year-round. ■

— WF STAFF



The boardwalk at Rehoboth Beach



Cape Henlopen State Park



The Cape May-Lewes ferry

FACING PAGE: COURTESY OF DOGFISH HEAD BREWERY
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CAPE MAY-LEWES FERRY: VISIT DELAWARE



Hey, Moms! Prioritize You

Don't put your health last!

BY COURTNEY MCGEE

As much as we look to creating healthful habits for kids, it's time to turn the camera on ourselves and see if we are setting healthy examples. Moms tend to focus so fully on everyone else that it can take a toll on their own wellness, in mind and body.

Why does self-care feel selfish?

You get the kids to the dentist, the pediatrician and their activities on time, but still haven't scheduled your overdue mammogram. Your kids are outfitted in new sports gear, and you're wearing worn-out sneakers. You pack healthy lunches and snacks for everyone, yet grab crackers and a soda from the vending machine to eat at your desk. Someone else's needs are always more pressing. Who's looking out for you?

"The identity of self as an independent person versus as a parent is often hard to separate," says Lauren Pantoulis, licensed clinical professional counselor (LCPC). "Most women assume if they take time to look at their own needs that they are being selfish and less of a mother. A feeling of discontent can build over time and result in resentment, relationship issues, fatigue, lack of patience and burnout."

Stress, pressure and anxiety

"We are living in a culture of the 'super mom' who works, keeps a perfect home, hosts Pinterest-perfect parties, volunteers at school, coaches a team, cooks healthy meals every night, helps with homework and is raising kind, gifted children who will go to Harvard on scholarship. At least, that's what we see on social media and television," Pantoulis says. "There is a pervasive message that unless she's devoting all of her time and energy outward, she's not doing her best for her family."

"We are drowning in the pressure of how we 'should' be living," she adds. "The result is high levels of stress and anxiety, and sometimes depression, as mothers give everything to their various roles in life without stopping to think about what makes them feel happy as an individual."

Don't wait until something gives way

It's often not until a crisis point that we think of ourselves, and even then it's more likely because we're worried about what will happen to our families if we become unable to care for them than because we're concerned about our own well-being.

Reframe it, if necessary, to see that in taking care of yourself you are ensuring that you are around to care for your loved ones, Pantoulis says. Think of the airline safety pre-flight speech — in an emergency, you are instructed to secure your oxygen mask before tending to those in your care. Prioritizing yourself allows you to bring your best self to those you love and sets a valuable precedent in affirming that your needs are important.

"The identity of self as an independent person versus as a parent is often hard to separate. Most women assume if they take time to look at their own needs that they are being selfish and less of a mother."

— LAUREN PANTOULIS
LICENSED CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL
COUNSELOR (LCPC).

Think about what you are modeling

Learning how to set boundaries and goals are lessons that will serve children well in life, and they can learn by watching you. "Teaching your children that self-care is important not only teaches them to respect you as an individual, but it also shows them healthy habits for caring for themselves," Pantoulis says. "When they see you doing things for yourself, they learn that not only is that OK, but it's good for their own

mental and physical health.”

Model independence and show the kids that they don’t need you for everything! “You want your daughters and sons to value their own self-care and not feel the need to grow into ‘people pleasers.’ Let them problem solve, take on some additional responsibility or seek support from others,” she says. “These are life skills.”

Set aside time for cultivating YOUR healthy habits

Nobody thinks they have enough hours in a day, yet if necessary you’d carve time out of thin air to make sure your loved ones get their needs met. Do the same for yourself. “Start small. Pick one thing and begin there. Maybe a daily walk, a block of time to read or joining a gym,” Pantoulis suggests.

Be creative. Try a guided meditation app. Rediscover an old hobby. Take a healthy cooking class with your spouse. Sign up for a 5K with a friend to keep each other motivated and accountable. As you commit to finding time and enjoyable ways to reflect, recharge and restore healthy balance, your

confidence and contentment will soar. And that’s an example worth setting.

“Your kids will see you growing as your own person and take pride in the fact that their parent is well rounded, strong and independent,” Pantoulis says. “It also helps with the relationship between spouses/partners, as intimacy can also suffer when parents are feeling tapped out and frustrated.”

“When mama ain’t happy, ain’t nobody happy”

The old saying does hold true. “Mom tends to be the center of the home,” says Pantoulis. “And, like a body, when the heart isn’t healthy, the rest starts to falter.” Consider your self-care needs the same as you would your children’s: balancing emotional, physical, nutritional and self-expression needs. Consider ways you can restore healthy balance, and don’t be afraid to ask for help.

Do a regular “check-in” with yourself, and take inventory of your feelings. Ask yourself: Do I feel resentful? Do I rely on autopilot to get through my day? Am I missing out on enjoying little things and being present in

the moment? Am I always fixating on what I have to do next? Are guilt and obligation my motivators for getting things done? Can I find laughter and contentedness in my day? Am I neglectful of my own health — sick more often, gaining/losing weight or sleeping poorly? What percentage of my day is spent focused solely on others?

Keep that “Mother’s Day” vibe all year

Pantoulis admits that even she sometimes feels hypocritical in advising moms to be more attentive to self-care, when she knows all too well how easy it is to neglect your own needs for the sake of others.

As a health-based writer and mom myself, I don’t want to go overboard on advice and add to the pressure of what you should be doing (besides, it’s easier to give advice than to follow it!). But I do want to give you this reminder: In this month when we celebrate moms, please take an opportunity to pause and consider your own well-being, recognize your worth and promise yourself the ongoing gift of prioritizing YOU. ■



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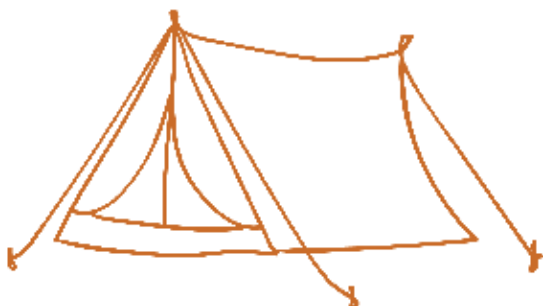
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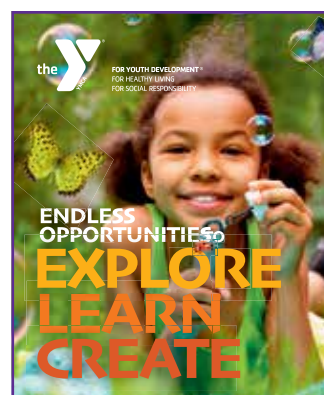
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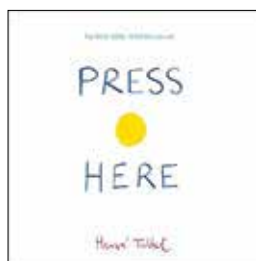
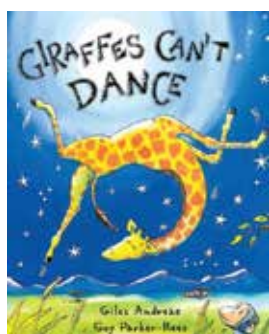
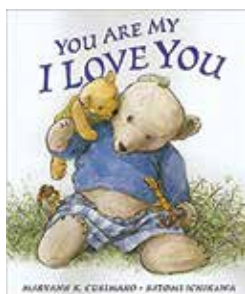
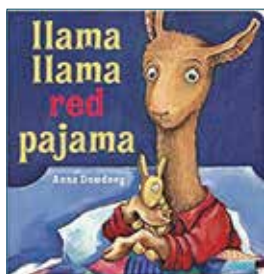


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The Gift of Reading

8 Children's Picture Books That Make Great Gifts

BY WF STAFF

It's not always easy picking out a gift for someone, especially if that someone is your child's friend. What current toys do they not already have?

When in doubt, gift a good book. It's a classic, fool-proof choice, and an essential great read never goes out of style. So, next time you're in need of the perfect child's birthday gift, pick up one of these must-have books below. Each one these titles are a wonderful addition to any child's reading collection!

"Llama, Llama, Red Pajama"

by Anna Dewdney

In this classic and infectious rhyming book, Baby Llama turns bedtime into an all-out llama drama! Tucked into bed by his mama, Baby Llama immediately starts worrying when she goes downstairs, and his soft whimpers turn to hollers when she doesn't come right back. But just in time, Mama returns to set things right. Children will relate to Baby Llama's need for comfort, as much as parents will appreciate Mama Llama's reassuring message.

"You Are My I Love You"

by Maryann Cusimano Love

This all-time family-favorite book describes a day in the life of a parent and child. It's full of smiles and giggles, messes and meals, boundless energy and well-earned rest. Not to mention lots of love. It all comes together in simple rhyming verses accompanied by colorful, playful illustrations.

"Giraffes Can't Dance"

by Giles Andreae

Giraffes Can't Dance is a touching tale of Gerald the giraffe, who wants nothing more than to dance. With crooked knees and thin legs, it's harder for a giraffe to dance than you would think. Gerald is finally able to dance to his own tune when he gets some encouraging words from an unlikely friend.

"Press Here"

by Hervé Tullet

Press the yellow dot on the cover of this interactive children's book, follow the instructions within and embark upon a magical journey! Each page of this surprising touch book instructs the reader to push the button, shake it up, tilt the book, and who knows what will happen next! Children will giggle as the dots multiply, change direction and grow in size — igniting creativity.

"I Took the Moon for a Walk"

by Carolyn Curtis

When the day has ended and everyone else has fallen asleep, a young boy embarks on a magical adventure with his friend the Moon. Their unusual journey is described in lyrical verse, creating an enchanting story that celebrates the serene beauty of the world at night.

"The Wonderful Things You Will Be"

by Emily Winfield Martin

This is a story that extends through lifetimes. From brave and bold to creative and clever, this book expresses all the loving things that parents think of when they look at their children. With beautiful illustrations and a clever gatefold with kids in costumes, this is a book families will love reading over and over.

Happy Birthday, Blue Balliett!

Each month, we celebrate a birthday of literary significance.



"Any time you can get kids curious, they're going to pay attention and focus in a different way," writes Blue Balliett.

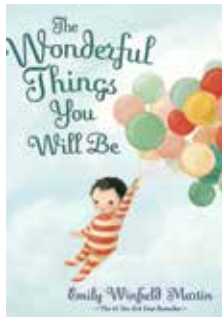
Balliett is the bestselling author of several novels, including "Chasing Vermeer," "The Wright 3," "The Calder Game" and "The Danger Box." Her work has the Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Juvenile Novel, Chicago Tribune Prize for Young Adult Fiction, the Agatha Award for Best YA Novel, as well as a spot in the official White House library. Her book "The Danger Box" was given to President Obama in January 2011 as a gift from the American Booksellers Association.

Book Worm Angels, a Chicago-based organization that continuously provides thousands of books to classrooms in public schools across the city, also honored Balliett with the 2012 Kermit W. Myers Achievement Award, for "extraordinary contributions to literacy."

Balliett's books also stretch across many audiences, as her writings appear in more than 30 languages.

Born and raised in New York City, she studied art history at Brown University. Now, she lives in Chicago and has taught

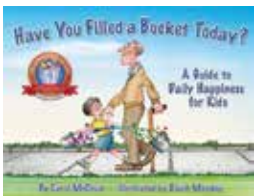
at The University of Chicago Laboratory Schools. These days writes full time, all from the comfort of the Hyde Park home that she shares with her husband and three children. ■



"Have You Filled a Bucket Today?: A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids"

by Carol McCloud

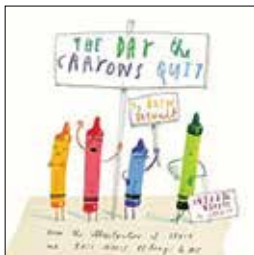
While using a simple metaphor of a bucket and a dipper, author Carol McCloud illustrates that when we choose to be kind, we not only fill the buckets of those around us, but also fill our own bucket! All day long, we are either filling up or dipping into each other's buckets by what we say and what we do. This book teaches empathy, kindness and spreading around happiness.



"The Day the Crayons Quit"

by Drew Daywalt

This hilarious and fun story outlines the tale of colorful and hardworking crayons as they try to talk to their creative owner from taking a break from their coloring duties. Beige Crayon is tired of playing second fiddle to Brown Crayon. Black wants to be used for more than just outlining. Blue needs a break from coloring all those bodies of water. What will make them resume their essential duties?



"Little Blue Truck"

by Alice Schertle

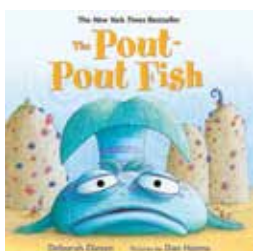
Beep! Meet Blue. A muddy country road is no match for this little pick up — that is, until he gets stuck while pushing a dump truck out of the muck. Luckily, Blue's pack of farm animal friends are willing to do whatever it takes to get their pal back on the road. This book is full of truck sounds and animal noises that kids will love. And it sends a message about the power of friendship and helping others.



"The Pout-Pout Fish"

by Deborah Diesen

Swim along with the pout-pout fish as he discovers that being glum and spreading "dreary wearies" isn't really his destiny. Bright ocean colors and playful rhyme come together in this super fun and humorous fish story that aims to turn even the poutiest of frowns upside down. ■



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MOM'S DAY OUT!

9 Local Mother's Day Events

BY ADRANISHA STEPHENS

Sure, Mother's Day gifts are always a pleasant surprise, but this holiday isn't about spending a ton of cash — it's about spending quality time with one of the most important people in our lives: Mom. Instead of a flower display or a sweet card, treat Mom (or yourself!) to a day that's extra special. Whether it's getting out and exploring or relaxing and unwinding, our list of fun activities to do together will make this Mother's Day one for the books.

MOTHER'S DAY POT PAINTING AND HERB GROWING CLASS SAT. MAY 11

This Mother's Day, take Mom to a pot painting and herb growing class. She will receive a hand-painted gift and a plant that you picked out just for her. Supplies are provided, along with tips and tricks on how to make this a memorable gift that keeps on giving. 910 Bladensburg Rd., N.E., Washington, D.C., 1-2 p.m., \$26, cultivatethecity.com.

MOTHER'S DAY KOMBUCHA WORKSHOP SAT. MAY 11

Take Mom out this weekend for an unconventional Mother's Day Tea. Instead of your typical tea party, make a batch of fresh kombucha with integrative nutrition health coach Rachel Abbett. Guests will learn how to make this fizzy beverage as Abbett explains the do's and don'ts of fermentation. You will leave with a mason jar full of starter kombucha, along with the knowledge to get brewing in your own kitchen. The workshop will conclude with an all-ages alternative to wine tasting, where patrons will sample various flavors as well as blend their own. 102 E. Fairfax St., Falls Church, Virginia. 11:30-1 p.m., Tickets start at \$30, facebook.com/luminousandgrounded.

MOTHER'S DAY 5K, 10K THROUGH MAY

Instead of brunching it up this Mother's Day, why not run for a cause? Celebrate that special someone in your life with the sixth annual Mother's Day 5K & 10K, hosted by Virtual Run Events. You choose the course and pace as you time yourself and report your finishing times to the organization. Of each registration, 15 percent will go to VITAMIN ANGELS, an institution that administers vitamins and minerals to mothers and babies that need them. Guests can complete their race any time in May, even better if it's on Mother's Day. Check website for location and time, Tickets start at \$9, virtualrunevent.com.

MOTHER'S DAY PICNIC SUNDAY, MAY 12

Spend the day with Mom at James Charles Winery and enjoy a picnic at the vineyard in her honor. As you indulge in a specialized meal, make sure to grab a seat out on the terrace to watch some live music. James Charles Winery and Vineyard, 4063 Middle Rd., Winchester, Virginia. Tickets start at \$20, jamescharleswine.com.

MOTHER'S DAY WEEKEND AT MT. VERNON MAY 11-12

Stop by George Washington's place to see a bit of American history, take in gorgeous views of the Potomac and grab a photo

with Mrs. Martha Washington. She will be handing out lavender sachets to all moms on the Mansion's piazza. 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Hwy., Virginia, 9-5 p.m, Tickets start at \$20, mountvernon.org.

MOTHER'S DAY CRUISE MAY 13

Guide the family aboard the Odyssey and treat Mom to an event full of food, live music and breathtaking views. Pick between a two- or two-and-a-half-hour cruise along the Potomac River, and take in historical D.C. landmarks from the water. The brunch buffet includes items like smoked salmon and a build-your-own Belgian waffle, while the lunch menu offers prime rib, salmon and a dessert station. 600 Water St., S.W., Washington, D.C., Tickets start at \$82.90/adult, \$49.74/child for brunch and lunch; \$109/person for dinner/ 9:15 a.m. boarding time for brunch, 2:15 for lunch and dinner, odysseycruises.com.

MOTHER'S DAY BRUNCH AT PINSTripES MAY 13

This Mother's Day, what better way to celebrate than with a fun game of bowling and food? Dishes include custom omelets, carved prime rib, fresh shrimp, bagels, smoked salmon, waffles and a chocolate fountain. For the young ones, there's even a Kids Corner with pizza, chicken

fingers and mac and cheese. 11920 Grand Park Ave., North Bethesda, Maryland, 10-4 p.m. Tickets start at \$34 for adults, \$15 for children ages 6-12, kids 5 and younger are free, pinstripes.com.

MOTHER'S DAY TEA AT GREEN SPRING GARDENS MAY 13

Sip on some tea and listen to classic poetry, all dedicated to moms this Mother's Day. Make sure to stroll through the wooded stream valley, layered with more than 20 thematic demonstration gardens before or after the event. There will also be prize drawings and favor bags available. 4603 Green Spring Rd. Alexandria, Virginia, 1 p.m., \$45, fairfaxcounty.gov.

MOTHER'S DAY GARDEN TOUR AT TUDOR PLACE HISTORIC HOUSE AND GARDEN MAY 13

Take a springtime tour with Mom this Mother's Day as experts guide you through an expedition of the historic gardens at this 5.5-acre, 19th-century property. Learn about plants that were initially seeded a century ago, such as the Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow forget-me-nots, Florentine tulips and grape varieties ascending the North Garden Arbor. 1644 31st St., N.W., Washington, D.C., tudorplace.org, 9-10 a.m., Tickets start at \$15 for members, \$20 for non-member, tudorplace.org. ■



"I felt helpless as a mom, trying to balance what I knew was 'normal' while also agonizing that unlike most kids, my son refused carrots or grapes."

— KATHRYN STREETER

It Takes a Village

How My Child's Eating Habits Changed and I Had Nothing to Do With It

BY KATHRYN STREETER

The sun descended into the ocean, a fiery orange ball igniting disco-like flashes across the rolling waves.

Sunburned, the kids were weary, beginning to fray. Parents faced the aftermath of a full day at the beach, involving lots of sand tracks through the house and messy baths because of said sand. The grandparents turned their attention to dinner: It was burger night.

Unlike everyone else, my son's burger was plain; he wouldn't let lettuce and tomato ruin his hamburger. The cousins sat together at the bar, boys to one side, the giggly girls the other. Coughing and vomiting suddenly hushed all laughter and conversation.

"Ewww! Gross," the girls shrieked.

A cousin had pranked my son, hiding a small succulent piece of lettuce in his burger. Everything in my kid's stomach from the day now decorated his once-plain burger.

I caught my weary head in my hands. This scene was a vivid reminder that our son had issues with vegetables. He started rejecting fresh produce as a wee toddler, but it wasn't until he began gagging and throwing-up that I accepted his aversion wasn't in his mind or a childish act of rebellion. With the exception of applesauce, he simply couldn't tolerate the texture of produce.

As he grew, he enjoyed junk food like any kid. Candy. Ice cream. Chips. When junior high arrived, energy drinks were the rage and my son's friends introduced him to Monster. I felt helpless as a mom, trying to balance what I knew was 'normal' while also agonizing that unlike most kids, my son refused carrots or grapes. He looked like the picture of health, but I worried a lifetime of bad eating habits would dog him.

My admonitions that he re-try fruits and vegetables every so often didn't only fall on deaf ears, they deepened his resistance. All things considering, I let go. I couldn't fix this. Instead, I choose to prioritize my relationship with him.

And then, one day, everything started changing. My son was required to read Michael Pollan's "The Omnivore's Dilemma Young Readers Edition" for his ninth grade English class. Using the question "What's for dinner?" as a prompt, Pollan unpacks what is hidden in the everyday foods we consume. My teen's curiosity was whet. What he learned appalled him.

"Do you actually know what we are eating, Mom?"

His reaction was pure disgust as he learned what processed food is. Frowning, he read food labels. Around the dinner table, he singled out corn, but not in the way you may think.

"Corn-filler is slipped into just about everything we eat. It's terrible for you!" I was getting lectured, but I didn't mind. Every fleeting anxiety I'd had about his posture toward food vanished. Overnight, he had morphed into an advocate for health, urging me to quit buying white rice. White rice, he explained, was stripped of all its protein and minerals so it had a longer shelf life.

"Brown rice is loaded with protein. Get that." Nodding, I listened in silence. This book was teaching him in ways I couldn't.

When he changed, I had to change, too. Whole-grain bread for sandwiches and protein-packed energy bars fill my grocery cart. For breakfast, granola fresh out of the grocery storage bins or oatmeal, the old-fashioned rolled oats kind, "Not the instant packets, Mom!"

I had been regularly buying ice cream for my teens but suddenly it got freezer-burn. Sugary cereal got stale. He cut back on all of the processed foods I'd stocked the pantry with. He boosted his water intake. Gratefully, he had always liked fish and we stepped up our consumption.

On an ordinary school night, I tap on his bedroom door. "Tea." He's quit dessert and instead, ends the day with hot tea. Taking chamomile back to his room also gives me a chance to say good-night to my high-schooler. In the morning, out of the corner of my eye, I see him remove a bag of Pringles from his brown-bag lunch.

"That's junk, Mom. Empty calories." He reaches instead for almonds and cashews.

"I'm still getting the hang of this!" Truly, I am.

There may come a day when he reattempts a hamburger with lettuce. But even if he doesn't, his foundational thinking about food and health no longer troubles me.

I know I can't take any credit for this victory and honestly, it doesn't matter. I long ago accepted that it takes a village to raise a child. Today, I recognize that books are influential members of this community as well. ■

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

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