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INSIDE!**  
P. 18

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Keep the birthday bash jumping with age-appropriate party activities. **Pg. 14**

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## DIRECTORY

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## READERS' RESPONSES

We welcome your feedback — on specific articles, overall themes and anything else related to editorial content. Enter your comments on the Feedback tab of our website: [info@washingtonfamily.com](mailto:info@washingtonfamily.com).

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

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YOUR  
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# Washington FAMILY

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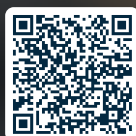
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# Thank You Moms and Teachers

**T**hey've cooked thousands of homemade dinners, crafted Halloween costumes, set up makeshift forts in backyards, offered advice and comfort, drove to endless sports practices and recitals ... I could go on and on. Where would we be as adults and parents today without our moms?

Celebrated on the second Sunday in May, Mother's Day is the day we thank the moms in our lives for all that they do. In this issue of *Washington FAMILY*, we're honoring military moms who serve their families and country (page 10).

May is also the month when we take time to express appreciation for teachers and the lasting contributions they make in the lives of their students. Contributing writer Jennifer Marino Walters profiles several teachers from the DMV who dedicate themselves to promoting academic excellence and personal growth in their students (page 12).

Saying thank you is something all of us can teach our children from an early age. Whether it's to acknowledge a kind word or deed or a physical present, our article on the art of the thank-you note offers ways to cultivate an attitude of gratitude in kids (page 16).

While we're talking about expressing thanks, we want to thank you, our readers, for your continuing support for *Washington FAMILY*. This year marks our 30th year of publication, and we have much to celebrate. Do you have a favorite story from a past issue? Was your child one of our cover kids? Share your comments, photos and reflections with me by emailing mvyskocil@midatlanticmedia.com. We invite you to be part of our 30th-anniversary celebration.

Happy Mother's Day to all of our DMV moms and happy reading! ■

*Michael Vyskocil*



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# {TOP 10}

BY LEENIKA BELFIELD-MARTIN

## Family Events for May

Celebrate Mother's Day, Memorial Day and more with your family this month.



# 1

**MAY 1**

### SILVER SPRING MOTHER'S DAY ARTS AND CRAFTS FAIR

What better way to show mom that you care then with a beautiful locally made craft? You'll find plenty to choose from with this event's 60 artisan crafters, plus enjoy activities for the kids.

Free  
[silverspringdowntown.com](http://silverspringdowntown.com)



# 2

**MAY 6-8**

### SESAME STREET LIVE! LET'S PARTY!

Join Elmo, Abby, Big Bird and Sesame Street friends for this fun, interactive experience at EagleBank Arena in Fairfax. You and your little one will be on your feet dancing to the show's pop-infused soundtrack featuring familiar songs like "C Is for Cookie." Show dates and times are Friday, May 6, 6 p.m.; Saturday, May 7, 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. and Sunday, May 8, 10:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.

Tickets start at \$20 a person.  
[sesamestreetlive.com](http://sesamestreetlive.com)



# 3

**MAY 7**

### PASSPORT DC AROUND THE EMBASSY TOUR

You don't need to hop on a plane to travel the world. Instead, you can take a stroll through Embassy Row to experience the rich local and international cultures that Washington offers. Take the family for an experience of touring one of the embassies. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Free. Event organizers recommend that you take a form of government-issued identification with you.  
[culturaltourismdc.org/portal/passport-dc1](http://culturaltourismdc.org/portal/passport-dc1)

**MAY 14**

### MOUNT RAINIER DAY

It's Mount Rainier's biggest celebration of the year. Activities include a grand parade starting at the Kaywood Theater, plus various local vendors and entertainers. The celebration also includes a selection of festivities just for kids. 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Free  
[mountrainiermd.org/residents/mount-rainier-day](http://mountrainiermd.org/residents/mount-rainier-day)



# 4



# 5

**MAY 15**

### 2022 ASIAN FESTIVAL ON MAIN

Celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month on Fairfax's Main Street. This event highlights cultural heritage through food, arts and crafts, education and performances.

Free  
[asianfestivalonmain.com](http://asianfestivalonmain.com)



**MAY 15**

**NSO FAMILY CONCERT:  
"PHILHARMONIA  
FANTASTIQUE: THE  
MAKING OF AN  
ORCHESTRA"**

Follow a magic sprite as it embarks on a musical journey through the inner workings of an orchestra. This unique hybrid experience has the symphonic sounds of the NSO, as well as stunning visuals that blend animated and live action filming. Tickets start at \$18.

[kennedy-center.org/nso/home/2021-2022/philharmonia-fantastique/](https://kennedy-center.org/nso/home/2021-2022/philharmonia-fantastique/)



**MAY 21**

**GAITHERSBURG BOOK FESTIVAL**

Celebrate the power of the written word with this fun-filled literary event. When you go, don't forget to visit the children's village for literary activities, writing workshops and more. Admission and parking are free.

[gaithersburgbookfestival.org](https://gaithersburgbookfestival.org)

**MAY 30**

**NATIONAL MEMORIAL DAY PARADE**

The nation's largest Memorial Day parade returns. Catch this patriotic parade in person along Constitution Avenue in Washington at 2 p.m.

Free

[americanveteranscenter.org/parade](https://americanveteranscenter.org/parade)



**MAY 21**

**KIDSFEST SPRING  
FAIR AT MANASSAS  
MUSEUM**

KidFest offers the best of both worlds! Not only does it have the best exhibitors offering products and services for parents, but it will also feature inflatables, carnival games and activities for the kids.

The event is free, but moon bounces and games are available for a fee.

[chiceventsdc.com/may-21-2022-kidsfest-spring-fair](https://chiceventsdc.com/may-21-2022-kidsfest-spring-fair)



**MAY 21**

**MCLEAN DAY 2022**

Bring the family and enjoy music, games, balloon animals, a petting zoo, amusements, sponsors, exhibitors, gourmet food trucks, carnival rides and more.

Free admission; ride tickets are sold at the venue or may be purchased in advance online.

[mcleancenter.org/special-events/upcoming/day.listevents/2022/05/21](https://mcleancenter.org/special-events/upcoming/day.listevents/2022/05/21)



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# HERE'S WHAT WE'RE LOVING FOR KIDS THIS MONTH

BY ELENA EPSTEIN,  
DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL  
PARENTING PRODUCT AWARDS

For more product reviews, visit [nappaawards.com](http://nappaawards.com)

ILLUSTRATION: FANDSRABUTAN/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS;  
PRODUCT IMAGES COURTESY OF NAPPA



## comfiGO® Kids Friendly Car Booster Seat

This comfortable and convenient car booster seat is great for travel. Its shoulder guide smoothly adjusts the car's seat belt to your child's height, and the patented stretchable and adjustable lap band keeps the vehicle's lap belt section low on the hips. \$59.95, ages 4-12, [clypx.com](http://clypx.com)



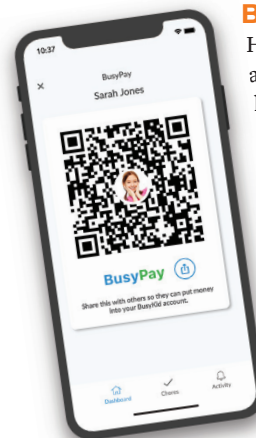
## Tonka Steel Classics – Mighty Dump Truck

Your little one will enjoy playing with this truck for hours on end. This sturdy, steel construction vehicle is ready for the toughest loading jobs. \$24.99, ages 3+, [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)



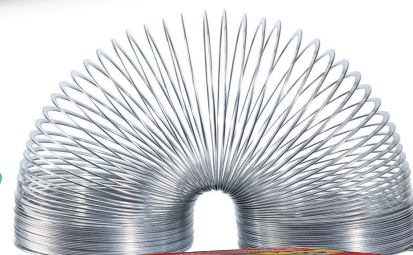
## Hazel's Helpers

Help your children develop decision making, construction craft and planning capabilities. They can play while practicing fine motor skills. \$34, ages 4+, [simplyfun.com](http://simplyfun.com)



## BusyKid

Here's an educational app that helps teach kids how to earn, save, share, spend and invest a real allowance. The app also provides a prepaid debit card so that kids can learn how to manage and spend money one can't see. \$3.99 per month, ages 5-16, [busykid.com](http://busykid.com)



## Slinky: 75th Anniversary Classic Slinky

Celebrate 75 years of wiggly-jiggly fun. This classic metal spring toy walks downstairs, alone or in pairs, and makes a slink-ity sound. \$3.99, ages 5+, [target.com](http://target.com)





### Techno Tiles

Kids gain creative freedom in building masterpieces they can play with. From rockets to castles, vehicles and abstract structures, imagination is limitless with these tiles. \$19.99, ages 4-8, [tlji.com](http://tlji.com)

### SleepOvation Baby Mattress

This innovative product reduces pressure on the head while keeping the spine correctly aligned.

The two-stage design supports the newborn and toddler phases.

\$475, birth-2 years, [sleepovationbaby.com](http://sleepovationbaby.com)



### SunGemmers Suncatchers

Uniquely colored transparent gem stickers catch and amplify the sun, creating a glowing, sparkly effect. The craft kit includes preprinted window designs, color guides and more than 1,000 gemstone stickers. \$12.99, ages 6+, [plbfun.com](http://plbfun.com)



### MONSTER GO Snake Puzzle

Kids can have all the fun in one. It's detachable, disassembled into pieces and can connect into different sets according to your child's imagination. \$9.90, ages 6+, [monster-go.com](http://monster-go.com)



### Sleep Bag

Indulge in this wearable blanket made from bamboo fabric that is breathable and buttery soft to the touch. This item features a J-shaped double zipper, which makes it super easy to use. \$50, ages birth-24 months, [kytebaby.com](http://kytebaby.com)

## Youth & Teen Art Camps at **The Art League** ages 5 & up



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The Art League  
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# MILITARY

## Tales from mothers serving across the DMV

BY LINDSAY C. VANASDALAN

Capt. Candice Hunt takes the family out to their favorite pizza place on one of the days where cooking dinner would be too much for her and they need her attention.



Lt. Col. Racine Randolph attended the Pentagon's Month of the Military Child Event, 2018, with her children.

Capt. Candice Hunt has her morning routine down pat. As a mother in the U.S. Marine Corps, based in Quantico, she gets up around 5 a.m. before waking her three children about an hour later to get ready for school. Her ex-husband—in U.S. Air Force security forces at the Pentagon—gives her a few nights off each week.

Co-parenting can be difficult to navigate in any family, but even more so in the military with unexpected late nights, responsibilities that take priority and sometimes long deployments.

It can be impossible to achieve balance, Hunt says.

"I thought the military was the hardest thing I've ever done until I had kids," she says. "There is no balance. There really isn't. You just try to be organized and set goals, and you allow yourself to not always be perfect and you keep moving."

As a woman in the military, Hunt is a rarity. Women comprised only 16% of enlisted forces—and 8% of the Marine Corps—in 2018, according to background provided by the Council on Foreign Relations.

Pair military service with motherhood, and the experiences are rather unique.

Washington FAMILY spoke to three mothers about what it's like to be a mom serving in the military.

### You're Never Alone

Getting by day to day often takes outside commitments. Hunt uses a nanny for her children—ages 2, 4 and 7—one or two nights a week if she or her husband is deployed so that their routines are not disrupted.

With schedules that are often unpredictable, it helps considerably to have family members nearby who are able to step in. In the case of Racine R. Randolph, a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army, her mother relocated with her disabled father to help care for her 6-month-old while she was deployed for a year.

"All of this becomes an extended family affair," she says. She adds that it was important to her to have someone care for her son who knew and loved him as much as they did.

A special camaraderie exists among military neighbors and friends. Military families—especially stay-at-home moms—have stepped up for Hunt, cooking dinners or picking up the kids, regardless of whether she was living on base or what branch they were in, she says.

"I don't think I could have made it, especially on my first tour with my first kid, if I didn't have neighbors and friends who were there," Hunt adds.

Tammye Abbott found the same support. She was a single mom during her 20-year service in the U.S. Navy. Her sons are now 23 and 35.

"Being a single parent in active duty is not easy," she says.

Her next-door neighbor is active duty, and his wife would pick up her son when she had overnight assignments and ensure he was fed, washed and doing homework.

Abbott says they're still the best of friends.

"Having friends that understand what it's like to sacrifice—to serve in the military—they're all the more willing to jump in and help you out," Randolph says.

### The Challenge of Separation

In her 16-year career, Hunt has been fortunate enough to have only one major overseas duty station, in Japan, where she lived with her family for three years. Many military moms aren't as lucky.

Randolph recalls the logistical difficulties of shipping her breast milk home to her infant

# MOMS, We Salute You!

for the first time when she was on tour alone in Korea for a year. Shipping cost \$800, and the breast milk was stuck in customs for three days.

Abbott, who grew up with a stay-at-home mom while her military father was overseas, believes there's something about having a mother away that's more difficult.

When her eldest son was getting his clinical hours to be a military social worker, he realized how much help he needed, Abbott recalls. He asked her how she used to do it. "It's hard just getting me up and out doing what I need to do," Abbott remembers him saying.

Hunt says a lot of dads are stepping up. Her last master sergeant, for example, became the primary parent on call so that his wife could start her career. This example made Hunt realize that she should never assume fathers are more available in their careers than mothers.

Programs in the military to ease the burden of family separation exist. They aim to keep military parents together, but they do not apply to civilian spouses such as Randolph's spouse.

Randolph had to make the difficult choice to take her yearlong tour alone to sustain her husband's career. Although he and her youngest were able to visit once, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 kept her family, including two older children, now 7 and 8, apart for the rest of the tour.

"Service to your country as a mother is a sacrifice that cannot be repaid," she says. It took her youngest son—now 3—about a year to "have that trust and love for me" when she returned in 2021.

Abbott cried for two weeks when she started a six-month assignment—her longest up to that point. Her kids were 2 and 15 at the time.

"The flag secretary would be asked every day if I was still crying. 'Yes, sir, but not as much,' or 'she's OK, sir. She's drying up,'" Abbott says.

## Military Support

Randolph, who works for the Army Talent Management Task Force, says one of the goals they're working toward is longer stretches between moves and telework options. This development is something that she's been hoping to see as she reflects on her 21 years of service. Many more dual working families exist today compared to the 1960s, according to the Pew Research Center.

The Navy has carrier groups that give an eight- or nine-hour family cruise with fun activities before a deployment. It helps children adapt by becoming familiar with

where their parents will be living and working, Abbott says.

And the military provides local benefits to families: more affordable child care on base and facilities on site such as youth sports and libraries that provide convenience to working parents.

Sometimes, finding support is also about being open with your superiors, Hunt says.

"If you have a bad day because life is hard, (it's) being able to go to your boss and have that conversation," she says. "Hopefully, they had a few experiences, too, to understand."

## Making It Work

As a parent in the military, you will have to make sacrifices, but you can exercise priorities.

"Everyone has to sit down and think about what the must-dos are," Randolph says, whether they be dinner together or attending sports games.

Hunt makes accommodations she can for her kids, such as letting her son visit his old friends and feeding off her daughter's excitement for moving to a new location.

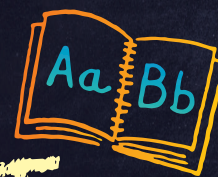
"She thinks it's an adventure," Hunt says, noting everything is exciting for her, whether it's new friends or a new house.

All three women also have incredible takeaways from their experiences that they can share with their kids: respect for service, exposure to history and diversity and the knowledge that it's OK to fail and try again.

"I was proud to be in the military," Abbott says. "It makes you feel like you're doing something really important." ■



Tammye Abbott and her two sons are shown at her youngest's graduation from Potomac High School.



# Celebrating Outstanding Teachers

## Meet Three Star Teachers in the DMV

BY JENNIFER MARINO WALTERS

Over the past two years, teachers have gone above and beyond for their students. During the first part of the COVID-19 pandemic, they proved their adaptability by juggling virtual, in-person and hybrid learning. After schools fully reopened, they've helped students readjust to being in the classroom.

This month, during Teacher Appreciation Week, May 2-6, it's time to celebrate and recognize teachers for their service and dedication. Meet some of the outstanding educators who serve the DMV.

### **Dr. Monica Isquith Subject Expert Teacher: Spanish | BASIS Independent McLean**

Dr. Monica Isquith has been a teacher in Northern Virginia for 20 years. She's spent the past six of them at BASIS Independent McLean. She teaches middle school science and high school honors biology, and her students have a passing rate of 100% on the AP exams.

Isquith serves as the sponsor for the Hispanic Honors Society and the Biology Club. She started the girls' middle school basketball team and the co-ed volleyball and tennis teams. She's taken students on four trips to the Galapagos Islands for an interactive Spanish and science learning experience.

#### **What do you love most about being a teacher?**

I love the amazing energy the students have and the impact I can make on their lives. The most rewarding part is to see students getting excited about learning. But what I love most is the interaction with the students—to know them and work hard to inspire them.

#### **What is one of your biggest goals as a teacher?**

My biggest goal is that students feel safe in my



*Dr. Monica Isquith - BASIS Independent McLean*

classroom—that they are able to participate and share their ideas without being judged. If they feel safe, they will learn and enjoy being at school. I hope my students gain confidence and determination and that they feel the passion I have for what I teach and am able to apply it to themselves. When you treat your students with love, learning gets easier for them, and you receive love back.

#### **What was your funniest teaching moment?**

There have been a lot in 20 years, but a really sweet and funny moment was when we dissected a brain. One of my students yelled out, "This is the best moment of my entire life!" I know this student will have moments that are more amazing in her life, but on that day, I made her have the best day of her life!

#### **How can parents work with teachers to best support their children?**

Parents should focus on the learning part and the student's experiences at school, not just on the grade. Always ask your child to tell you something they learned in school that day. Even if there is no answer, never stop asking.

### **Pearl Brown and Hannah Chick Co-Teachers, Middle School Classroom | Oneness-Family Montessori School**

Pearl Brown applies her scientifically trained mind—she earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry—and poetry-writing heart to provide versatile teaching and mentoring to Oneness-Family middle school students. She is known to use, by turns, power, tenderness, pressure and patience in the classroom.

Prior to joining Oneness-Family in 2009, Hannah Chick was the dean of students in the middle school at the Thornton Friends School in Silver Spring, as well as a middle school and high school science teacher. While at the school, she developed a three-year integrated middle school science program with an environmental focus. A biology major in college, she teaches all subjects at Oneness-Family.

#### **What do you love most about teaching?**

**Brown:** I love the positive impact that I have on each of my students. I love getting to know what they like and don't like and what makes them laugh. The most rewarding part of teaching is guiding students to honor, respect and love themselves—to say yes to their strengths and welcome the lessons learned from their weaknesses.

**Chick:** I love teaching in a multi-age classroom because I cherish the relationships I develop with students over my three years with them. Especially in middle school, so much change and growth happens over three years. I get to be a part of their journey of growing and discovering themselves. It's incredibly rewarding to help students stretch beyond their comfort zone academically, socially and personally and to see the sense of accomplishment, pride and



Pearl Brown (far left) and Hannah Chick (far right) with their students at Oneness-Family Montessori

confidence they exude when they surpass their expectations of their abilities.

### What is your teaching approach?

**Brown:** My approach is to teach students to think through an assignment. The most important skill in learning is not that you got the “right” answer, but that you can explain the reasoning that led you to the answer you got. That helps students develop confidence in their reasoning and analytical skills, which helps them better handle their academic and personal challenges.

**Chick:** I tend to lean into understanding the big picture and recognizing patterns over encouraging students to memorize information.

### What is one of your biggest goals as a teacher?

**Brown:** My hope is that after my students have left my class they will have confidence in their abilities to think and reason and to explain their work, that they will love and honor the person they are becoming, that they will always affirm their goodness and that they will recover from their

mistakes with resiliency, grace, and a deeper knowledge of their personhood.

**Chick:** I hope that the students I work with grow in their confidence in their capacity to meet challenges, their ability to advocate for themselves, their capacity for self-reflection and their willingness to seek out novel experiences that push them beyond their comfort zone.

### How can parents work with teachers to best support their children?

**Brown:** Understand that the child we see and interact with at school may not be the same child they see at home. Therefore, it is important that teachers and parents form a team in which consistent communication flows easily and honestly. Parents should love and accept their children as the whole person they are. Too often parents act like grades define their child’s success or failure, and that is simply not true. The goal of education should be to educate the whole child, not just isolated academic parts of the child.

**Chick:** Communicate! If there are things going on at home that are out of the normal routine, send an email so teachers have a heads up. Trust that your child’s teacher has his or her best interest at heart. If your child tells you that something is going on in class that surprises you, reach out and ask questions. Make it a family routine to talk about the things they do in class each week. ■

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# Children's

## How to keep the birthday bash going from the time the doorbell rings until the last guest departs

BY LEENIKA BELFIELD-MARTIN

**Y**ou've sent invitations, bought decorations, made a list (and checked it twice) ... now you're ready to throw your child the best birthday party of the season. But the biggest task has yet to begin: hosting the party. Don't let all your preparation go to waste. Find out how you can make sure that your guests will be entertained.

### Think about a theme

Keeping in mind your party's theme is a great way to help you stay organized and add some flair to the activities. Turn simple activities into exciting entertainment by incorporating the theme into them. For example, "pin the tail" on the donkey can be morphed into "pin the patch on the pirate" for a pirate-themed birthday.

### Keep the structure simple

What party guests are going to be able to bounce on a moon bounce, get their faces painted, play six different games and eat pizza all within a three-hour period? None of them. Don't overwhelm your guests with too many things to do. Avoid activity overload by keeping your party activity schedule straightforward and easy.

### Listen to your child

Your child knows exactly what his or her friends enjoy doing and what activities they dislike. Let your child provide a list of suggestions for activities. You may not be able to accommodate all their requests, like booking a favorite musical artist for entertainment, but the experience will give you a feel for what activities your child's peers like to do.

### Set a schedule

Schedule what you plan to do with your guests a week before your event. Your schedule doesn't have to be too structured. Kids lose attention quickly, so most activities should last only about 30 to 40 minutes. If your activities are outdoors, weather

TO MAKE SURE EVERYONE FEELS LIKE A WINNER, AVOID COMPETITIVE GAMES AT A PARTY. IF THERE ARE PRIZES, FIND A WAY FOR EVERY KID TO GET ONE.

BALLOONS: JULIA\_SUDNITSKAYA/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS; DOORBELL: DORIOCONNELL/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS

# Party Activities

permitting, make sure to have a plan B for alternate indoor things to do. Classic party games make a convenient alternative.

## Don't forget to delegate

You can easily get overwhelmed when you're hosting an event. Lift the weight off your shoulders by putting together a "party crew" of family members and friends to help you on party day. By delegating tasks to your party crew, you'll free up your time to host. Having the parents of your child's friends stay for the duration of the party can also help things run more smoothly. Just be sure to have enough food and drinks for your adult guests.

## When in doubt, dance it out

How do you deal with the awkward transitions from one activity to another or a waning interest from kids? It's time for a dance break! Turn on tunes and let the music work its magic. You can have the little ones help you pick out a few trendy songs beforehand, or you can use child-friendly party playlists that music streaming services offer.

## What about a movie?

Wind down a party with a movie. Pick three or four options for kids to vote on, then turn on the movie while you begin the cleanup. Don't forget to pop some popcorn and get some blankets together to make the experience as cozy as possible (bonus points if you've chosen a sing-a-long film).

## Keep calm

The most important thing you have to do while hosting your child's party festivities is to keep your cool. Your attitude and enthusiasm set the tone for the vibe of the party. Your child and their friends probably won't remember the little bumps in the road that happen along the way, but they'll remember the joy they're celebrating at your party. ■

## Hiring Help

Bringing in the party professionals to lead the fun can keep children occupied and give parents a break from working the party. Consider balloon artists, magicians, musicians and storytellers. Fees vary depending on the entertainer and length of time you select. Look for entertainers who let the kids get involved. For example, you may want to ask a magician to provide a scarf and magic wand for each child so that the magician can have kids follow along with a simple magic trick.

Check our party directory in this issue and on our website to find entertainers in our area who specialize in kids' parties. You can also contact children's museums, schools or parents you know for ideas and recommendations.

—Michael Vyskocil



# The Art of the Thank-You Note

Motivate your kids  
to express  
their gratitude

BY MICHAEL VYSKOCIL



Thank  
you!

# W

hat child doesn't love getting gifts? What if kids approached writing thank-you notes for those gifts with the same love?

Learning to write thank-you notes can be fun, and it's something kids of any age can do. First, a few points about thank-you note etiquette:

- Your child should acknowledge every gift, no matter how small, with a thank-you note. Some parents feel that this expression of gratitude should always be in the form of a handwritten note. Others feel a verbal thank-you message is OK if the person giving the gift is present when the child opened the gift. You'll need to decide which approach you want to follow in your family.
- Write and promptly mail thank-you notes within a few days of receiving gifts.

How do you get your kids interested in the art of the thank-you note? Start with a positive attitude. If you nag your kids to do it, they'll approach writing thank-you notes as something to dread. "I think the main reason kids ought to write thank-you notes is that grateful people are happy people," says Raffi Bilek, a family therapist and director of the Baltimore Therapy Center, in a Postable article. "Gratitude is a key factor in enduring,

long-term happiness. Training our children to appreciate what they have and what they receive is an important way to instill this trait in them."

Learn what you can do to give your kids some encouragement:

- Keep thank-you notes short. The notes don't need to be elaborate to be effective. If your child spends an entire morning writing one, he'll run out of steam before he gets to the others.
- Make it fun. Use colored papers, stickers, stamps, crayons, colored pencils, sequins and other craft-store objects to turn an ordinary thank-you note into something extraordinary for the recipient.
- Help your child understand the reasons for writing in the first place. You might talk to your child about how Aunt Pat spent time looking for just the right pair of roller skates so that her niece can enjoy them. Ask your child to think about a time when she gave a gift to someone. How did she feel when she got a thank you back?
- Make thank-you note writing something the family can do together. Children follow by example. Sit down at the kitchen table and write your own thank-you notes so that your child can see how important expressing gratitude is to you. Offer help if your child gets stuck.

## Thank-You Note Tips

### Younger Kids (Ages 3 to 7)

- Young children can put the fun into thank-you cards. For example, you can snap and print a photo of your son wearing the new baseball cap he got from his grandparents. Ask him to make a drawing or two on the photo.
- If your child knows how to write, have him use a pen or marker to write "thank you" on the photo or on a note card you can tuck into an envelope with the photo.

### Older Kids (Ages 8 and older)

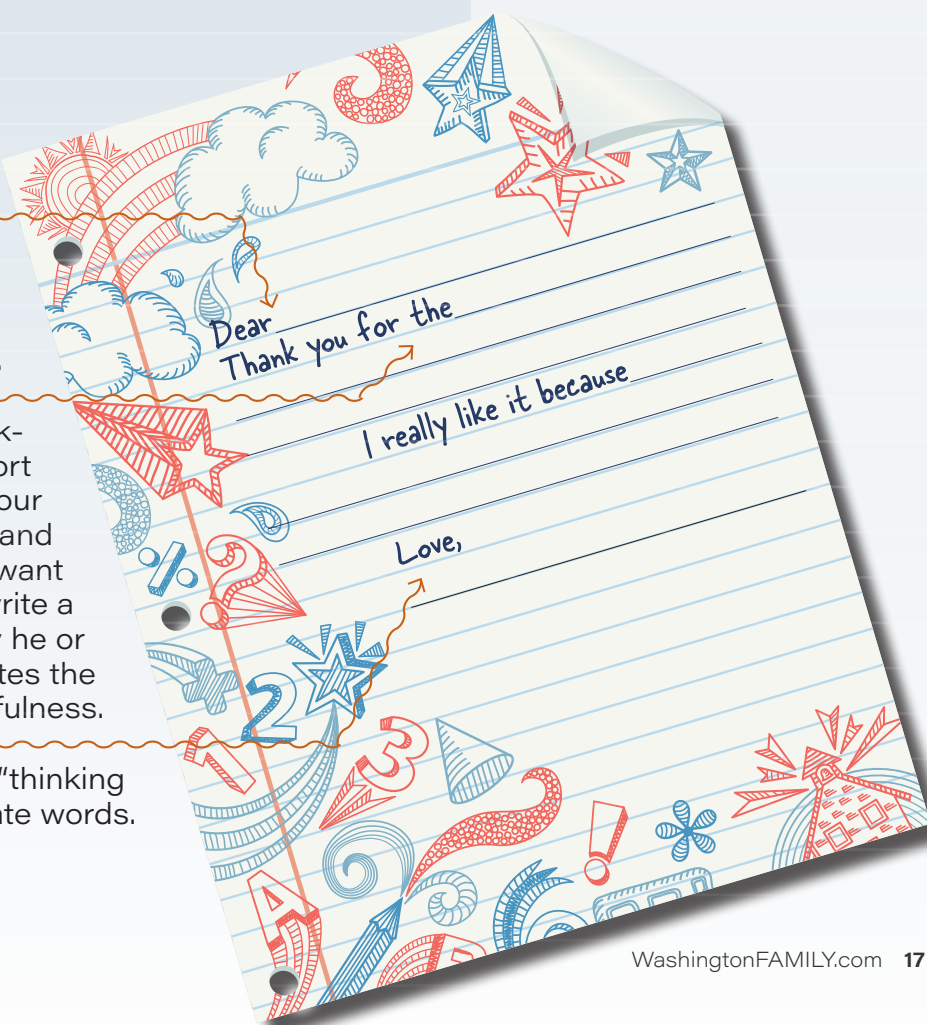
- Teach your child the basic parts of a thank-you note: a greeting to the person who gave the gift, the body containing details thanking the person for the gift and mentioning how he or she likes the gift or will use it, and a sign-off with your child's name.
- Children might get intimidated by finding the right words to say. Encourage your kids to use the words that are natural to them so that the message comes from the heart.
- Make writing thank-you notes part of a daily routine. Leave blank cards or paper where your child is most likely to see them, such as on a bedside table or a bedroom desk. ■

## All basic thank-you notes have the following parts:

**Greeting:** This line contains the word "Dear" followed by the name of the person who gave your child the gift.

**Body:** The body of the thank-you note can be a few short sentences. In the body, have your child acknowledge the gift and express gratitude. You may want to encourage your child to write a sentence or two about why he or she likes the gift or appreciates the gift giver's thoughtfulness.

**Closing:** Sign off with "love," "thinking of you" or other appropriate words.



# 2022 PARTY DIRECTORY

## LET'S GET THIS PARTY STARTED!

Whatever you're celebrating — birthdays, graduations, anniversaries — Washington FAMILY's Party Directory 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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Ellicott City, MD 21042

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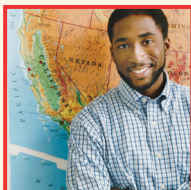
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*Editor's Note: To view more listings from  
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# Mother's Day

## AWARD RIBBON CRAFT

BY MIMI MARKOPOULOS

**M**other's Day celebrates motherhood and the contribution of mothers to society. Did you know that the holiday is celebrated worldwide as an international day to honor moms? In addition, Mother's Day is observed on the second Sunday in May in the United States every year. It is often marked by people

sending Mother's Day gifts and cards to their moms or mother figures in their lives.

In the United States, three women were most responsible for establishing the tradition of Mother's Day: Ann Reeves Jarvis, Julia Ward Howe and Ann's daughter, Anna M. Jarvis. These three women—who

advocated efforts toward adopting better health, welfare, peace and love—contributed to the day we celebrate mothers.

Now that we've had a history lesson, let's get right into making this simple, adorable and fun-to-make craft.



## MAKING MOTHER'S DAY AWARD RIBBONS

### Materials:

- Scissors
- 3 sheets of colored construction paper
- 1 piece of white paper
- Glue
- Marker

### Directions:

1. Cut 1 piece of colored construction paper into five long strips.
2. Make a snowflake shape out of the paper strips by

overlapping them and gluing them in the center as you go.

3. Hold the top part of the snowflake shape. Loop it down and glue it to the center at the spot of the strips' initial overlap.
4. Cut out a circle from white paper. Write a message such as No. 1 Mom on the circle and glue the paper circle at the center of the colored construction paper shape.
5. Cut the remaining two pieces of construction paper into two rectangles with a triangle-shaped notch at each end to resemble the notched edges of a ribbon.
6. Glue the ribbon strips to the back of your award.

## CONSIDER THESE FUN IDEAS FOR CELEBRATING MOTHER'S DAY:

Take mom to a spa.  
Take her out to her favorite restaurant for a meal.  
Prepare breakfast in bed.

Have a picnic in the park.  
Enjoy some fun at an indoor pool or activity center.  
Create something together. ■



### How can an educational consultant help my special needs child?

According to the Independent Educational Consultants Association, “An Independent Educational Consultant (IEC) is someone who can assist you in finding the most suitable school placement for your child using an individualized approach. The IEC conducts personal interviews with your child and your family and combines it with data collected on the student including school transcripts, teacher comments and prior testing. In addition, an IEC has an extensive knowledge of schools and their available support services and profile, including student-teacher ratio, teacher credentials and availability of learning aids like computers and tape recorders, plus the culture and school environment.” For more information about IECs, visit [iecaonline.com](http://iecaonline.com).

# Finding the Perfect Fit for Education

## How to pick the right school for your child with special needs

BY JACQUELINE RENFROW

Parents want the best education possible for their children. But when you parent a child with special needs, deciding which school will best support your son or daughter’s needs is not easy. We spoke with educational planning experts who specialize in understanding the academic and social-emotional needs of neurodiverse children for some tips to help parents find the perfect fit for a child at any age.

First, it’s about matching a school to your learner, not the learner to the school, according to Brad Hoffman (M.S.Ed), a board-certified educational planner at My Learning Springboard Inc. Hoffman’s company serves students around the country but primarily in the greater Washington and New York City areas. The boutique, multidisciplinary educational consulting firm works with learners of all ages—from preschool through young adults—with diverse learning goals.

“A school can have a phenomenal reputation without necessarily being the right fit for your child,” Hoffman says. “Many families we work with send their multiple children to different schools. It certainly presents an added challenge logistically, but for a variety of reasons, one particular school may not be well suited to the individual needs of each of your children.”

Before diving in, parents need to keep in mind that making educational placement decisions means putting the child’s current and potential schools under a microscope. Before the process can begin, parents need to make a list of their top priorities for a school environment since some tradeoffs may be likely.

“All choices come with opportunity costs, and school selection is not exempt from this reality,” Hoffman says. “Academic programming and perceived rigor,

learning support, athletics, clubs, activities, facilities, geography, and costs are all important factors to consider.”

### Taking the first step

Whether a parent chooses to work with an educational consultant or look into school choices, the first step is assessing the child’s current school environment and experience.

When determining whether the child is currently in the proper school setting, Hoffman’s team typically starts by reviewing all of the academic records and previous assessments and speaking to any of the child’s relevant service providers. They ask parents to think about what their child needs to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally in school.

Hoffman recommends that parents make a pros and cons list of what is working and what is not working in their child’s current school setting.

“It is imperative to determine if the student is appropriately challenged and making academic progress as well as determining if their social and emotional needs are being met,” he says. “This comprehensive overview helps to more clearly identify the parents’ concerns with a variety of data points.”

Laura Rup, director of admissions at AIM Academy, a school for grades 1 through 12 in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, says that the admissions committee at a school should be asking similar questions about what a child will need when considering an applicant. Rup works to place children at AIM Academy who will fit the school’s niche—educating children with language-based learning disabilities such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia.

“When the school and child are a match, that is where ‘magic’ can happen,” Rup says.

If you plan to look outside of your child's current educational institution, Rup recommends starting with school websites. They are "chock full of information, but sometimes it can feel like drinking from a fire hose!" Try zeroing in on the "at-a-glance" or snapshot information. This strategy will usually provide parents answers to a majority of factors such as the size of the school or type of applicants the school seeks.

"If the profile does not seem like a fit, you can quickly move on. You want to focus your time on those schools that are best able to support your child," she says.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Hoffman would recommend that parents spend some time in their child's classroom to gain an up-close look at what is happening. If you are working with an educational consultant, ideally, this individual would observe the child in the classroom as well. Hoffman notes that whether parents get to see inside the classroom or not, working closely with the child's teacher is paramount to gathering needed information.

## The more data, the better

Other vital pieces of data can contribute to making the best school decision for your child. First, if the child has undergone a neuropsychological assessment, the evaluating psychologist can help to identify qualities and supports that are critical for your child's success. Additionally, other related service professionals, such as a speech therapist or occupational therapist, can provide valuable insights. Also consult with any current service providers in the classroom, such as a school counselor or a special education teacher.

Parents should bring their own information about their child to the table as well. Ask a lot of questions about a potential school

when meeting with admissions staff or faculty members.

"At AIM, many of our applicant families are learning about a newly diagnosed learning difference at the same time they are looking for a new school to support their child. It's natural to have questions," she says. "Admissions folks are not there to judge. They are there to educate, and chances are that they have answered any question you have a number of times before. A positive home-school relationship is critical to student success, and asking for clarification is a great way to feel involved and informed."

## Public versus private

When debating public versus private schools, don't automatically assume that one is a better fit for your child than the other without looking over their individual services.

Obviously, the student-to-teacher ratio is usually smaller at a private school, and the facilities and enrichment activities are often more robust. However, that does not mean that the private school necessarily offers the emotional and educational services that are best for your child.

Some private schools offer learning specialists on faculty to consult with teachers to address the identified needs for specific students or work directly with identified students. However, these learning specialists may not be certified special educators—as it is not required.

However, specialized private schools exist. At these schools, all or most of the faculty includes skillful learning specialists and special educators engaged in regular professional development and implementation of evidence-based interventions. In these specialized school settings, related services are

generally integrated into the daily schedule. Specialized schools will differ depending on their mission and target population.

Public schools offer various levels of service within the general education setting. Services can range from plug-in and pull-out services to a self-contained classroom. All teachers, both general and special educators, in a public school setting have to be certified by the state in which they teach. Public schools are required to follow the procedures set forth in the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and Section 504. Hoffman notes that any school, public or private, that takes federal funding is required to participate in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process under IDEA.

## Don't forget the power of emotions

Hoffman notes that while data plays a large factor in choosing a school, an undeniable emotional factor exists behind school placement. Therefore, visit a school you are considering whenever possible and talk with faculty such as the admissions team, learning specialist or head of school. When an in-person visit is not possible, arrange for digital meet-and-greets and tours of the physical space. In addition, talk with currently enrolled families to get a better sense of the school culture.

Plus, allow your children to have a voice in the decision.

"This means letting them know you are considering having them look at new schools and responding to their questions about it," Rup says. "You get to make the decision, but your child has to live the choice on a daily basis. Establishing open communication will make the transition experience better for them and for you." ■





### FAMILY FAVORITES

**Family meal:** I would say spaghetti and meatballs. We love to make lamb meatballs.

**Place to photograph your family:** Probably at home. We just bought a 110-year-old house out in Purcellville, and there are always weird outbuildings and light.

**Family photo:** We spent some time living abroad in England. My boys were a couple of years younger, and everywhere has swords and shields. I remember this photo of Henry and Hollis doing what we called storming the castle. Everywhere we went, my husband would be like "OK, go storm the castle!"

**Story to tell your kids:** My husband used to be in the Army, and we met in college. He got orders to move to a different base, and if we weren't married, basically I couldn't go. We like to tell them the story of when we got married on our lunch hour and both (of us) went back to work. We didn't even bring the camera.

# Becky Gardner

## Celebrating life through photography

BY LINDSDAY C. VANASDALAN

**B**ecky Gardner's photography journey began with a few community college classes after her son Henry was born in 2011. In seeking something fun and different from her work in corporate sales and recruiting, she turned to an old love.

"I've always been really interested in genealogy and local history, and trying to find out the stories of things and places," Gardner says. Now she seeks out stories through her camera as the owner of Becky A. Gardner Photography.

A big part of these stories shines through in clients' homes, she says, but Gardner also enjoys finding hidden gems where she photographs families in Loudon and Fairfax counties, as well as Arlington and Washington, D.C.

"Through 11 years—and some of my families have been with me that long—I haven't run out of places," Gardner says.

Gardner now lives in Purcellville, Virginia, with her husband, John-Mark, and her three children, Hollis (6), Henry (11) and Sage (13).

### How do you balance your day-to-day schedule as a photographer with family life?

I feel like that's something that I still am learning. It's gotten much better as I have learned to set boundaries, say no to things and focus on what is going to be best for not only my clients but for my family. I think when you're first starting out it's a lot of "hustle, hustle, hustle" and trying to say yes to everything. There is definitely room to say no, and that's sometimes all you can do for your sanity.

### What does creating those memories mean to you as parent?

It means so, so much. My daughter just turned 13, which I feel like, you know, I spent a lot of time going back through pictures and I feel like that's one reason

why they're awesome. But then it's realizing that 13 years went by super duper fast.

I went through a time where I actually had Hodgkin's lymphoma. I was sick, went through chemo and lost all my hair. And I made sure to take pictures of my kids. We had a lot of funny things to lighten the mood there. But I think a lot of levity can be found in photos. Looking back, you can find that—maybe see something differently than you did before or you can always then see. I have a giant wall of photos and books and books and books of them to look through.

### Your photography is focused on capturing the authentic moments that tell a family's story. Has your career made you more driven to document these moments in your own life?

Yes and no—I would say most photographers would agree with that. When I pick up my camera now, I would say that's one of the hardest things is it sort of becomes work, or that I get to be kind of too much of a perfectionist, or trying to really treat it as a job rather than letting my family take center stage. A couple of times a year, I'll really buckle down and have a couple of long days with my kids where I can document them as they are.

### What's one thing you hope your kids learn from your career?

Creativity and creating art, and creating something for others to appreciate and treasure and that's meaningful to them. I hope that they get letting their brains wander and play in beautiful light in big open fields and those kind of things. I started with a camera and a couple of classes and then put my mind to figuring out this was something that I wanted to do, took the steps and did it the right way. You can create something if you put in the work. ■



# BEST KIDS' COOKING AND BAKING EXPERIENCES in the DMV

BY LINDSAY C. VANASDALAN

Is your child a budding gourmet? Soon your little one could be making you pancakes every morning, not just on Mother's Day! Just kidding ... but your little chefs will love the opportunity to learn (and eat) more at these cooking and baking classes in the DMV.



## Cookology

21100 Dulles Town Circle, Sterling, VA 20166 | [cookologyonline.com/kids](http://cookologyonline.com/kids)

Is your little chef looking for more options to hone their culinary skills? Kids with big dreams of becoming a chef can get started at Cookology, which offers a range of camps; family cooking classes; one-on-ones with mom, dad, a grandparent or caregiver; and a workshop. Cooking classes at Ballston Quarter and Dulles Town Center begin as early as age 3. Kids will learn skills such as measuring, mixing and rolling. All age groups will work with a professional chef and explore cuisine including New World, seasonal, healthy and gluten-free varieties.

## Henry's Sweet Retreat

4823 St. Elmo Ave., Bethesda, MD 20814 | [henryssweetretreat.com](http://henryssweetretreat.com)

Serving up all types of candies and treats—nostalgic varieties, candy-by-the-pound jars, every chocolate bar you could imagine (including bacon and potato chips!)—Henry's opens up its modern candy store to kids with fun classes and camps for baking and decorating. Owner Patty Craver is also a full-time pastry chef, which means she offers lots of house-made goodies in the store, such as fresh pastries, chocolate-covered Oreos, cake pops, buckeyes and fudge. Summer camps for ages 6-12 include lunch and a baking craft.

## The Kosher Chocolate Factory

14803 Southlawn Lane (behind the Dunkin' Donuts), Rockville, MD 20850 | [kosherchocolatefactory.com](http://kosherchocolatefactory.com)

Learn how to make your own chocolate at The Kosher Chocolate Factory, part of the JCrafts workshop series. Families can sign up for two programs: chocolate from scratch and truffle making. This kosher series also allows children to explore the historic connection between Jews and chocolate and mold some kosher-themed chocolate shapes. Kids will also get to make their own custom box of truffles to take home. L'chaim!

## The Red Bandana Bakery

8218 Wisconsin Ave., Suite 101, Bethesda, MD 20814 | [theredbandanabakery.com](http://theredbandanabakery.com)

Here's a baking class you and your child can complete in the comfort of your own home. Order kits from the gluten-free bakery with a 4-inch or 6-inch cake round (dairy-free, vegan and keto-friendly options) and frosting, sprinkles, fondant, preserves filling, cake board and a piping bag and get baking. A pre-recorded instruction video from the head baker will be available to play as you create. Kids can also try other kits, including scratch-made pizza, cookie decorating, chickpea blondies, bagels and cinnamon rolls.

## Wild Wood Pizza

1600 Village Market Blvd., Suite 120, Leesburg, VA 20175 | [wildwoodpizzeria.com](http://wildwoodpizzeria.com)

"Pizza is a great equalizer. It doesn't matter if you're young or old," reads the Wild Wood Pizza website, and that quote translates to its cooking classes! Kids of all ages will participate in hands-on pizza making in the Village at Leesburg. Chef Curtis Alfred will teach them how to roll and knead dough and create their own pizzas, which will then be placed in the wood-burning oven by Wild Wood staff. Parents or guardians must be on site, but only children younger than 10 require cooking supervision. Purchase an extra DIY pizza kit to take home after class. ■



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# The Basics of Bike Safety

Brush up on these bicycling essentials for kids

BY ALEX KRUTCHIK

**W**armer temperatures and sunny skies encourage many families to take to the streets and sidewalks to ride their bikes. Biking through the neighborhood is one of the simplest ways to entertain oneself and stay in shape.

But biking can also bring about a few risks, especially for first-time riders. According to the National Safety Council Injury Facts, individuals 19 years and younger are most at risk of suffering a cycling injury. In its most recent report in 2019, 112,900 individuals younger than age 19 were injured while riding a bike.

Jessi West, executive director at Neighborhood Bike Works in Philadelphia, says that wearing a helmet comes first when getting ready to go on a ride.

“We always tell our kids that it is vitally important for them to protect their brains,” West says. “And that is why we wear helmets. We are often biking with kids on hard surfaces that can cause injuries that can affect them for the rest of their lives.”

## What are some best practices for bicycling?

Mike Chan, marketing manager with Pedalheads in Washington, says that keeping things fun and upbeat is one of the keys when teaching a young biker.

One tip he offers is to let the biker’s feet touch the ground, rather than pedaling as normal.

“If you feel that heel and the base are touching the ground, that’s actually what you want,” Chan says. “A lot of times, feet can be a little bit too high when sitting on the bike, as bikes can be a little bit too big. It makes it more challenging for children to learn when they’re first learning how to ride.”

West says that many parents find that using a balanced bike first will help their kids. A balanced bike is essentially a child-sized bike without pedals, a design which forces the rider to push with the feet. This design allows kids to establish the balance that’s essential for biking. Because the



An instructor with a group of children works with youth at a Pedalheads’ camp.

coordination aspect of it is less challenging, West says that this type of bike acts as “a stepping stone” for kids. She adds that this approach could work better than learning with training wheels.

“It teaches them a balance that learning to ride with training wheels actually doesn’t,” West says. “The training wheels help do the balance for you, whereas a balanced bike teaches them to balance with their bodies.”

Parents can also incorporate games and challenges into their children’s riding lessons, Chan says. Moms and dads can draw a chalk line on the ground that goes in different directions for children or have them ride toward a fixed point, such as a lightpost.

“Just keep it not too serious or too outcomes driven,” Chan says. “Parents should encourage and help them along as they’re developing these first skills.”

## What’s the best age to teach kids to ride bikes?

Chan says that while every child is different, Pedalheads starts teaching kids as young as 2 years old. Besides balancing, Chan says that the big skill that children learn at first is the pedaling motion.

Although children may learn balance and pedaling, Chan calls attention to a few benchmarks to look for when deciding whether kids are ready to ride near roads.

“If they are riding on the road, it would be good to have skills like being able to ride close to the curb without bumping it, being able to follow or be followed by a parent behind them without swaying back and forth, knowing their hand signals and knowing the signs that are on the road,” Chan says.

Most states, including Maryland and Virginia, require cars to give at least 3 feet of space when sharing the road.

While some more experienced cyclists enjoy the challenge of biking in the rain, snow or other elements, West recommends children avoid slippery conditions altogether, especially when the rain first begins. West says this period is the most dangerous time because that's when the oil or the gasoline left on the road mixes with the rain and causes the road to become more slippery.

### Follow the ABCs of bike safety

When this situation happens, she recommends sticking to the side of the road where less gasoline or oil is present.

Once children are finally ready to go on a ride, West says they should go through the "ABC bike safety check." The ABC acronym stands for air, breaks and chain.

"Before you go out bike riding, you should check to make sure that you have enough air in your tires, check your brakes to make sure that they're functioning and take a look at your chain and make sure that it's cleaned and lubricated," West says. "You should also rotate your wheels a few times to make sure that the chain is working properly." ■



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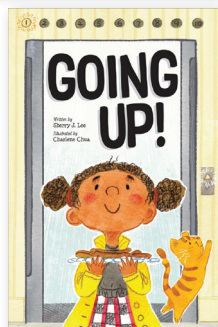
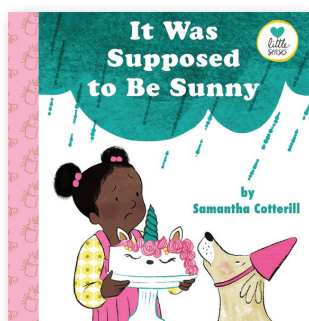
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# Let the Party Begin!

## 12 Books Celebrating Special Occasions

BY JENNIFER ROTHCHILD, COLLECTION ENGAGEMENT LIBRARIAN, ARLINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Parties are a great time to connect with friends and family and meet new people. These books explore all types of parties and the feelings that surround them, from uninvited guests and weather-related disasters to making new friends and how a good event can help change the world.

### PICTURE BOOKS

#### **"It Was Supposed to Be Sunny"**

written and illustrated by  
*Samantha Cotterill*

Laila has plans and charts for everything, especially her upcoming birthday party. But the weather doesn't cooperate, and doing the obstacle course inside results in a cake disaster. Laila is ready to cancel the party, but some helpful ideas from her mom and a few quiet minutes spent with her therapy dog allow her to enjoy the big day. While the hints in the story and the included back matter will be helpful for kids with sensory processing disorders, anxiety, or autism (like Laila), they will also be useful for any kid who wants a special day to be perfect.

#### **"Your Birthday Was the Best!"**

by *Maggie Hutchings*, illustrated by  
*Felicita Sala*

A cockroach is having the best time enjoying all the games and festivities at a young child's birthday party until he wears himself out with all the excitement and falls asleep on the birthday cake. Luckily, everyone is so excited to see him that their screams wake him up so he can have more fun. Young readers will love the cockroach's sunny attitude about the best birthday party, even if he is not a welcome guest.

#### **"Going Up!"**

by *Sherry J. Lee*, illustrated by  
*Charlene Chua*

Olive's birthday party is on the 10th floor of

June's apartment building. She and her dad, along with a platter of fresh-baked cookies, get in the elevator. At every floor, the elevator stops to let in more people. The excitement for the party builds and builds as more people pack in until they finally reach the top of the building. The final spread reveals everyone spilling out of the elevator to celebrate the guest of honor.

### BEGINNING READERS

#### **"Cupcake Fix: A Branches Book"** **(Layla and the Bots #3)**

by *Vicky Fang*, illustrated by  
*Christine Nishiyama*

In this third adventure, Layla (inventor and rock star) is helping with the grand opening celebration of the new community center. The mayor is worried that attendance will be low. She and her robots build a cupcake machine to help attract a crowd. Delicious hijinks ensue in this fun series that weaves in STEAM concepts and includes at-home activities for readers to try for themselves.

#### **"We Will Find Your Hat!: A Conundrum!"**

written and illustrated by *Candy James*

Fox cousins Reddie and Archie are back in this early-reader graphic novel. It's Hat Day, the hattiest day of the year, but when Reddie goes to pick up Archie, Archie can't find his hat. The two must search through piles and piles of Archie's belongings to find the missing hat. Will they be able to find it in time for the party? A silly read

with a lot of visual clues and jokes, this light mystery is one beginning readers will love. It also works as a read-aloud book.

### "A Whale of a Tea Party"

by Erica S. Perl, illustrated by Sam Ailey

Whale is having a tea party with her friends Lumpo, Bob and Grumpy Gus. As much as she likes her friends, they're rocks. They can't answer when she asks if they want more tea. But when Quail and Snail arrive, Whale invites them to join the party, turning it into the "best day ever."

## MIDDLE-GRADE BOOKS

### "Best. Night. Ever.: A Story Told from Seven Points of View"

by Rachele Alpine, Ronni Arno, Alison Cherry, Stephanie Faris, Jen Malone, Gail Nall and Dee Romito

It's the night of the big middle school dance. Seven students all have different plans relating to the dance, whether they're going or not, or even in the band. Each chapter follows a different student, and is written by a different author, over the course of the dance as funny antics and friendship drama make for an unforgettable night.

### "PhilanthroParties!: A Party-Planning Guide for Kids Who Want to Give Back"

by Lulu Cerone

This hands-on guide is full of step-by-step instructions for tweens wishing to use social events for a good cause. When she was 10 years old, author Lulu Cerone organized a

lemonade-stand competition to raise money for Haitian earthquake relief. The event was very successful and a lot of fun, so she started throwing more events to raise funds and awareness of different causes. With three events for each month of the year, this guide has everything young philanthropists need to get started.

### "It's My Party and I Don't Want to Go"

by Amanda Panitch

Ellie has always hated crowds and being the center of attention, but now they're making it hard to breathe. She's terrified of her upcoming bat mitzvah, so she'll try anything to stop it from happening, except for talking to her parents about her panic and anxiety. From hiding the invitations to trying to fake her own death, Ellie's antics grow out of control until she has even bigger problems than the bat mitzvah. Full of humor and heart, Ellie will need to discover there's more to becoming an adult than learning your Torah portion.

## TEENS

### "Sunny G's Series of Rash Decisions"

by Navdeep Singh Dhillon

After his older brother dies, Sunny finds his journal and decides to continue writing in it, making a list of uncharacteristically rash decisions, such as cutting his hair and shaving his beard (visible markers of his Sikh faith) and going to prom (even though it's the same night as his brother's barsi, which honors his death anniversary). When some friends try to

coax him away from prom to a fan convention instead, the rash decisions keep coming in a fast-paced night that perfectly balances the madcap adventures while exploring Sunny's underlying grief.

### "10 Truths and a Dare"

by Ashley Elston

Olivia has everything planned out—she's aced her AP exams and set to graduate as class salutatorian and attend LSU where she has her double major already picked. Unfortunately, she's failed her physical education class, and if she doesn't make it up quickly, graduation isn't going to happen. She can volunteer at a local gold tournament, but only if her cousins agree to stand in for her at all the events happening during senior party week so that her parents and older relatives don't find out. She's not going to let things like her shaky grasp of golf stand in her way in this engaging tale full of humor and witty banter.

### "The Jasmine Project"

by Meredith Ireland

Jasmine's family always knew that her boyfriend was no good for her, but when they finally break up, she's not interested in meeting any of the guys they think she should be with. They decide that her graduation party is a great time for a secret Bachelor-style series of setups. They even have a podcast. In this romantic comedy, everyone in Jasmine's large family has an opinion, but they all ultimately have Jasmine's best interest at heart. They're determined to get Jasmine the love she deserves, but only if their plans don't backfire. ■



# Top 10 Reasons Why I Love Being a Mom of Twins

BY CHERYL MAGUIRE



They certainly are two peas in a pod. The Maguire Twins, who are now 17, show off their cuteness in their baby photo.

My Turn gives readers a voice. To submit a piece for consideration, email us at [mvyskocil@midatlanticmedia.com](mailto:mvyskocil@midatlanticmedia.com). My Turn opinion pieces do not reflect the views of Washington FAMILY.

**A**dmitting I'm a mom to twins usually elicits a myriad of questions:

Who was born first?

Are they identical?

How do you manage?

People are fascinated by twins, especially twin babies. I couldn't go to the grocery store without strangers approaching me to get a closer look at "the twins." Sometimes I felt like I was warding off the paparazzi. Now that they are older, no one even knows they are twins since they are a boy and girl and don't look alike. They also don't acknowledge each other in school so some people don't even know they are siblings.

I wrote this top 10 list when they were

babies—for me it was a more challenging time to be a parent than now. I still feel this way, but some of the statements are more relevant to when they were little. They are now 17 years old. I would also add to the list that they can help each other with their homework since I definitely don't remember eighth-grade math equations or other similar school-related things.

10. Only one pregnancy, for two babies—that is two for the price of one in my book!

9. I don't have to worry about what I look like. Everyone is too busy staring at "the twins."

8. No one expects me to arrive on time.

7. After having twins, I feel like I can accomplish anything.

6. I only need to plan and pay for one birthday party for two kids.

5. After potty training twins, my fear of germs is officially cured.

4. They have been sharing since they were in the womb—no teaching necessary. OK, this one might be a stretch, but it sounds good, right?

3. Twin discounts. I'm starting to realize a lot of the items on this are money saving related.

2. Everyone opens the door for us.

And the No. 1 reason I love being a mom of twins is . . .

1. Daily affirmations from strangers that my hands are indeed full! ■

*Cheryl Maguire holds a Master of Counseling Psychology degree. She is married and is the mother of twins and a daughter. Her writing has been published in The New York Times, Parents Magazine, AARP, Healthline, Your Teen Magazine and many other publications. She is a professional member of ASJA. You can find her at Twitter @CherylMaguire05.*

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