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# Washington FAMILY

Smart. Local.  
Parenting for  
the DMV.

MAY 2023

**MEET DMV  
TEACHERS**

**EPIC PARTIES  
ON A DIME**

**FUN WITH  
FAMILY PETS**

**mother's  
day**



**UPPER MARLBORO SINGLE MOTHER  
YANA BAILEY SHARES THE  
IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTION**

# VOTE FOR THE WINNERS



**Vote for your favorite people, places  
and things in the DMV!**

The winners are chosen by popular vote, so let your friends know it's time to cast their ballot. As a business, share with your audience to help you win the title of "Best" in your category!






**Voting closes May 15th**

Winners will be contacted in June, and the results will be in the July issue of Washington FAMILY magazine.

**Go to [washingtonfamily.com/bestforfamilies](https://www.washingtonfamily.com/bestforfamilies)  
and VOTE TODAY!**

**Washington  
FAMILY**

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## MAY 2023



VGAIJC / E+ / GETTY IMAGES PLUS



YANA BAILEY (RIGHT) WITH HER CHILDREN LAUREN AND LEE  
PHOTO: PABLO RAYA

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

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WE WANT  
**YOUR**  
FEEDBACK

# Washington FAMILY

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**2023 SUMMER CAMP**  
**BUILDING ELECTIC MINDS ONE S.T.E.A.M PROJECT AT A TIME!**

**Summer Camp Programs:**

<p><b>Scratch Programming (Ages 6-10):</b> Cost: \$350 per week</p> <p><b>WHAT TO EXPECT:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Introduction to testing, debugging, remixing and reusing computing experiments.</li> <li>- Personal connections through using creativity, imagination and personal interest.</li> <li>- Creation of computational artifacts through stories, animation and games and so much more!</li> </ul> <p>Camper should be able to read on a 1st grade level.</p>	<p><b>Adventures in Engineering (Ages 8-12):</b> Cost: \$400 per week</p> <p><b>WHAT TO EXPECT:</b></p> <p>We believe kids will best learn engineering when they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engage in activities that are fun, exciting, and connect to the world in which they live, choose their path through open-ended challenges that have multiple solutions.</li> <li>- Have the opportunity to succeed in engineering challenges, communicate and collaborate in innovative, active problem solving and so much more!</li> </ul> <p>Camper should be able to read on a 3rd grade level.</p>
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**DATE:** June 19th - August 18th  
**TIME:** 9:00am - 4:00pm  
**Location:** 8382 Terminal Road, Suite E, Lorton, VA, 22079

**Register Now on Eventbrite!**  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/o/the-willis-academy-28930269155>  
For Inquires and slot reservations, please  
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Email: [contact@thewillisacademy.com](mailto:contact@thewillisacademy.com)





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info@thefamilymagazine.com

# We Love You, Mom

**M**other's Day only comes once a year, but the love between mother and child is present year-round. In this issue, we hear from two single mothers who learned they can share that love even more when they have the support of a community and each other.

Their story about connection in motherhood will warm the heart of any mother. Take some time to bond with your child through our Mommy and Me craft.

In addition to mothers, we also celebrate the role models our children see every day in the classroom for Teacher Appreciation Week (May 8-12). Get to know them in our featured Q&A!

It's also important to not just celebrate but raise awareness about important topics. We reflect on National Foster Care Month in May with a feature highlighting an overburdened system. And we look at how

we can support everyday awareness for sensory sensitivities through a story on neurodivergent-friendly salons and barbers.

As we look ahead to summer, we also wanted to share some summer travel safety and epic party tips. Contributing writer Cheryl Maguire reveals a family secret for creating the best birthdays on a budget!

For our pets theme this month, a special needs cat teaches important lessons about differences in our My Turn. The theme continues with events and activities you can do with your pets and books about every kind of pet you could imagine!

Enjoy the season with your four-legged friends! ■

*Lindsay C. VanAsdalan*

**The Kennedy Center**

PERFORMANCES FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES



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## Fyütsch

Celebrate community and Black history through hip hop and visual storytelling.

Discover community, Black history, and culture through a blend of hip hop, soul, R&B, pop, and reggae! Fyütsch's live shows are filled with spirited songs, spoken word, and visual storytelling to educate, entertain, and empower the next generation.

Sat., May 6 at 11 a.m.  
Family Theater

AGES 5+



DISNEY PRESENTS

## The Lion King

More than 100 million people around the world have experienced the phenomenon of Disney's *The Lion King*, and now you can, too, when Washington, D.C.'s best-loved musical returns to the Kennedy Center! Winner of six Tony Awards® including Best Musical, this landmark musical features some of Broadway's most recognizable music crafted by Tony-winning artists Elton John and Tim Rice. There is simply nothing else like *The Lion King*.

June 22–July 29  
Opera House

AGES 6+

**Kennedy-Center.org**  
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Groups call (202) 416-8400  
For all other ticket-related customer service inquiries, call the  
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Kennedy-Center.org/COVIDsafety

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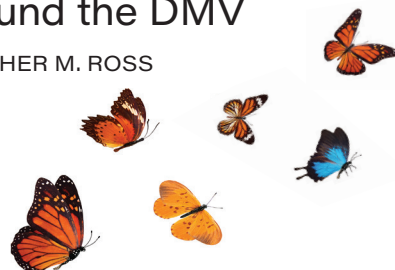
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## {TOP 10}

Family Events for  
MayExplore these fun spring activities  
in and around the DMV

BY HEATHER M. ROSS



1

THROUGHOUT THE MONTH | OPEN  
10 A.M. – 9 P.M. (OR UNTIL 6:30 P.M.  
TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY)

PIXELBLOOM: TIMELESS BUTTERFLIES

Artehouse D.C., 1238 Maryland Ave. SW,  
Washington, D.C. 20024Experience the life cycle of a butterfly like you've never seen  
it before! Families can make their way through a virtual  
world brimming with light, sound and beauty in the cherry  
blossom and butterfly displays at Arthouse Studio.Per person: \$17-25, \$30 to arrive any time of day; ages 3 and  
younger, free | [artehouse.com/location/dc](https://artehouse.com/location/dc)

2

MAY 7 | 10 A.M.

INTERNATIONAL FAMILY EQUALITY DAY

Smithsonian National Zoo, 3001 Connecticut Ave. NW,  
Washington D.C. 20008Embrace family diversity at the Smithsonian's National Zoo  
and Conservation Biology Institute. Families will have the  
opportunity to speak with zoo nutritionists, attend keeper  
talks and watch animal demonstrations.Free; Entry pass registration required | [nationalzoo.si.edu](https://nationalzoo.si.edu)

3

MAY 7 | 1 P.M.

PAINT NITE: GREEN DRAGON

KO Distilling, 10381 Central Park Drive,  
Suite 105, Manassas, VA. 20110Foster creativity in your family with a  
guided afternoon painting session. The  
host, Donna Robinson, will guide budding  
artists as they paint a pre-sketched rendition of a dragon.  
Each participant will choose their own colors, and all supplies  
are included with registration costs. Use coupon code donna-  
robinson-23SpringFun for an extra 15% off the ticket price.

Event is family-friendly and open to children.

\$30 per person | [paintnite.com](https://paintnite.com);  
search events for "green dragon"  
within your area



4

MAY 11-21 | BEGINS 6 P.M.  
THURSDAY, MAY 11; LAST EVENT  
8:10 P.M. SUNDAY, MAY 21

**JXJ D.C. JEWISH FILM X MUSIC FESTIVAL**  
Edlavitch DCJCC, 1529 16th St. NW,  
Washington, D.C. 20036

The Washington Jewish Music Festival and Washington Jewish Film Festival are here. Families can see an exciting lineup of powerful films, listen to a diverse range of performances and participate in Q&A's, workshops and panel discussions. Closing night screenings will feature winning short films from DMV teens. See the full schedule of events and sign up for a pass online.

*\$15-22 for individual events (some special programs differ);*

*\$30-180 for festival packages | [jxjdc.org](http://jxjdc.org)*



8

MAY 19 | 10 A.M. – NOON

**MAY MONTHLY MOTHER'S CLUB:  
ANNUAL PICNIC!**

**Yuma Center, 4101 Yuma St. NW,  
Washington D.C. 20016**

Connect with other moms and let the kids play as they enjoy the sunshine! The picnic is a potluck, so bring your best mom-dish and connect. This event is hosted by the Yuma Center, an organization with the mission of inspiring women and encouraging them to discover new perspectives on work and life.

*Registration required | [yumadc.org](http://yumadc.org)*

5

MAY 12 | 7 – 10 P.M.

**LOVE YOU MOM**

**Rollingcrest Chillum Community Center,  
6120 Sargent Road, Chillum, MD. 20782**

Create a special gift for mom this Mother's Day. Teens ages 13-17 are invited to create a painting or poem to show their mothers how much they're appreciated. Sign up for a Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) Youth ID, free to residents ages 6-17, at [mncppc.org](http://mncppc.org).

*Free with M-NCPPC Youth ID | [arts.pgpc.org](http://arts.pgpc.org)*

6

MAY 13 | 10 A.M. – 4 P.M.

**EU OPEN HOUSE**

**Multiple locations, Washington D.C.**

Make your way around the world as a family when the European Union and its Embassies open their doors to the public for a day of culture sharing, food, music and more. This event is held in celebration of Europe Day and includes 24 embassies! Find a full list of participating embassies and what they have to offer online.

*Free | [eeas.europa.eu](http://eeas.europa.eu)*

9

MAY 20 | 3 - 11 P.M.

**FIESTA ASIA STREET FAIR**

**400 Pennsylvania Ave. NW,  
Washington D.C. 20565**

Taste incredible foods, experience unique arts and engage with a variety of cultural experiences. Families can look forward to performances, vendors, foods, emerging stars and a stunning parade. The Fiesta Asia Street Fair is the signature event of the National Asian Heritage Festival.

*Free | [fiestaasia.org](http://fiestaasia.org)*

10

MAY 31 | 10 – 10:45 A.M.

**TUDOR TOTS: WHO'S HOPPING?**

**Tudor Place, 1644 31st St. NW,  
Washington D.C. 20007**

Hop on over to Tudor Place, a historic house and garden, to see spring's biggest icon—the bunny! This program is a chance for children ages 18 months to 7 years old and their parents or guardians to learn more about rabbits and the other little creatures who make their homes in the garden. The event will include songs, group story time and a fun craft.

*\$6.50 for children, free for adults |  
[tudorplace.org](http://tudorplace.org)*



7



MAY 15 | 5 – 6:30 P.M.

**THE ART OF LEI MAKING**

**Kentlands Mansion - The House, 320 Kent  
Square Road, Gaithersburg, MD. 20878**

Celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month as a family by joining Kumu Kaimana Chee, who will provide a brief history and background of the lei. Families will learn how to make their own lei and can enjoy a traditional Hawaiian chant and hula performance. All supplies are included.

*\$45 for residents, \$50 for non-residents; best for ages 12+ |  
[gaithersburgmd.gov](http://gaithersburgmd.gov)*

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

BY ELENA EPSTEIN,  
DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL  
PARENTING PRODUCT AWARDS

NAPPA Awards has been celebrating  
the best in family products for 33  
years. For more product reviews and  
gift ideas visit [nappaawards.com](http://nappaawards.com)

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## Epic

Encourages kids to explore their interests and learn in a fun, safe, kid-friendly environment with unlimited access to 40,000 high-quality books and videos, including classic favorites and contemporary original content. Features tracking for parents and allows kids to boost their skills with a full set of Read-to-Me books, buddies, badges and more. \$6.67/month, \$79.99/annually, ages 2-12, [getepic.com](http://getepic.com)



## Lost Loot: DIY Pirate Treasure Hunt Game

Turn your home and backyard into a pirate's playground with this fun family game. Offers an infinite number of game plays with more than 100 indoor and outdoor clue cards and blank cards included. \$34.99, ages 3+, [scsdirectinc.com](http://scsdirectinc.com)



## Skillmatics High Contrast Flash Cards

Designed by educators, these black and white high-contrast images range from simple shapes to more complex patterns and objects to stimulate babies' developing brains and vision in their first year. Prop cards up in the wooden stands for stimulating tummy time. As babies grow, they can hold the durable, non-bendable cards independently and explore early object recognition and vocabulary. \$19.97, ages birth to 12 months, [skillmatics.com](http://skillmatics.com)



## Naturepedic PLA Pillow

A luxurious fiber-based pillow that provides comfort in its simplest form. Derived entirely from sugarcane, its outer cover is 100% certified organic cotton. \$79 (Standard), all ages, [naturepedic.com](http://naturepedic.com)







### Mumaloo Craft Box

Includes 10 pre-packaged craft activities with easy-to-follow step-by-step instructions and all the materials you need to complete each engaging activity. This craft set promotes creativity, sensory development and critical thinking. \$29.99, ages 3+, mumaloo.com



### Troomi— Safe Smartphones for Kids

Provide kids with guardrails for safety and opportunities for growth, learning, personal discovery and preparation for the future. Powered by KidSmart OS, an Android-based operating system that empowers parents

with an extremely easy, powerful and flexible set of parental controls—all while eliminating social media, addictive games and pornography. \$189.95, ages 6+, tweens & teens, shop.troomi.com



### 12little Luxe Clutch in Toffee

For moms who like to walk on the wild side, this diaper clutch gets a fashion-forward update in a luxe version made with 100% vegan leather. It can be carried as a clutch or crossbody using the detachable webbing strap, or it can be swapped in with other 12little straps that are sold separately. \$85, twelvelittle.com ■

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



the  
**art**  
league

**Register online at**  
**[www.theartleague.org/classes](http://www.theartleague.org/classes)**

The Art League  
305 Madison St | Alexandria, VA 22314 | 703 683 2323 | school@theartleague.org

# Mom and Me FIGURINES

BY HEATHER M. ROSS



**M**ake a memory this Mother's Day with a craft that's fun for all ages. This month, make painted figurines of both parent and child using a kid-friendly clay substitute that's easy to handle. The completed figurines can be used as dolls or decorations!

*This craft is not recommended for children younger than 3 years old.*

## YOU WILL NEED:

4-ounce packet of Crayola Model Magic

3 or 4 colors of acrylic paint  
(including hair, skin and clothing colors)

Paintbrushes (including a fine tip)

A cup of cold water and a paper  
towel for cleaning brushes

2 toothpicks

## STEP 1: GETTING READY

Gather all of the above supplies and clear a space on the countertop or table. For the Model Magic clay, you'll want a smooth, clean and hard surface to make rolling easier. Do not open the paints yet.

## STEP 2: DIVIDING UP THE CLAY

Divide the clay so that the "mom" piece is twice as large as the "child" piece. Any children participating in the craft can start working with the child piece to get familiar with the clay. Next, take one third of each piece and separate it from the main lumps, as pictured. These small segments will become the figurine heads.

## STEP 3: THE HEAD

Mold the head segment into a ball shape with your fingers. Then, roll it in your palms or against the hard surface to smooth out any odd pinches or lumps. When you have a nice sphere, set it aside.

## STEP 4: THE ARMS

The arms will be simple. For this step, you'll want a long, thin piece of clay. Take a piece about

half the size of the clay used for the head and roll it flat on the table until it resembles a worm. If your worm ends up too short, roll it until it is longer. If your worm appears too long, you can either mash it up into a ball and roll it again or pinch some of the clay off the ends.

## STEP 5: THE BODY

Mold the main body piece to be a long tube. If you want your figure to wear pants, divide the bottom part to about halfway up the body piece. Then, roll each "leg" between your fingers to give it a rounded shape.

## STEP 6: THE HAIR

Depending on how much hair you or your child have (and the style of hair), you will need different amounts of Model Magic. Mold the hair into shape around the "head" piece, but leave space for the neck. If your figure has longer hair, it will add stability to the final figure.

## STEP 7: ASSEMBLY

To assemble your figure, place the arm segment behind the main body so the sides are equal lengths. Then, press to blend the pieces. To attach the head, use the toothpick to push one end into the body piece where the neck would go and the other end into the "head" piece. No part of the toothpick should be visible. Press any pieces of the hair not against the head to the body for added stability. Before setting your figure out to dry, stand it up and gently press the "feet" to the flat surface.

## STEP 8: DRYING

If your figure doesn't stand on its own, prop it up against something so that it dries in the vertical position. Allow at least 24 hours for the Model Magic clay to dry completely.

## STEP 9: PAINTING

Once your figurines are dry, use the fine-tipped brush and paint for details and edges. When changing colors, rinse the brush in cold water. (Hot water can melt the glue and cause bristles to fall out and get stuck in your work.) Allow the paint to dry.

Ta-da! ■





# Pet-Friendly Outings in the DMV

BY HEATHER M. ROSS

**P**ets are an important part of the family, but unfortunately, they're often left behind when we go out. Luckily for them, the DMV is the place to be for pet-friendly dining, parks, painting and playing. Here are six ways you can get the whole family involved and celebrate the love and companionship our furry friends give.

## Crumbs & Whiskers

3109 M St. NW, Washington, D.C. | 11 a.m.–7:30 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Thursday; 11 a.m.–8:10 p.m. Friday; 9:40 a.m.–8:10 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

Dogs get a lot of attention when it comes to animal-friendly public spaces, but there's room for a family of cat lovers, too. Crumbs & Whiskers rescues and helps find homes for homeless cats—and raises money for charity! Book your tickets in the morning for playful kittens or later in the day for a more cuddly experience. See who's up for adoption ahead of time by visiting [crumbsandwhiskers.com](http://crumbsandwhiskers.com)

## Dog-Friendly Dining

529 E. Howell Ave., Alexandria, VA | 5–9 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 5–10 p.m. Friday; 11 a.m.–10 p.m. Saturday; 11 a.m.–8 p.m. Sunday

Washington, D.C. has hundreds of dog-friendly restaurants to choose from, but how many of them also have an off-leash indoor and outdoor dog park? Barkhaus is a dog-friendly bar and restaurant that also offers a doggie daycare service for members. If you plan on bringing your dog with you, make sure your dog is registered with proof of vaccination. [brewskisbarkhaus.com](http://brewskisbarkhaus.com)

## Dawson Farm Park

312 Ritchie Parkway, Rockville, MD | Sunrise – Sunset

Visit this historic 7.2 acres with your pets and family to enjoy a nature trail, park benches, paths, picnic tables and playground equipment. This park is an ideal destination to relax, get fresh air and learn as you read the many interpretive signs around the historic granary and barn. Just remember to bring a portable water dish and any other comfort supplies your furry friend might need!

[rockvillemd.gov/Facilities/Facility/Details/Dawson-Farm-Park-13](http://rockvillemd.gov/Facilities/Facility/Details/Dawson-Farm-Park-13)

## May Flowers: Small Dog Play Group

1818 2400 R St. NE, Washington, D.C. | 10 a.m.–1 p.m., May 20

While a day in the dog park is a fun family outing, it can be overwhelming for smaller dogs who just want their share of the space. Join other families and small-dog owners for a leashed stroll through the Arboretum and a picnic! All dogs attending must be under 25 pounds and fully vaccinated. [meetup.com/dmv-smalldog-dc/events/287728010](http://meetup.com/dmv-smalldog-dc/events/287728010)

## Walk in the Park

2901 20th St. NE, Washington, D.C. | Sunrise – Sunset

There's lots to love and lots to do as a family at D.C.'s largest dog park. The Langdon Dog Park is an 11,500-square-foot off-leash

park with spaces for dogs of all sizes and dog water fountains. The park's play space has gravel, grass and stumps so your furry family member can climb, roll and run. For humans, there are plenty of benches for when you want to take a minute to enjoy the outdoors—or for when you need to catch your breath. [wagwalking.com/lifestyle/parks/langdon-dog-park](http://wagwalking.com/lifestyle/parks/langdon-dog-park)

## Paint Your Pet: Pop Art Workshop

1121 King St., Alexandria, VA | 11 a.m.–1 p.m., May 13

Some of them hiss, some bark and some meow. Pets come in all shapes and sizes. Learn how to paint your pet, no matter what they look like, in a pop-art style with Alexandria-based acrylic artist Kellie Sansone. If you can't make it to the event in person, you can order a pop-art paint kit for your family online. Tickets for this event are \$70. [kelliesansone-creates.com](http://kelliesansone-creates.com) ■

# Secrets to Throwing An EPIC BIRTHDAY Party On a Dime

BY CHERYL MAGUIRE

**W**hen I received the invite to my nephew's pirate party, I was worried. The event was being held at his house in the wintertime, so all the 5-year-olds would be cooped up. How would more than 20 kids be entertained in a small area indoors? Would I hear so many chaotic screams of "Arrr" and "Ahoy" that I would want to walk the plank?

My fears subsided when I beheld the enormous cardboard-created pirate ship in my nephew's living room. If the boat hadn't been so crowded with kids, then I would have jumped inside of it myself. When I noticed organized activity stations set up throughout the house, I knew all the kids would have a blast. The party was such a huge success that my kids still talk about it four years later.

The pirate party isn't the only impressive at-home event my

sister, Tara, and brother-in-law, Mike, have hosted. They've had other parties for my nephew and two nieces. The themes of their parties have included knights and princesses, western cowboys and cowgirls, fairies and gnomes, Star Wars—and of course, pirates. For all their parties, they created a life-size cardboard centerpiece, such as a castle or western town, for the kids to play in and games centered around the theme, along with a favor to take home. Homemade treats and a cake are abundant at every gathering.

The best part is that these parties didn't break the bank. So, what is their secret to throwing an epic birthday party on a dime?

## Planning In Advance

The Stull family is already planning their next party—unicorn-themed—for June. They get ideas from Pinterest and other crafting websites. Sometimes, they brainstorm ideas on their own. This planning helps them to have enough time to create all the activities and cardboard centerpiece.

Potential Savings: \$25-50. Advanced planning allows them to buy sale items and use coupons.

## Homemade

Almost everything at the Stull family's parties is homemade, from the cardboard centerpieces to the games, food and favors. This significantly cuts down the cost of the parties, which were all under \$200.

Potential Savings: \$50-75 by not buying a store-bought cake, games or favors.

## Teamwork

Tara and Mike Stull work together to create the life-size centerpiece, games, favors and homemade baked treats. They also include their kids in the process of coming up with ideas and creating items. By working together, they don't become too overwhelmed with the planning and creating that's involved. It also makes the process more fun for the entire family.

Potential Savings: \$25-50; the more they work together, the less they need to purchase items.

## Old School Games With A Theme

At their parties, Mike and Tara Stull offer simple games that everyone loves, and they incorporate their party's theme into the game. For example, instead of a typical water gun fight, they created a water gun shooting range for their western-themed party. Or instead of pin the tail on the donkey, it was pin the lightsaber on Yoda for the Star Wars-themed party. Some other games they included were a pirate scavenger hunt for gold coins, relay cowboy horse races and a "beware of the shark" cardboard bean bag toss game.

Potential Savings: \$100-200 by not hosting the party at an outside venue such as a play gym, bowling alley or laser tag arena.

## Finding Free or Discounted Items

Tara and Mike asked local appliance stores for free cardboard boxes to create the centerpiece, games and favors for each party. They also got deeply discounted "mistake paint" for a quarter of







the price (around \$9 instead of \$40) from colors shoppers didn't like and returned to Home Depot and Lowe's.

Potential Savings: \$25-50 by not purchasing cardboard boxes, games and favors, plus savings from purchasing mistake paint, which can be used for crafts, games or painting the cardboard centerpieces.

### Using Coupons and Purchasing Sale Items

The Stulls purchase some items at Michael's and other craft stores using coupons. They also use coupons at the grocery store to buy food for each party. Families can find coupons on store websites or apps, or by signing up for store emails. Online coupon websites such as coupons.com are also helpful.

Potential Savings: \$50-100 by using coupons and purchasing sale items.

### Selling on Craigslist or an Online Marketplace

After their last party, the family sold some games for \$30, and plan to do this for future parties.

Potential Savings: \$50-100, depending on the items created and sold. Selling household items prior to the event to help fund it is also an option.

### Who's Ready to Party?

These parties are a lot of work, but the whole family loves creating a memorable event. I know that we are anxiously awaiting the unicorn party. Who knows, maybe we will even spy a real one?

*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, National Geographic, The Washington Post, Parents Magazine, AARP, Healthline, Your Teen Magazine and many other publications. She is a professional member of ASJA. You can find her on Twitter @CherylMaguire05 ■*



PROVIDED PHOTO

Pirate-themed party supplies



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*Editor's Note: To view more listings from our party resources directory, visit our website at WashingtonFAMILY.com/annual-party-extravaganza. ■*

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# Parenting Paths Cross

Single Mothers Share Importance of Community

BY SASHA ROGELBERG



It may take a village to raise a child, but every village looks different.

For single mothers Yana Bailey and Lonyetta Yamoah-Manuh, their village was, in part, each other.

Bailey met Yamoah-Manuh about 10 years ago at church, when Bailey was tabling for Lupus awareness. At the time, both women were working single mothers with young daughters and connected over their similarities.

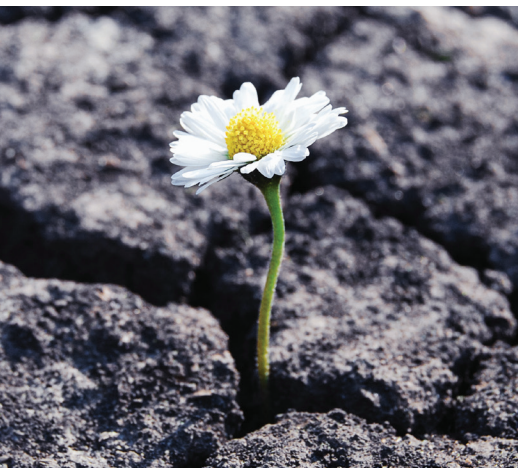
Soon, Yamoah-Manuh, a 42-year-old mother in Fredericksburg, would bring her daughter, Lauren, now 17, over to Bailey's to play with Ayana, now 19, every week-end. The daughters and mothers became fast friends.

"It's like having a second sister, a second mom, that extended family," Yamoah-Manuh says. "It's somebody

Yana Bailey (left) with her daughter, Lauren, and son, Lee.

PABLO RAYA





that I could really trust with my daughter.”

Over a decade later, Bailey, 45 and living in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, and Yamoah-Manuh are still friends and see each other about once a month. Though their journeys have taken them in different directions, their similarities in motherhood have kept them intertwined. Both women have been single mothers twice, with two sets of kids about a decade apart: Bailey has a 5-year-old son, Lee, and Yamoah-Manuh a set of 6-year-old twins, Laila and Lila.

As Mother’s Day approaches, these two parents are reflecting on their paths as single mothers.

### *What has been the importance of finding support in community as a single mother?*

Yamoah-Manuh: It’s just playing that role of auntie, just being able to have someone to talk to or just for babysitting reasons, or just to be able to have playdates and have your kids be around other kids in other environments that you trust because there’s so much going on in the world now....You have to be aware of what type of people [are] around the kids—whether they’re smoking, drinking, how they’re dressing [and], of course, child predators. There’s just so much in the world that being a single parent, you have to be ultra-aware of what’s going on in wherever your kids are going to be.



*Lonyetta  
Yamoah-Manuh  
with her  
daughters,  
Laila and Lila.*

Bailey: It’s also cost-saving; you know where your children are; you are familiar with the family, the mom; and it also feels good to help others who are in an alike situation.

### *What has been a difference between being a single mother for the first versus second time?*

Yamoah-Manuh: With the twins, I already know the importance of having those friend groups and making sure that, even if you don’t have the family support, that it is important to have those friends that you can depend on and that you could talk to, even if they can’t be your weekender, your weekend mom. You can still talk to them and vent, and get things off your chest, and bounce ideas off and just be an adult with [them] — because we’re around our kids so much that we don’t get that outlet.





Bailey: The biggest lesson is taking care of yourself and having the emotional stability and wherewithal to be present as a parent, which, I think it takes some maturity, and it can take even going to counseling just to make sure that you are able to be a present parent. Because you only get one chance to parent, and it goes by very, very fast. I'm more financially stable now, which also is a big part of it. And possibly because I'm more financially stable, I'm able to be more present because I'm not in that figuring-out stage.

### *What's a piece of advice you've gotten from another single mother?*

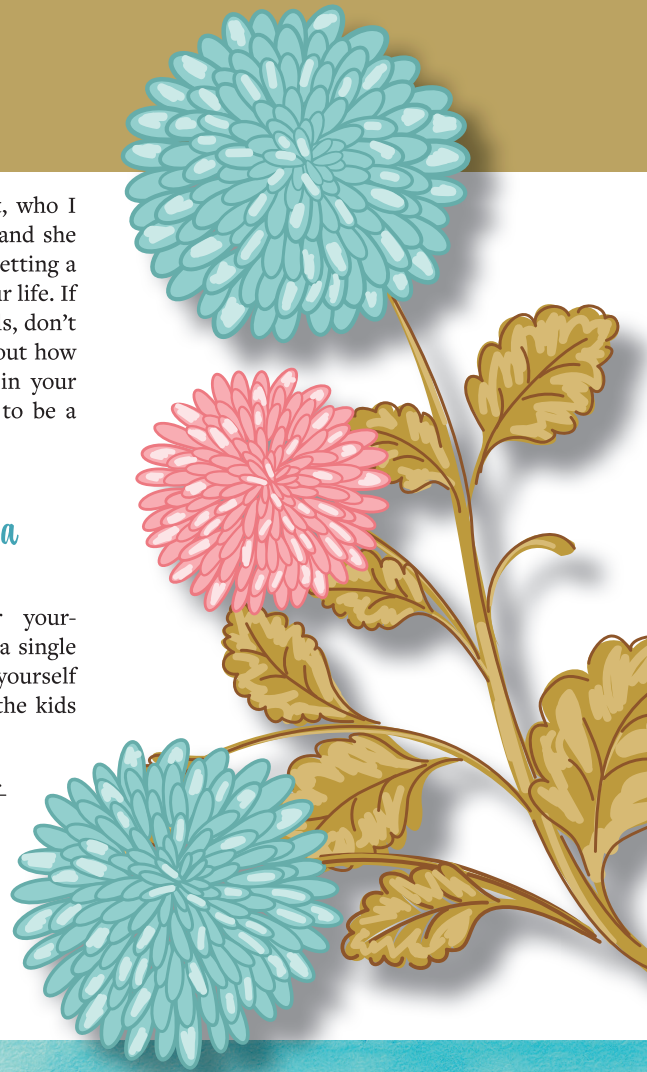
Yamoah-Manuh: Just the juggle of life-work balance. I talked to Yana all the time, and she's like, 'We have to, of course, make money for the kids. We have to be able to take care of them. We have to provide, but we also have to make time to be fun and to make time for the kids where they're actually allowed to be kids. We can't always be in parent mode.'

Bailey: It would be from my aunt, who I look up to, and she's a divorcee (and she raised two kids on her own after getting a divorce), and [it] is: Don't stop your life. If you have passions, if you have goals, don't stop your life. You have to figure out how to still do what you want to do in your life....You have to figure out how to be a parent and be yourself.

### *What advice would you give a single mother?*

Yamoah-Manuh: Take time for yourself. Although you're a mom, and a single mom, you do have to take time for yourself because if you're not good, then the kids can't be good.

Bailey: You have to practice self-care, like, what can you do to get your mind off of today's stresses? Or what's going to help you get up in the morning to get them ready, to get through school on time? ■



*"You have to practice self-care,  
like, what can you do to get your mind  
off of today's stresses?"*

— Yana Bailey





# FOSTERING CHANGE

## Hope for the Foster Care System

BY HEATHER M. ROSS



**A NEW RULE, PROPOSED BY THE ADMINISTRATION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (ACF), AIMS TO SUPPORT KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER THROUGH KINSHIP CARE.**

ACF is a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), which reports the number of youth in foster care has been on the rise every year since 2012.

But the proposed rule would help reduce the number of children in foster care by making it easier to connect children with their “kin” — which HHS defines as including people who are related to the child by blood, marriage or adoption, or who have an emotionally significant relationship to the child, like godparents or close family friends.

“When children are placed with relatives/kin, they can maintain a connection to their roots, which ultimately

helps to build a positive self-image,” explains Pam Hoehler, director of placement services at Adoptions Together, in Catonsville. “When children know their roots, they feel a stronger sense of connection to their culture and community of origin and have a better sense of [self].”

The ACF rule would affect child welfare agency licensing standards, revising the definition of “foster family home” to reduce licensing delays.

The sooner licensing can be completed, the more time children get with people known to them or with loved ones. The rule was proposed (on Feb. 14) to help children stay closer with their families and combat the risks associated with living in the foster care system.

However, not everyone is optimistic about the proposed regulation. Past efforts to support kinship care have had mixed success.

“The system has never been worse, but it’s never been better,” says Rob Scheer, whose nonprofit supports foster families. “It’s the same thing they tried to do before, but we don’t have enough foster homes as is.”

Despite the positive change that would come from keeping children

in homes with their kin, experts agree that we cannot ignore the fact that the foster care system is overburdened. It’s important to get to the root of the issue—the need for foster homes.

### *An Overburdened System*

Scheer, who lives in Gaithersburg, Maryland, is the founder of Comfort Cases, an international nonprofit based in Rockville dedicated to bringing dignity and hope to young people experiencing foster care by providing backpacks filled with personal care and comfort items for the children.

Scheer has firsthand experience, both as a child who experienced foster care and as a parent. He adopted his children from foster care with his husband, Reece.

“All five of my children arrived carrying the trash bag,” Scheer says, remembering his own trash bag from childhood. “It’s letting them know they don’t matter—that they’re disposable. These kids deserve more than a trash bag.”

On a recent trip to Kansas, Scheer says he saw three young girls sleeping in the foster care office because they had no placements. This situation is not



Rob Scheer remembers his own trash bag from childhood

“All five of my children arrived carrying the trash bag. It’s letting them know they don’t matter — that they’re disposable. These kids deserve more than a trash bag.”

— ROB SCHEER



unique, he says. It's actually incredibly commonplace, and it happens all over the country.

Data collected by the HHS in 2016 showed Washington, D.C. had nearly 1,200 children in foster care. Virginia currently has more than 5,400 children in its foster care system, with more than 700 awaiting foster families, according to UMFS, a statewide nonprofit with a location in Alexandria. UMFS reports a 37% decrease of approved foster families statewide.

The Baltimore Sun reported in 2019 that nearly 1,700 children in Baltimore were in foster care. More recent data suggests many don't have proper placements. An update from The Baltimore Banner last year confirmed some foster children were living in hotels or spending nights in a commercial office building downtown.

A sizeable portion of children in foster care were removed from their homes due to neglect, which Scheer says actually comes from poverty.

Neglect is the most common reason for children to enter the child welfare system, being responsible for entry in 76% of cases, according to the Anne E. Casey Foundation, a charity focused on improving the lives of young people at risk for poor educational, economic and social outcomes.

"Neglect is, in many cases, a lack of resources," says Gail C. Christopher.

Christopher was one of 10 recipients for the 2023 Casey Excellence for Children Awards, for her lifetime

of work over the last 40 years making efforts to improve the well-being of children. Christopher is known for her work infusing holistic health and diversity concepts into public programs and policy discussion.

Christopher is also the executive director of the National Collaborative for Health Equity, a D.C.-based national organization that promotes health equity by using data and developing leaders.

Recently, Christopher released her book "Rx Racial Healing," which she says is a guide for facilitators to teach racial healing in colleges, groups, institutions and communities.

As of 2019, HHS reported that of all the children in foster care, 23% of them were Black or African American. For comparison, Black or African American children make up 14% of the total child population of the United States.

According to Christopher, this disparity exists because of the historic belief in a false hierarchy of human value, which has "decimated families of color."

Christopher says this is where data analysis comes in. By using data and statistics, she says, we can examine the disproportionate dissolution of families, helping to identify unconscious or implicit biases.

The issue of drugs like opiates being marketed disproportionately to low-income communities is one way this bias manifests, according to Christopher.

She also stresses the need for a living wage and affordable housing, because when parents are having to work three jobs to pay rent, there isn't time for much else.

In August, nearly half a million Americans were working multiple full-time positions according to The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Whether it's changes that open up more avenues to children—such as the kinship rule—or addressing the need for foster care, Christopher says more can be done.

"Children need and deserve love," she says. "We as a society must find a way to show that love. In the foster care system and the policies we create." ■



## FOSTER FACTS

Only 3% of foster youth go on to graduate from college (Annie E. Casey Foundation)

Adults who have been in foster care suffer PTSD at twice the rate of combat veterans (Annie E. Casey Foundation)

Nearly a quarter of all foster youth who aged out of care were homeless after exiting the system (The Midwest Study)

Over half of all foster youth who aged out of care were incarcerated within two years (The Midwest Study)



## FOSTER RESOURCES

### COMFORT CASES

Since Comfort Cases began its work, the nonprofit has distributed more than 200,000 backpacks filled with new items like pajamas, toothbrushes, lotions, books and stuffed animals.

Today, Scheer keeps a trash bag with him to remind himself where he came from and how far society has to go with how children are treated. Learn how to get involved locally at [comfortcases.org](http://comfortcases.org).

### ONE SIMPLE WISH

One Simple Wish is a national nonprofit based in Trenton, New Jersey, that supports children in foster care by granting wishes, including requests for tangible items like bicycles, school supplies and experiences.

In 2021/2022, it helped grant 22,706 wishes, including 7,728 wishes for essential items and 2,796 wishes for education. Founder and foster mother Danielle Gletow hopes to grant 1 million wishes before 2024. [onesimplewish.org](http://onesimplewish.org)

### AFC KINSHIP CARE

For additional information on the proposed change, contact Kathleen McHugh, director of the policy division of the Children's Bureau, at 202-401-5789 or at [cbcomments@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:cbcomments@acf.hhs.gov).

Find updates on the proposal at [hhs.gov/cb/policy-guidance/im2302](https://hhs.gov/cb/policy-guidance/im2302).

# APPRECIATING OUR TEACHERS



## A Q&A with Educators in the DMV

BY JARRAD SAFFREN



**T**eachers do it all—and often without the recognition they deserve. In celebration of our hardworking teachers for Teacher Appreciation Week (May 8-12), we reached out to winning schools from *Washington Family's* July 2022 Readers' Choice Poll, each of which had school officials recommend a teacher that exemplified the school's excellence. Get to know these local educators and why they do what they do.

### APPRECIATING LAURA NUTTER

**Bullis High School,  
Potomac (Grades 9-12)**



Laura Nutter

#### What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I love getting to know my students and talking to them about things they're interested in and things they enjoy. I love getting them excited about science. I think of times where I've done a demonstration, and their jaws literally drop. How does that happen? Or maybe it's something we've learned before and they'll have that moment where they're like, 'Oh, that's how that's connected to the other concept we learned.' [I love] to see the actual click in their brain as we make these connections.

#### What is something that teaching has taught you?

I mostly teach biology, so I always tell the students I have learned more biology being a teacher than being a biology major in college. The second thing that comes to

mind is patience. I have learned the power of patience and how to be patient in all different types of situations.

#### What made you want to be a teacher?

My first job out of college was as a lab technician at the University of Richmond. I enjoyed the science, but I really enjoyed teaching the undergrads. That's where it clicked for me. My first full-time job was at TC Williams [High School] in Alexandria [Virginia]. A bio teacher position. My first year was really hard. I was working 12- to 14-hour days. But I would still have those moments of, 'Oh, this is so fun.' I still remember one activity. We were learning genetics and making marshmallows out of the genes. I remember one student saying, 'That was so fun.' I said, 'I could cry.' It's worth it.





Sue Ann Salimbene

## APPRECIATING SUE ANN SALIMBENE

**Seneca Academy, Darnestown  
(Preschool- Extended Day 4s)**

### What do you enjoy most about teaching?

The thing I enjoy most about the children is when they discover something on their own. It kind of happens naturally. The lesson goes where the [child's] interest lies. A teacher is kind of like a facilitator.

### What is something that teaching has taught you?

To be flexible. To take joy in the moment you're in. Children have a remarkable ability to be in the moment that adults sometimes forget. As a teacher, you're thinking, 'Oh, it's going to go this way.' And they have a way of looking at it in a totally different way, and you say, 'Wow, I never thought about that before. You're right!'

### What made you want to be a teacher?

When I was a little girl playing dress up, I was always the teacher. I liked helping people.

## APPRECIATING LISA PAWLEY

**Oneness-Family Montessori  
School, Chevy Chase  
(Preschool - Ages 2 and 3)**

### What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I have always enjoyed interacting with young people. It is amazing to witness the expansion of their minds as they learn and discover new things.

### What is something that teaching has taught you?

Teaching has taught me that I always need to be flexibly minded. As teachers, we spend so much time planning lessons and communicating concepts. While this is necessary and crucial to learning, we also need to be able to pause and be prepared to tackle concepts that come up spontaneously. Some of the most beautiful learning moments that I have witnessed have organically grown out of the lessons presented.



Lisa Pawley

### What made you want to be a teacher?

It began with one of my own children. I observed my eldest child in preschool at 3, and how she was challenged with a particular classroom structure. When we moved her to a Montessori school a few weeks into the school year, it was immediately evident how she connected with the kinesthetic nature of the learning environment. At the time, I was teaching dance and directly related to many aspects of Montessori education. Concepts such as developing independence, working with materials built from natural materials and a structured but free exploratory environment all inspired me.

## APPRECIATING SARA HAWKINS

**The Lab School of  
Washington, Washington, DC.,  
(Grades 5-8)**

### What do you enjoy most about teaching?

I grew up learning differently than the other students in my classes. I struggled in spaces and with teachers who only had one answer

in mind. I thrived in environments and with teachers that gave me an opportunity to express my understanding of what we were learning in multiple ways, where there wasn't just one "right" answer: I could write a paper, create an artwork, verbally explain what I understood and knew.

The Lab School allows me to differentiate in my teaching to reach my students with dyslexia, ADHD and other language based learning differences in a way that is meaningful to them. One of my favorite experiences at Lab has been creating a museum exhibit with my middle school students in the Museum Club each school year.

### What is something that teaching has taught you?

I have learned to be curious rather than judgmental. I find myself asking more questions to understand the reason why a student reacted or behaved in a certain way rather than jumping to a conclusion. I have learned how to have restorative conversations with my students; how to use hand gestures, facial expressions and [utilize] speech intonations to allow more connection and increase engagement; to be mindful of my blind spots and how to teach a culturally responsive/relevant class encouraging research into multiple viewpoints.



Sara Hawkins

### What made you want to be a teacher?

I was pretty negatively affected in my early education by some teachers who seemed to only focus on what I couldn't do. Meanwhile, teachers and coaches along the way who saw my potential, who cared about me, who saw me and who valued my special abilities were the ones who changed my trajectory as they made me feel able and even gifted. I wanted to be THOSE teachers for other kids like me. ■



# How to Create a Sensory-friendly Haircut Experience

BY HEATHER M. ROSS

**G**oing to get a haircut for the first time can be a scary experience for kids, but the fear tends to subside with more visits. The same cannot be said, however, for neurodivergent kids, who have unique sensitivities that make any visit to the salon or barber a challenge.

Being neurodivergent means you experience the world differently from many people. As many parents of children who have sensory processing disorders know, this can turn what might seem like a common errand into an ordeal.

This is because neurodivergent children often have sensitivities to sights, sounds, textures and other sensory stimuli. Autism Research Institute describes this phenomenon as a result of their senses being over- or under-reactive to stimulation. They process sensory information differently.

Some children on the autism spectrum experience synesthesia. Synesthesia is a blending of the senses where one sense can produce another sense at the same time. This means someone with this condition may hear shapes, perceive or associate a certain color with a sound or experience sound as a physical sensation. Sometimes, certain sounds or textures can even be felt as pain. According to research published in peer-reviewed journal *BMC Psychiatry*, synesthesia is more common in people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Autism Research Institute explains that these differences can present in a variety of ways, including withdrawing from touch, refusing to wear certain types of clothes or eat certain foods, distress when having the hair or face washed, clumsiness or odd posture.

All of these factors can make receiving a haircut a uniquely challenging experience, and not every salon or barber is prepared for it.

Haircuts involve a wide variety of stimulation from touching a child's hair to washing it, to the sound of the clippers or other customers to tolerating close physical contact with someone the child may not be familiar with.

## What Parents Can Do

There are a few things parents can do to help children who have sensory processing difficulties have a good experience with a haircut, explains family stylist Heather Parker, who owns Haircut Heather, in Columbia.

Parker has 12 years of experience in the field and has received training and certifications in working with neurodivergent children. Parker has also worked with Verbal Beginnings (which provides social and therapy services in Columbia and beyond, with summer programs in the DMV) to provide haircuts for children with ASD.

The most important thing parents can do, according to Parker, is remain calm. If the parent and the stylist seem anxious, the child will notice.

Parker says for stylists, the haircut process for children with ASD involves getting on their level and moving slowly while you figure out what bothers them. What overwhelms one child may not bother another, as every child on the autism spectrum can experience the world differently.

Another thing parents can do is look for a stylist who cuts hair in a more intimate setting, such as a one-customer-at-a-time studio. The more intimate environment removes the stimulation of other customers and can comfort children who are shy or more sensitive to having eyes on them.

Parents can also prepare their children by introducing them to the idea of getting a haircut beforehand. Let your child know

HAIRCUT: PROVIDED BY HAIRCUT HEATHER;



as much of what they can expect as possible. This might include showing them a video of another child getting a haircut, letting them watch you get your hair cut or reading them a story about a haircut. Reading books like “Even Monsters Need Haircuts,” by Matthew McElligott, or “Haircut for Lion,” by Michael Dahl, can be a great way to bond with your child and help them warm up to the idea.

For some parents, the best choice for your child’s hair may be learning to cut it yourself.

For parents looking to go this route, visit [claimingclipper.com](http://claimingclipper.com) for free tips on giving sensory-friendly haircuts. Calming Clipper also sells a 17-piece kit including a haircut guidebook.

## Where to Go

We reached out to local parents of children with autism through Facebook to find out where their children had positive haircut experiences. Parents recommended Haircut Heather and

Cookie Cutters Haircuts, in Lutherville.

Other neurodivergent-friendly salons include Bravado Hair Design, in Washington, D.C. (A parent’s review of this location said their child watched cartoons and didn’t even realize his hair was being cut.) and Snip-Its, in Gambrills, which partnered with Autism Speaks to create a haircut guide for children with ASD: [snipits.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Autism-Speaks\\_Haircut-guide.pdf](https://snipits.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Autism-Speaks_Haircut-guide.pdf) ■

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[haircutheather.glossgenius.com](http://haircutheather.glossgenius.com)

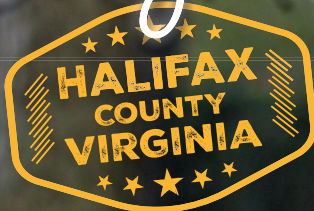
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1510 York Road, Suite 1510  
Timonium, MD. 21093  
443-275-7882  
[haircutsarefun.com/location/lutherville-md](http://haircutsarefun.com/location/lutherville-md)  
\*Cookie Cutters also has locations in Ellicott City and Nottingham.

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202-729-9958  
[Bravadohairdesign.net](http://Bravadohairdesign.net)

**Snip-Its**  
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1406 S. Main Chapel Way  
Suite 112  
Gambrills, MD. 21054  
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# How To Keep Your Family Healthy While Traveling

Expert advice from doctors, including how they keep their own families safe on the go

BY HEATHER M. ROSS

**W**ith summer break on the horizon, families will no doubt be thinking about planning their vacations. But how can they make sure everyone gets there and back in one piece?

We asked Dr. Joydip Roy, chief medical officer of UnitedHealthcare of the Mid-Atlantic (covering Washington, D.C., Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia) and Dr. Rachel Plotnick, a pediatrician of 17 years at the Greater Baltimore Medical Center Pediatric Group, for tips on staying healthy in the air, over the sea and on the road.

## Know the Risks

Both Roy and Plotnick say the most important place for families to start when preparing for travel is with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), where they can find an up-to-date guide for travel concerns and what vaccinations are recommended online before traveling to their destination. Plotnick recommends all new vaccines be applied at least one month before travel so that they will have time to take full effect.

## Avoid Common Travel Pitfalls

Once you know whether or not it's safe to travel, you can make preparations to ensure you are aware of—and can avoid—these common travel pitfalls.

### Jetlag

Jetlag happens when our bodies are out of sync with the time zone we're going to, Roy says. This usually happens when traveling to a time zone with a difference of two or more hours from the one you're used to. Roy says jetlag can leave people feeling tired and discombobulated—and children are just as susceptible to jetlag as adults.

To avoid jetlag, Roy advises getting plenty of rest before travel, staying well hydrated before and after your traveling, avoiding alcoholic beverages on the plane and getting plenty of sunlight once you reach your destination.

## Infectious Illnesses

Getting sick is always a concern in a family. It seems like once one kid catches a cold, it's just a matter of time before it spreads to the rest of the house. On vacation, the risk of catching a bug increases because of the stress travel places on our immune systems and because of the increase of high-traffic areas little hands just can't stay away from.

As a mother of three herself, Plotnick understands the struggle to keep everyone on board with disease prevention. She recommends explaining the process, especially when traveling with very young children.

Everyone should remember to wash their hands frequently, especially after touching high-contact surfaces like railings, door handles and light switches. In addition to handwashing, it can be a good idea to bring along disinfectant wipes to sanitize hotel spaces, hand sanitizer for dining out and masks for close quarters.

Johns Hopkins Medicine recommends on its website that people use antibacterial hand wipes or alcohol-based hand cleaners that contain 60% alcohol or more.

## Food Safety

Nobody books a ticket just to see the inside of a bathroom stall. Taking care of your digestive health can be the difference between a relaxing day at the beach and a frantic search for the next restroom.



When you're on the go, it can be easy to let nutritional standards slide in favor of quick and easy foods, but Plotnick warns parents to make sure they and their children are getting at least one to two meals per day that are nutritious and high in fiber.

Parents should also make sure everyone in the family is staying hydrated. Being dehydrated can cause children to feel irritable, in addition to being a potentially serious health concern, according to [hopkinsmedicine.org](http://hopkinsmedicine.org). One trick to staying hydrated is to let everyone pick out their own refillable water bottle before the trip and remind everyone to fill theirs up before leaving the house or hotel in the morning. (This works best if the parents are doing it, too!)

Food allergies add an additional layer of risk for many families. Allergens can be more

challenging to avoid if there is a language barrier. Some allergens are more prevalent in different parts of the world, and there is always a risk involved when trying foods you've never had before. Be prepared by having any allergy medication your family uses with you and

finding out ahead of time where the nearest emergency care is. Restaurants in some states are allowed to keep epinephrine on site for use in emergencies.

#### Your Travel Health Kit

Before you go, be sure to check local laws for the state

or country you are visiting to make sure any prescription medications you need to bring aren't restricted or illegal. Roy also recommends bringing enough of your prescriptions to account for any travel delays. All prescriptions should be clearly labeled and stored in childproof containers for safety.

This also applies to eyeglasses and contacts. Every member of the family using contact lenses or prescription glasses should have a spare pair in case something happens to the pair they're using while away.

Other things to pack include general pain relievers like acetaminophen, ibuprofen or aspirin; Band-Aids; sunscreen; sunburn relief; tweezers; antacids; medication for motion sickness and insect repellent.

Have a safe trip! ■



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# Angela Goldstein

BY SASHA ROGELBERG

**M**ost people like to compartmentalize their work and home lives, but Realtor Angela Goldstein isn't most people.

The Bethesda, Maryland resident is the co-owner of Northgate Realty with her husband, Lee, and with 30 years of combined real estate experience, the two define their business by the friendships they form with their clients.

With their personal life and private life so intertwined, the couple is constantly having to balance work and home life, but they find joy in the hustle. Even on the couple's March honeymoon, relaxing on the beach, the two took a couple business calls: "We both understand that real estate happens, any time, any moment. So rather than getting upset, we just embrace it. It's just part of our lives," she says.

When the couple isn't busy selling homes, they're spending time with their four children in their blended family: Jared, 24, Sofia, 19, Valentina, 16, and Oliver, 6.

## How do you balance a professional and personal relationship with your husband?

I can't tell you how in sync and in harmony and peace we are every day.

Communication is number one. I've learned through him how to communicate better, how to express my needs. And at the end of the day, we always have a powwow: How did the day go? And how can we improve?

And then, more importantly, we both understand that we are different, and we respect our different opinions. We are really secure in each other's relationship, where we can allow ourselves to have differences in opinions and we can still get along.

## What is one challenge of being married to your business partner?

When we were both on vacation, we were both gone! The challenge would be when we both need to be at a place...but somehow we make it work.

I guess sticking to the schedule, respecting the home life — while we're working, let's not focus on the laundry. House distractions, keeping those at bay so that we can focus on

work, that's a challenge. That's an everyday challenge for sure.

## How do you set boundaries between your work life and your family life?

I feel like as we learn more and more, we continue to evolve in that area. There's the kids being home during COVID, when they're off at school—all of that can disrupt the flow. And also, we have four dogs at home, in our house.

But I think we all have the same goal—that we want a peaceful house, we want to succeed. The kids understand that when we're in the office, we're in the office, and we respect that time.

We also have just started using it this year—it's been really helping—but we also create block schedules for ourselves. It's been doing wonders for us, where we actually respect our time. 'Okay, this is work time, and this is family time,' because obviously, we work from home, too. Other than going out to see clients and houses, most of the time, we're here.

## What is a lesson that you hope your kids learn from you?

I think that lesson is that you can do anything you put your mind into doing, as long as you're doing it for the good of everybody. As long as your intentions are good.

I hope that they see that there are ways to make a living in the world and be happy at the same time. You don't have to get on that hamster wheel if you don't want to. There's other ways.

## What advice would you give to other parents who own their own business?

Time management has been a big thing for us: Putting everything on the calendar, having an organized system of sorts.

I use something called the Productivity Planner, which is, basically, every morning, I have a list of [things] that I need to do for the most important [tasks], and I don't make that list too big. I keep it to five things. And that's the maximum: I do five things. And I feel like I can check them off my list, and then I feel more accomplished than if I had a list of 25 things and then I never feel like I actually do a single one. ■





## WHAT IS YOUR FAMILY'S FAVORITE ...

### Meal

I make the best tortilla soup. That's a winner for everybody.

### Activity

Get together and eat. Have dinner together. We don't get to see Jared, Lee's son, all the time because he lives at his own apartment now. And my daughter's in college (one of them), so just being able to get together for dinner.

### TV Show

"[The] Big Bang Theory" is probably on in our house all day long.

### Vacation Spot

I want to say Palm Springs because that was where we just got married, and we loved it so much. ■

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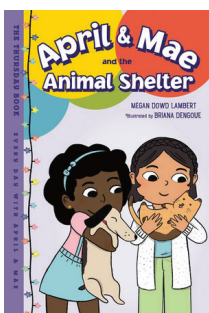
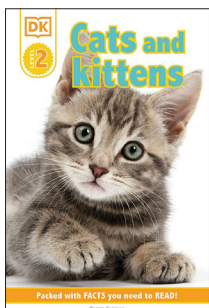
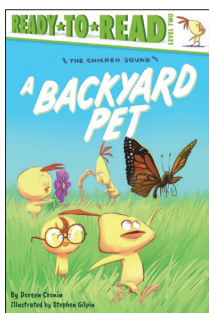
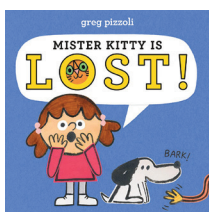
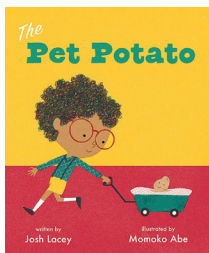
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# A Pet's Life

## 12 (Tails) of Pet Adventures, Human Companions and World Domination!

BY JENNIFER ROTHSCILD, COLLECTION ENGAGEMENT LIBRARIAN,  
ARLINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

Pets can be a valuable part of a family, or a cause of tension between a child who wants one and parents who don't. Of course, in the world of books we get both types of stories, as well as those about the interior lives of our pets, about kids who can talk to their pets, and that offer guides about choosing and caring for your real-life animal friends.

### PICTURE BOOKS

#### "I'm Not Missing"

by Kashelle Gourley, illustrated by Skylar Hogan

A dog on a missing poster explains that he ran away voluntarily to explore his inner lone wolf—the pressures of pet life were too much. He had to perform silly tricks for treats, someone was always watching when he went to the bathroom and trying to be a good boy all the time is exhausting. But when he sees his human with a different dog, he gets jealous and starts to rethink his lone wolf status. A fun look at the pressures of being a pampered pet and sly lesson in being careful what you wish for.

#### "The Pet Potato"

by Josh Lacey, illustrated by Momoko Abe

Albert wants a pet, but his parents aren't so sure. In an ultimate "dad joke," his dad gifts him a pet potato. Albert's used to ignoring such things, but when he thinks the wrinkles in the potato's skin look like a sad and lonely face, he decides to embrace his new pet potato with gusto. Together, they go on walks, play in the park and even take a bath. When Mom throws away the rotting tuber, Albert discovers he can grow a whole new family of pets to share the fun.

#### "Mister Kitty is LOST"

by Greg Pizzoli

Mister Kitty is lost and hiding somewhere in the pages of the book. A young girl and her dog need the reader to help them look, but each time they think they've found the missing cat, a page turn reveals

something else! Clever die cuts, bright colors, unexpected animals and counting make this a fun preschool hit.

### EARLY READERS

#### "A Backyard Pet"

by Doreen Cronin, illustrated by Stephen Gilpin

When searching for someone to play with, Sugar the chick sees that all her siblings are taking care of their pets in the backyard. Even though some of their pets seem silly (Sugar's not sure flowers can actually be pets), she still wants one of her own, and sets off on a search to find her own backyard pet.

#### "Cats and Kittens"

by Caryn Jenner

A great introduction to cats and kittens for beginning readers. In addition to seeing photographs of adorable felines, kids will learn all sorts of fascinating facts and information about cats, different breeds and how to care for them.

#### "April & Mae and the Animal Shelter"

by Megan Dowd Lambert, illustrated by Briana Dengoue

April and Mae are best friends. Even though April loves dogs and Mae loves cats, their pets are best friends, too! When the new animal shelter needs help, the girls each find a way to use their unique talents. April writes a letter to the local newspaper to urge people to adopt pets and Mae opens a lemonade stand to raise money. A fun installment in this early reader series that shows ways younger kids can help make a difference.



## MIDDLE GRADE

**"Hedge over Heels"***by Elise Ciotti-McMullen*

Reyna's mom is in the military, so she's used to moving frequently and always being the new girl in school. When she starts at yet another school, she doesn't want to make new people friends, knowing she'll just leave soon, but she does want a dog. What she gets is a hedgehog that's just as prickly as Reyna is. When her mom insists she enter Spike into a pet talent show, Reyna might learn to let some new people into her life.

**"Pets and their People: The Ultimate Guide to Pets—Whether You've Got One or Not!"***by Jess French*

Why do cats hiss? What do pet snakes eat? Whether you're interested in a pet dog, horse, lizard, bird or something else, this book will teach you all about their behavior, history and how to take care of them. There are even ideas for how to care for animals when you don't have a pet of your own.

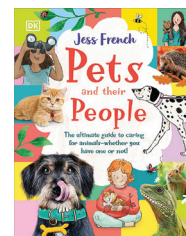
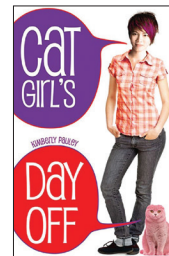
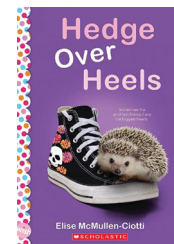
## TEEN

**"Cat Girl's Day Off"***by Kimberly Pauley*

Everyone else in Nat's family has amazing supernatural talents—her sister has X-ray vision and levitation! Nat can talk to cats. But when a film crew is in town to film a remake of "Ferris Bueller's Day Off," the cats tell Nat that a shapeshifter has kidnapped the female lead and a celebrity blogger. Along with her best human friends and plenty of snarky cats, Nat has to take her own day off from school to save the day.

**"Fetching"***by Kiera Stewart*

Olivia and her friends are relentlessly bullied and humiliated by the popular girls in their middle school. Fed up with it, Olivia decides to fight back using dog training techniques she's learned from her canine behavior expert grandmother. Her plan works extremely well, until everyone finds out about it in this pun-filled look at middle school popularity. ■



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# Embracing the Zigzags

BY MEG EDSON

**B**eauty is inside out, and we should embrace our differences.

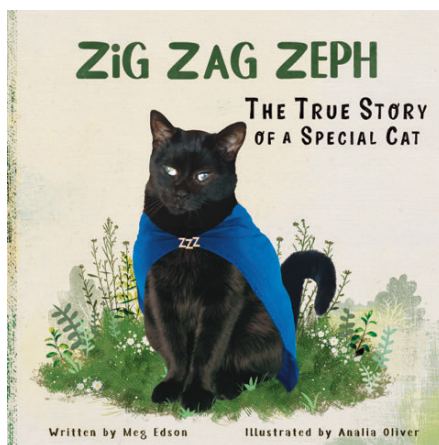
Those wise words came from my cat, Zeph, who is the subject of a children's book I wrote: "Zig Zag Zeph." Zeph has Cerebellar Hypoplasia (CH), a brain condition that makes him walk in zigzags. But he is a happy cat who doesn't let his challenges slow him down. Zeph does what other cats do but with his own quirky style. His strong spirit and amazing attitude are inspiring.

I wrote this book for two reasons.

First, I am a former special educator and worked at The Lab School in Washington, D.C. for many years. Zeph finds ways to do what he wants, and I saw that with my students. One day, watching Zeph's determination inspired me to write a book aimed primarily at kids with differences, but actually for anyone facing challenges.

Because of his condition, Zeph can't jump as high as other cats, but he never gave up on trying to get to the top of his cat tree. He sat proudly when he finally was able to get up there after using his front legs to climb up. His joy and perseverance is an inspiration, and my hope is that children will understand his message and enjoy that it is coming from the voice of a cat. Zeph embraces his differences and shows that it is cool to do things your own way.

My former students thrived when they were allowed to learn in their own way versus the standard/expected/traditional way. They go on to do amazing things—they're often highly intelligent and highly talented but just need to figure out their unique ways



of "climbing trees."

My second reason for writing was to raise awareness for special cats like Zeph. Special needs cats are often overlooked in the adoption process as perfection is sought. Having two CH cats and a third with one ear has taught me the valuable lesson of how wonderful these cats are. In the past, kittens with CH were regularly euthanized, and the same with adult CH cats left at shelters. The assumption was they couldn't thrive or were in pain. Neither is true. Zeph is a mild-to-moderate case, but even with severe cases in which cats can't walk at all, people find ways to help their cats be happy. While the more severe cases require extra dedication, most CH cats simply take longer to walk from A to B, are messier when they eat and might need a little extra patience and attention while they figure out how to navigate the world. Through the book, my hope is to get the word out about Cerebellar Hypoplasia and how amazing these wee-

ble-wobble cats are.

It's all part of how our society is moving towards embracing differences in those we love, whether it be kids or animals. We don't assume kids with challenges can't flourish. They can and do, often in inspiring ways. It's the same with a special needs pet, and this is what Zeph would like to get across.

*Meg Edson is a former special educator who lives in Bethesda, Maryland with her husband and band of merry cats. Zeph's lively spirit and ability to overcome difficulties prompted her to share his story. "Zig Zag Zeph" is available to order on Amazon or [zigzagzeph.net](http://zigzagzeph.net). You can follow him on Instagram @zigzagzeph. ■*





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