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SEPTEMBER 2021

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SEPTEMBER 2021



Discover our favorite kid-friendly museums in D.C. **Page 16**



PHOTO BY DAVID BARATZ PHOTOGRAPHY

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Special Series



Calendar of
Events



Family Matters
Family Fun



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Interior
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Single
Page Design



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Capital Culture

Without question, one of the best things about raising kids in the D.C. area is access to the arts.

The Smithsonian Institution alone has 17 museums and galleries, plus the National Zoological Park, all of which are free to visitors. Broadway touring companies make stops at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and The National Theatre, and many plays and musicals start at local theaters before moving to New York City. "Dear Evan Hansen," "Mean Girls" and "Beetlejuice" are shows that hit it big on Broadway.

And let's not forget all of the concerts, book signings and dance performances taking place on any given day.

The DMV also provides lots of opportunities for children to participate in the arts, from after-school classes to audition-only conservatories. However, arts participation isn't only a fun way to pass the time. The benefits of music, theater and visual arts lessons have been widely studied and include stronger problem-solving skills, improved academic performance, increased cultural awareness and a greater sense of innovation.

In our annual arts issue, we explore a variety of ways

that families can take advantage of the arts opportunities in our area. With museums opening back up, contributor Jennifer Marino Walters shares expert advice for making "grown-up" institutions fun and engaging for children (page 14). And Barbara Ruben shines a spotlight on Acting for Young People, a popular performing arts program in Fairfax that offers acting camps, showcase productions, workshops and more (page 12).

Our Parent You Should Know is Aileen Fuchs, the new president and executive director of the National Building Museum. She and her family — including daughter Faith, who's on the cover with her mom — moved from New York to Bethesda in time for the start of the school year. Read more on page 18.

You'll also find back-to-school advice, children's books for video gamers and family-friendly hiking spots.

Happy reading, and I'll see you at the museum! ■

PJ Feinstein



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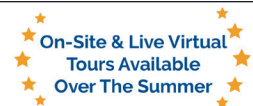
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{TOP 10}

Family-Friendly Events in September Around the DMV

BY PJ FEINSTEIN



SEPT. 3-6 AND 10-12

THE BIG BOUNCE AMERICA

The world's largest bounce house, according to Guinness World Records, is set to inflate at Rosecroft Raceway in Fort Washington, Maryland. Kick off your shoes and experience all the fun inside the 13,000-square-foot inflatable. Other air-filled attractions include a sports arena, an obstacle course and a space-themed wonderland. Tickets start at \$19. thebigbounceamerica.com



THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

A grand opening 18 months in the making, the National Children's Museum in D.C. invites young learners to tap into their creativity and curiosity. Exhibits such as an immersive digital weather experience, a three-story climber and slide and a data science alley will appeal to kids 12 and younger.

\$15.95. nationalchildrensmuseum.org

SEPT. 11-12

ROUND HILL APPALACHIAN TRAIL FESTIVAL

A celebration of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, which crosses 14 states, this two-day family-friendly event in Loudon County, Virginia, features food, music and games. Don't miss the hands-on activities happening on Sunday, including forest bathing, campfire cooking, nature sketching and hiking.

Free. roundhillat.org

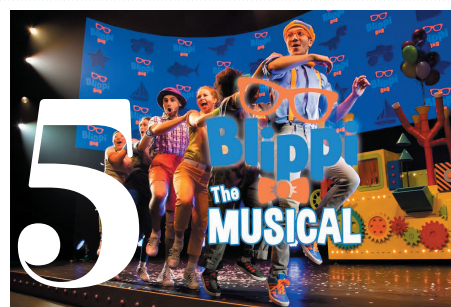


SEPT. 2-11

'A WIND IN THE DOOR'

The sci-fi sequel to Madeleine L'Engle's "A Wrinkle in Time" makes its theatrical debut at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Recommended for children ages 9 and older, this fantastical adventure finds literary favorites Meg Murry, Charles Wallace and Calvin O'Keefe on a mission across the galaxy to fight an evil force.

\$20. kennedy-center.org



SEPT. 16

'BLIPPI THE MUSICAL'

Blippi, the star of educational YouTube videos for young viewers, is bringing his bowtie, blue and orange hat and endless curiosity to EagleBank Arena in Fairfax, Virginia. There will be singing, dancing and, of course, the opportunity to purchase a meet-and-greet experience with the star of the show.

\$27-\$67. blippithemusical.com



SEPT. 11

'THE MIRACULOUS MAGICAL BALLOON'

Packed with physical comedy, this Synetic Theater production tells the story of a traveling actor and his trunk of toys and surprises. The performance is free for first responders and their families at Lubber Run Amphitheater in Arlington, Virginia.

Free. synetictheater.org

SEPT. 10-18

'BY THE SEASHORE'

Take a magical journey to the beach through puppetry, movement and sound. This 20-minute toddler-friendly production at Lee District Park's amphitheater explores all the amazing things you can find in the sky, the sea and the shore.

\$10. artsonthehorizon.org



SEPT. 5

MISTER BARRY FAMILY SHOW

Local magician Mister Barry takes the stage at the Capital Hilton during the three-day DC Festival of Magic. His comedic performance will keep little ones laughing and parents wondering, "How did he do that?" Recommended for kids ages 3 and older.

\$20. dcmagicfestival.com



SEPT. 12

ADAMS MORGAN DAY

D.C.'s longest running neighborhood festival, Adams Morgan Day, has been a family-friendly celebration for more than 40 years. Activities for kids include soccer and flag football clinics, face painting, workshops and more.

Free. admoday.com



SEPT. 17-18

SHARED STORY TIME WEBINAR

Join the National Air and Space Museum for a virtual reading of "There Once Was a Sky Full of Stars" by Bob Crelin. Learn how light pollution hides our starry skies and the best way to view stars in your backyard.

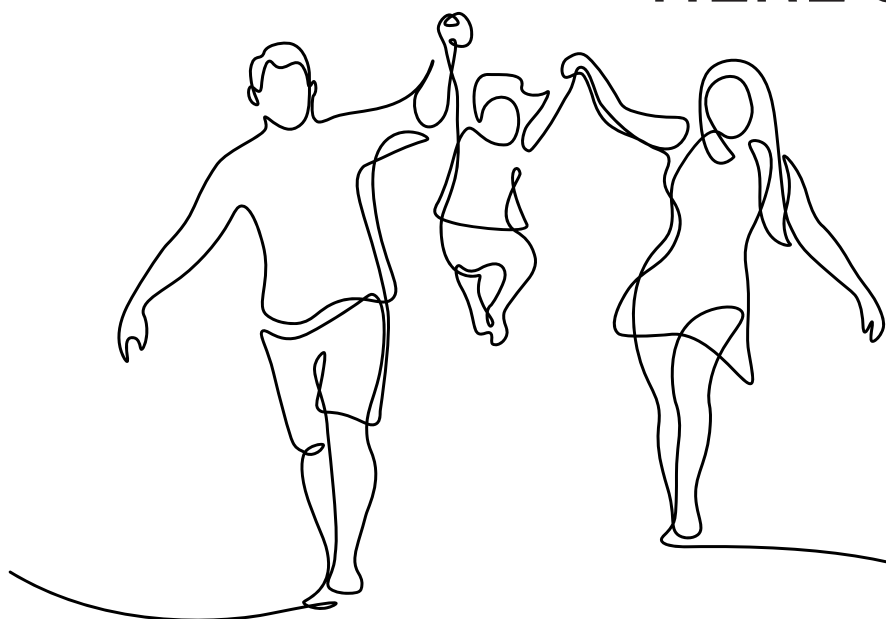
Free. si.edu

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

TETIANA GARKUSHA/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES PLUS



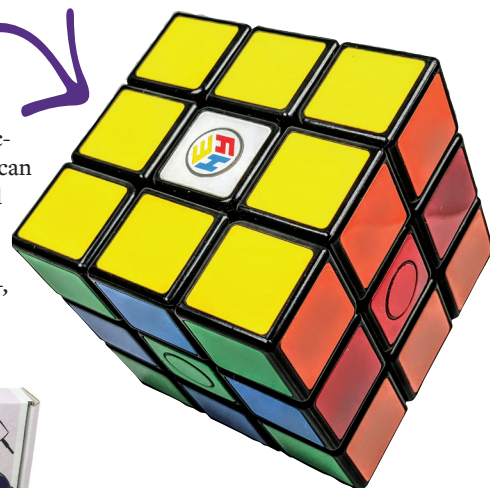
Stack the Scoops

To play this ice cream-themed card game, players collect points by matching base cards, scoop cards and toppings card — an activity that reinforces basic math skills. \$25, ages 5+, vibugo.com



HEYKUBE

Beginners to experts can try solving the three-by-three puzzle by following directional LEDs built into the cube, or they can turn off the light-based hints. Download the optional HEYKUBE app to solve world records challenges, send scrambles to friends and more. \$99.99, ages 8+, heykube.com



DIY Nail Polish Making Kit

Mini manicurists can embrace their creativity as they blend shades to create custom polish. With this collection of primary-colored pigment powders, the color possibilities are virtually unlimited! \$45.99, diykitcreations.com

Blinger – On The Go

This travel kit features 120 gems in multiple colors and shapes that adhere to hair, clothes and more. This Blinger is perfect for any fashionista. \$12.99, ages 6+, jazwares.com



Blah Blah Blah Phonics Card Game

Decode words using phonics with three decks of increasing difficulty. Race to get rid of cards by matching sounds and letters, and play wild cards to trip up your opponents. \$27, ages 4+, mrswordsmith.com



Nut Nut Squirrel! Even Nuttier
Outsmart your opponents and keep the squirrels away. Are you meek and mild-mannered, an impulsive risk taker or a slow, calculating strategist? Find out in this breakout game of lickety-split decisions, chance and choices. \$11.99, ages 4+, pbnjgames.com



Dinosaur Air Attack

Dino researcher Luis can attach his latest invention to the helicopter: Schleich's tranquilizer cannon with an integrated net. It's great for hours of imaginative play. \$29.99, ages 4+, schleich-s.com



Paint and Create Easel Case

This portable, dual-sided painting studio allows little artists to create their own masterpieces anywhere. A complementary travel art case makes it easier than ever to keep 65+ colorful painting supplies protected and organized. \$24.99, ages 4+, crayola.com

Treasures Await! Adventure Ship

Ahoy, matey! The snap-in captain and first mate can climb aboard the ship from the fold-down stairs, spin the ship's steering wheel, keep watch from the crow's nests and more. Plus, the free-rolling vessel comes with a detachable rowboat and a treasure chest for added adventure on the high seas. \$59.99, ages 3+, lakeshorelearning.com



Bird-filled marshes, river islands and a hidden gold mine. All types of family-friendly hiking options — easy and safe, yet not so boring that the ho-hums strike — abound in the Washington, D.C., area. Explore five great hiking destinations that you and your kids will enjoy.

BY BARBARA NOE KENNEDY

TAKE a HIKE!

5 family-friendly hiking spots in the DMV

THEODORE ROOSEVELT ISLAND, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Several short, mellow trails lace Theodore Roosevelt Island, near Rosslyn, Virginia (it's actually in Washington, D.C.) — the perfect go-to for all ages. Let the kids run free on the Woods and Upland Trails, home to red and gray fox and white-tailed deer. The most interesting trail is the Swamp Trail, a 1.5-mile loop, on the island's eastern edge, a habitat of marsh wrens, red-winged blackbirds, turtles and frogs. For those into history, look for the statue of the island's namesake. The best thing about the island? It's impossible to get lost!

GETTING THERE *The parking area is accessible only from the northbound George Washington Memorial Parkway south of Key Bridge. From there, walk across the footbridge. Free.*

MORE INFO nps.gov/this

SENECA CREEK STATE PARK, GAITHERSBURG, MARYLAND

The shores of Clopper Lake, in the heart of Seneca Creek State Park's timbered hills, might look crowded at first glance. But slip onto the 3.7-mile Lake Shore Trail that loops the lake, and you'll find a quiet realm where the kids should keep their eyes open for cottontail rabbits, wild turkeys and groundhogs. Along the way, the lake plays peek-a-boo between the trees; scan the skies above for bald eagles. The park has several shorter family-friendly trails, including the Long Draught Trail, the Great Seneca Trail and the Mink Hollow Trail, which connects the Lake Shore and Long Draught Trails for a longer 1.5-mile hike.

GETTING THERE *Take I-270 north to exit 10/Clopper Road in Gaithersburg and go 2 miles west. The park entrance fee is \$3 per person for Maryland residents; \$5 per person for nonresidents.*

MORE INFO dnr.maryland.gov/publiclands/pages/central/seneca.aspx

GREAT FALLS, POTOMAC, MARYLAND

For families looking to stretch their legs, the Maryland side of Great Falls offers primo hiking. The 0.2-mile stroller-accessible towpath crosses several boardwalks over wildflower-dotted isles to the Great Falls Overlook, where the crashing waters of the Potomac River mesmerize visitors. The aptly named Billy Goat Trail, a 3.7-mile loop, is for more intrepid hikers who enjoy clambering over large boulders, climbing angled rocks and teetering beside steep cliffs along the Potomac River. Then there's the easy 3-mile Gold Mine Trail loop in the wooded uplands behind the falls, which makes for a fun treasure hunt for the gold-mine ruins that remain from a 19th-century boom.

GETTING THERE *The Great Falls section of the C&O Canal National Historic Park is located off MacArthur Boulevard in Potomac, Maryland. The car entrance fee is \$20.*

MORE INFO nps.gov/choh/planyourvisit/greatfallstavernvisitorcenter.htm

POTOMAC OVERLOOK REGIONAL PARK ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

Sorry, but this leafy sanctuary, tucked away in an Arlington neighborhood, doesn't really live up to its name. You won't find a sweeping river overlook. That said, it's a lovely sanctuary of oaks, hickories and tulip poplars, laced with novice hiking trails. Families can make an easy 1.2-mile trek on the Overlook, Red Maple and Heritage Loops Trails and White Oak Way. Take a longer hike by connecting with the Potomac National Heritage Scenic Trail in adjacent Donaldson Run Park. A little nature center near the park entrance has info and free maps, plus interactive exhibits on local wildlife and natural history.

GETTING THERE *The park is at 2845 Marcey Road in Arlington. Free.*

MORE INFO novaparks.com/parks/potomac-overlook-regional-park

HUNTLEY MEADOWS PARK, FAIRFAX COUNTY, VIRGINIA

Huntley Meadows, in the heart of suburban Alexandria, offers an easy flat trail with three different sections: Cedar Trail, Deer Trail and Heron Trail. A boardwalk that hovers over marshy water, the Heron Trail — with its belching toads, cackling geese and statuesque herons — is popular with little ones. An observation tower along the way gives a bird's-eye view over a 400-foot-long beaver dam. The nature center has lots of info on the area's wildlife and geology.

GETTING THERE *The park is located at 3701 Lockheed Blvd. in Alexandria. Free.*

MORE INFO fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/huntley-meadows ■



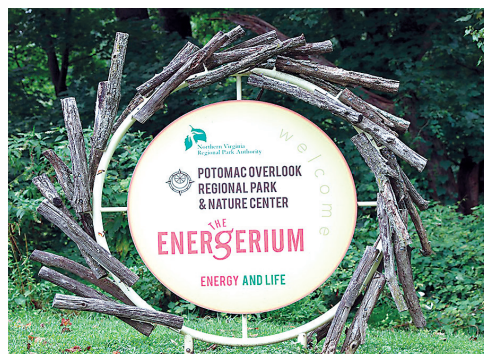
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WIKIMEDIA COMMONS: ALBERTHERRING

NO SMALL Parts

BY BARBARA RUBEN

Ten-year-old Noah Campbell has encountered the Wicked Witch of the West, danced the Charleston and embarked on a film noir movie marathon. It's all part of his experience with Acting for Young People, which offers theater classes and opportunities to be on stage (both real and virtual) for kids ages 5 to 18.

Last December, online audiences could catch Noah as Wee Willie, a Tiny Tim-type character in "A Wicked Christmas Carol," a kind of mash-up between "The Wizard of Oz" and "A Christmas Carol." This fall, he's looking forward to a role in "Rockin' Robin Hood," in which the titular character and his band of merry men and women sing and dance their way through a mixtape of pop hits. His little brother Lucas, 6, also participates in programs for younger kids.

Fairfax's AFYP, as it's called, is now in its 24th year, igniting dreams of Tonys and Oscars for hundreds of children each year — or at least giving them the courage to set foot on stage and belt out a tune. AFYP is the brainchild of Mary Lechter, a Washington-area actress who has performed at Arena Stage and Source Theatre, among other stages. Her credits also include the soap opera "All My Children" and the movie "Avalon."

While performing, she started teaching acting classes for kids at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and Studio Theatre.

"I discovered I had a real love for teaching," she says. "But when I moved to Fairfax, I realized there were no acting classes for kids, so I just took a stab at it."

Lechter can only estimate that "thousands" of children have taken part in AFYP over the years. "The beauty of it is I can't go to Target or go to a graduation and not see some kid I haven't already met and is excited to tell me about what they're doing now," she says.

AFYP's first classes were held in a rented room in a fire station. Lechter says AFYP was "nomadic" during its first years before finding a home in 2012 at the Mason Community Arts Academy at George Mason University in Fairfax. Today, the program offers summer camps, after-school programs, classes and what it calls showcases — musical productions targeted to various age groups. This fall, four showcases will be in rehearsals, with performances in December.

"I impress on (the students) that there are no small parts. We want everyone to feel important in the process and have something special to do," Lechter says.

While the showcase rehearsals and performances will be in person, audiences will be restricted to Zoom. But that's a step in the right direction, according to Lechter. When COVID-19 first shut down schools in spring 2020, AFYP acted fast, reasoning that the show must go on.

"While the world was shutting down, they were literally one of the very, very few organizations to stay running," says Meggan Strasbaugh, whose daughter Hailey has participated in AFYP programs for the last two years. "They moved seamlessly online with Zoom. I was so happy they kept going during that time when we had nothing else," she says.

**At
ACTING
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every student
has the
opportunity
to shine**



PHOTOS COURTESY OF ACTING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The number of pandemic-era students has fallen off a bit, says Lechter, noting that 600 youth participated in summer camps this year, compared with 800 to 900 in a typical year. Camp programs were offered both online and in person. Scene blocking got trickier to ensure actors were at least 6 feet apart, and enunciation through masks took some practice, according to Lechter.

The status of after-school programs this fall was still in flux in mid-August. The same is true of AFYP's free Time to Shine program, held after school at three Fairfax County Title 1 elementary schools. The program, funded with support of The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia, offers acting classes and a snack for children at schools where many students have low-income families.

Hailey, 13, says she is excited to return to in-person classes. "AFYP made me love acting, singing and dancing. The environment is super fun and happy and positive," she says. "And while I like performing online, it's not the same as seeing everyone in person."

Hailey played Simba in AFYP's production of "The Lion King." Rehearsals started in person in spring 2020 but quickly transitioned to online.

She also cites AFYP's teachers as an inspiration. The program uses professional actors and theater education students from George Mason University, where Lechter is a faculty member.

"They are a combination of folks like me, career professionals in arts, and students. I know within a couple days of seeing these students interact — their clarity in explaining, their generosity in wanting to help others — if they might be right for AFYP," says Lechter, who is also the associate director of Mason Community Arts Academy.

Some AFYP participants, like Hailey, hope to go on to a career onstage, and some alumni have been in local productions at Ford's Theatre and

Monumental Theatre Company in Alexandria. A few have been in independent films.

However, the program has benefits for a range of youth, Lechter says.

"We see a growth in confidence. Acting is hard. Students come out of their shell, speak a little louder, become a little more sociable with their peers. We hear from parents that grades

have improved because their presentations went really well," she says. "When in a production, there are always problems to solve, and it helps them think quickly and creatively."

Noah's mother, Leigh Campbell, says, "They are learning public speaking skills, learning how to act in front of other people. I think they'll carry this with them their whole life: how to be in the spotlight and not be uncomfortable."

Noah, who admits he doesn't need much of a confidence boost, describes his AFYP summer camp experience in this way: "Some kids were super shy and quiet, but by the end of the week, they were super loud and happy!" ■

To learn more, visit afyp.org or call 703-554-4931.

Fall showcase rehearsals are held on Saturdays, starting Sept. 11. The fee ranges from \$275 to \$450, depending on the age group.





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Visiting **MUSEUMS** with **KIDS**

BY JENNIFER MARINO WALTERS

As area museums open back up after COVID-19, find out how to enjoy them with your children.



SMITHSONIAN'S NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM



NATIONAL CHILDREN'S MUSEUM



NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

Museums across the country are starting to reopen after being forced to close during the pandemic. Many of them, such as Baltimore's Port Discovery Children's Museum, Philadelphia's Please Touch Museum and the National Children's Museum in Washington, D.C., are geared just for kids. But "grown-up" museums can be as fun and engaging for children with a little planning and preparation on your part.

Explore these expert tips on how to successfully visit — and dare we say, enjoy — museums with your kids.

BEFORE YOUR VISIT

Consider everyone's interests

You can find a museum to fit almost any interest. Is your child a budding astronaut? Try the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. Does she love trains? Baltimore's B&O Railroad Museum is a good bet. Consider your interests as well, as your enthusiasm can rub off on your kids.

Or pick a museum based on what your child is learning about in school, even if he doesn't seem into it. "Sometimes magic can happen in unexpected places," says Beth Maloney, director of interpretation at the Baltimore Museum of Industry.

Work out the logistics

Visit the museum's website and figure out all

the details ahead of time. How will you get there? How long will it take? Are you allowed to eat inside? If so, can you purchase food on-site or will you need to bring your own? Is the museum wheelchair or stroller accessible? Are bags allowed inside? What are the COVID-19 and masking policies? Be sure to also check what days and times the museum is open, as many have limited hours due to COVID-19 or are closed on certain days of the week.

Discuss proper behavior

"Talk with your kids about 'Museum Manners' — quiet voices and bodies, touch only what you are allowed to and be respectful of other visitors," says Sarah Erdman, a museum consultant with Cabinet of Curiosities in Northern Virginia. "Kids can absolutely be

joyful and excited about what they see, but they should behave more like they are visiting a library than a playground."

Set up a game plan

Explore the museum's website with your kids and have them choose which exhibits they most want to see or programs they want to participate in. This involvement will help get them excited for the visit and ensure you fit in what they most want to do.

DURING YOUR VISIT

Meter your expectations

"You will not see the whole museum, and you may not have this deep philosophical discussion about the meaning of art — and that's OK," says Erdman. "If you and your children

KID-FRIENDLY Museums in D.C.

Although most D.C.-area museums offer at least a few exhibits that kids would enjoy, several have exhibits that are designed specifically for children.

(NOTE: Museums or exhibits with a * next to them currently remain closed due to COVID-19.)



AGNOSTICPREACHERSKID

NATIONAL BUILDING MUSEUM

At the museum's "Play, Work, Build" exhibit, kids can create tiny creations with smaller blocks and massive structures with giant foam blocks. A digital interactive experience lets them build with virtual blocks — which make less mess when kids knock them down. \$10 for adults; \$7 for ages 2 to 12.



LEON REED

SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY

The Lemelson Center for the Study of Invention and Innovation at the Draper Spark!Lab* offers STEAM activities and experiments for kids ages 6 to 12. For children up to age 6, Wegmans Wonderplace* includes a pretend construction area, a kitchen, a farm and other hands-on activities. Free.



JASON DECROW - AP

SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

Kids can build an igloo, explore an Amazonian stilt house, do Maya math and many other hands-on activities in the imaNations Activity Center*. The STEM-based activities, developed by a team of Native scientists, engineers and inventors, highlight the impact of Native innovations. Free.



FLICKR

SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

At Q*rius Jr.*, students in grades K-5 can practice their scientific inquiry skills as they interact with items from the museum's collection. Kids will also enjoy seeing the dinosaurs at the David H. Koch Hall of Fossils, the mummies at "Eternal Life in Ancient Egypt" and the live butterflies at the Butterfly Pavilion* (which requires a separate paid ticket). Free.



CUMULUS CLOUDS

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Although many parts of this museum may be too difficult for young kids to view, "Remember the Children: Daniel's Story" is an interactive exhibit designed for kids and their families. It tells the story of one family's experiences during the Holocaust from the perspective of a young boy. Free.

enjoy your time together and they want to visit again, that is a win! If they see one thing that has an impact on them, learn something new, or have a new idea about something, that is a successful visit."

Let your kids be your guides

Give your children a map of the museum and let them be in charge of your route, but don't get too set on a specific order. "Museums are different from books. You can explore them in multiple ways," says Maloney. "It's OK to jump around."

Get interactive

"Children learn really well through hands-on experiences, which is why interactive exhibits are so popular with families," says Erdman.

While more and more museums are offering hands-on and multimedia exhibits, some of these features may be temporarily closed due to COVID-19. But there are many ways to create interaction yourself. Most museums allow you to take photos or sketch with pencils. Younger kids may enjoy playing "I Spy" or looking for specific things, such as finding all the dogs in a painting.

"My kids and I will imagine we are furnishing

a house and pick the pieces that we want in there, or make up stories about the things we are seeing," Erdman says.

Ask questions

Have your children think about how the objects are presented, such as why certain pieces might be grouped together or whether a painting would look different in a different frame. Older kids and teens can discuss how the museum presents certain topics and what it's leaving out. Does the science museum discuss climate change? Does a historic house talk about the enslaved people that lived there?

Know your family's limits

"There is something called 'museum fatigue,'" warns Maloney. "Tune in to everyone's feelings and know when to call it a day. It's about the quality of time you spend at the museum, not the quantity." Be sure to take plenty of breaks.

AFTER YOUR VISIT

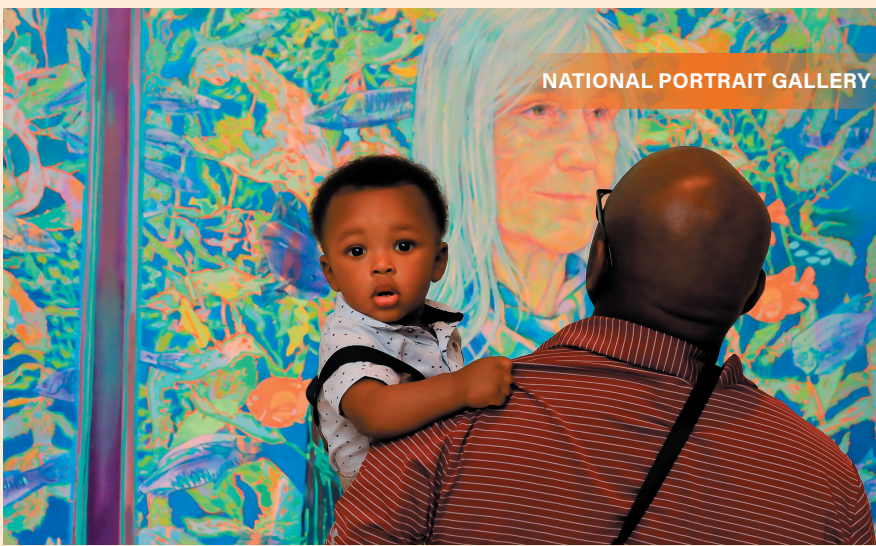
Reflect

Discuss what everyone learned and enjoyed. Ask your kids if there's anything they're still



NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

TONY POWELL



curious about or want to learn more about on a future visit.

Do more research

Visit the museum's website, check out books from the library or watch YouTube videos to learn more about what you saw.

Get creative

Use any photos you took or drawings your kids created to make a collage, a scrapbook page or a pretend museum.

Plan your next visit

Talk to your kids about which museum they'd like to visit next, or what they'd like to see during your next visit to the same museum.

And remember: Be present, be flexible and enjoy your time together. "Visiting a museum as a family is as much about the time spent together as about what you see," says Maloney. "I still remember visiting a museum with my grandma when I was a little kid." ■




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Aileen Fuchs

Building a New Life

INTERVIEW BY PJ FEINSTEIN



Aileen Fuchs has joined our Zoom call from a sparse corner of her home. She's seated low to the ground next to an open window for natural light.

"We're moving from New York to D.C., so I'm in, like, boxes," she says with a laugh.

Fuchs and her family — husband John and twins Faith and Fletcher, who are almost 6 — are relocating to Bethesda for her new job as president and executive director of the

National Building Museum in Washington, D.C. She describes the move as a reset for the family. "We are saying yes to opportunity, and we are practicing gratitude to be excited about what we're going to do," she says.

In her professional life, Fuchs is looking forward to welcoming back families to the National Building Museum, which reopened in May after being closed for 16 months for renovations and then the pandemic.

"It's that interior sense of scale that is just unrivaled anywhere and brings out the kid in everybody," says Fuchs. She's also eager to restart the museum's educational programs — and to burst the misconception that the museum's exhibits mostly appeal to architects.

"We're a museum about the built environment — where you live, where you work and where you play," says Fuchs. "It couldn't have more impact in people's daily lives."

What are some things your family loves to do together?

Hike, camp, walk. I would call them city kids, but we do love getting into nature. We love to travel and we love to eat. My husband and I are super foodies. We met working in restaurants, and I kind of fancy myself a mixologist, too. The kids make mocktails, and they're really good eaters. It makes me really happy.

What was the secret to getting them to be good eaters?

Lack of options! You don't want to try it? That's what dinner is. I guess you're going to be hungry!

What has surprised you the most about raising twins?

One of my friends said to me that my parenting the twins was like I had my second kid first.

I remember holding one and the one over there was crying. And then the one who was crying, whom I couldn't get to, stopped crying. I was like, "Oh, I don't need to go to you every second!" They self-soothed earlier, and I understood that earlier.

It was infinitely harder, but now it's almost

3 Quicks Qs

Paper or digital calendar?

Paper. I'm also a slave to my Outlook, but I love to actually write things down.

Last movie your family watched together?

"The Sandlot." Everyone loved it, and I hadn't seen it in so long.

Coffee or tea?

Coffee. Always half and half, no sugar. And always hot, even on a 97-degree day.

infinitely easier because I'm never in a position where they're like, "Mommy, mommy!" They have their best friend with them all the time. It's really been lovely, especially during the pandemic, too. I felt really fortunate they were in it together.

How do you juggle motherhood and your career?

I really try to be present in what I'm doing, no matter what I'm doing, all the time. Even if I'm not spending as many hours or getting the quantity of time, I try to make all my time with them be really quality. I try to put the phone down and do something with them — read or do a craft.

When it comes to work, I'll set a timer on a meeting and put my phone down so I can be really present with whom I'm speaking. I think that's how you get the most value out of anything you do.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I meditate every day. I try to either run or do yoga, or I'll do a 20-minute workout. I try to stop, cook dinner and use a new recipe that I like. I'll have a glass of wine and read my Bon Appetit. I try to have my own time, and when I don't do that, I feel like I'm not being good to anybody. You have to invest in your own mental health and your own spiritual self to be a great leader or to be a great mother. ■

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The 10 Commandments of



By Jan Pierce

A retired teacher's advice on how to make the most of a new school year

THE FIRST FEW DAYS OF SCHOOL are important ones for children. Meet and greets, new rules and expectations, a few queasy tummies — they're all part of getting the school year underway. For parents, it's a time for fresh starts too, sometimes burdened with a few doubts and fears. Did he get the right teacher? Will she learn to read?

Relax, parents. You can get this new school year off to a great start.

I taught school, mostly first and second grades, from 1967 to 2007, and then retired. I had a few years off (for good behavior) while I raised my two children. I loved teaching. And I especially loved the first day of school, when everything in the classroom was fresh and new. Crayons had sharp points, glue containers were full. Desks were scrubbed and boasted beautifully printed nametags atop each one. Children arrived that first morning all put together, wearing smiles of anticipation.

I often met a few parents that day as well. They were the ones who couldn't quite allow their children to ride the bus; they needed to see them safe and sound to the classroom. I understood. I cried the day my eldest boarded the bus for first grade, later telling me it was like "a ride at Disneyland."

Read and follow the 10 commandments of back to school, and you'll be well on your way to a wonderful school year.

1 THOU SHALT SET A PROPER BEDTIME.

It can be difficult to transition from the long, fun-filled days of summer to the more rigid schedule of fall. Start a week or two early. Get back into the habit of going to bed early and rising at the appropriate time. Maybe even add 15 or 20 minutes to the morning scramble time to ease the pressure. Select clothing the night before. Eat breakfast together. Your children will arrive at school ready to begin their day.

2 THOU SHALT DO THE DREADED PAPERWORK.

Teachers and administrators take advantage of the first week of school to get all their ducks in a row. They want current address and telephone information. They need to know who to call in case of illness or emergency. And teachers want to get a handle on the children in their room. They want to know which parents will be available to help them and who has special health conditions.

Even though the sea of papers coming home threatens to spill over into the trash can, don't let that happen. Take the time to complete the paperwork and find a safe way to transport them into the teacher's waiting hands. The teacher will love you for this.

3 THOU SHALT WAIT A WEEK OR TWO BEFORE MAKING CHANGES.

The one and only time I intervened in selecting the teacher for my son, I was dead wrong. I got him the older, more experienced teacher and we were both bored for the rest of the year. (My son and I, not the teacher.) Trust the system. Children are placed with a certain teacher based on the needs of both the child and for balance in the classroom. The ratio of boys to girls, the number of special needs children or English-language learners, for example, have been taken into consideration.

If you suspect that a change may be necessary, wait a bit and see how your child adjusts. You may be surprised. (Of course, in any situation that has potential for serious problems, you as the parent must act in your child's best interests.)

4 THOU SHALT VOLUNTEER.

I can't emphasize enough the value of giving something to your child's classroom experience. If you work during the day, you can still send in cupcakes or take time off to chaperone a field trip. If you have young children at home, arrange child care trades and volunteer to listen

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to children read, play reading and math games or provide any other help the teacher needs. One-on-one attention is very valuable in the classroom, and you can offer that with no training in education. Children are very aware of their parents' attitude toward school and learning in general. Be the parent who shows up, supports and gives.

5 THOU SHALL ATTEND OPEN HOUSES AND PERFORMANCES.

See commandment number four. Show up. It matters.

6 THOU SHALT MAKE AN APPOINTMENT FOR IMPARTING IMPORTANT INFORMATION.

Open houses and other large school gatherings are wonderful for a positive group experience. But if you have a question about what happens in the classroom, your child's successes or needs, behavior issues and the like, please make an appointment to visit with the teacher before or after the school day. Teachers are encouraged by parents' concern and interest in their child's performance. They want to give you their full attention to discuss important topics.

7 THOU SHALL BE PART OF A TEAM EFFORT.

The school, the family and the child make up a learning team. There may be other teaching specialists involved in your child's learning experience — speech therapists, social workers and reading specialists. Speak positively about your child's teachers and the school program. While no system is perfect, most educational professionals want to cooperate with parents and address their concerns. Your child will know if you're unhappy with the school and it will reflect in his or her attitudes and behaviors.

8 THOU SHALT PAY ATTENTION TO CHANGES IN ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR.

If your child has changes in behavior

or attitude, pay close attention. The problem may be as simple as illness or mild discouragement, but it could be something bigger such as bullying incidents or fears of failure. Talk it out and take appropriate action.

9 THOU SHALL FEEL FREE TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE TEACHER.

Teachers are busy, and they may give the impression they don't have time to talk with you. That's wrong. They have time before the bell rings in the morning, after school and during the evenings. They often like to email back and forth. Teachers care about their students, and they're usually eager to hear what you have to say.

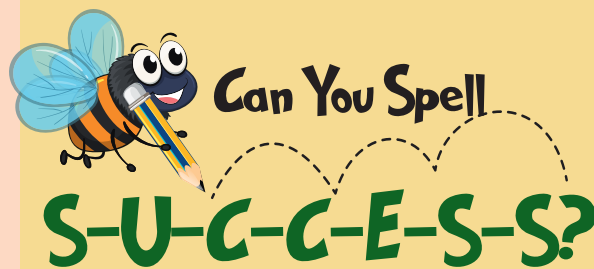
10 THOU SHALL DO THY BEST TO "LET GO" IN APPROPRIATE MEASURE.

It's hard to entrust your child to anyone but yourself. But growing up is a series of letting-go experiences. Kids go off to preschool, kindergarten, first grade and before you know it they're ready for high school. The time flies by, and you can't stop it. Further, you don't want to. Let your children become strong and independent one step at a time. It's hard to let go, but it's necessary.

As you know by now, children don't come with a user's manual. Parenting is a tough job, and each child is unique. You've done your best to prepare your child for school and the world, and now you have to entrust him to another adult's care. You have to allow her to fend for herself for a large chunk of each day. You have to trust he'll make good choices. It's hard.

On the other hand, most teachers are not doing their extremely complicated and demanding job for the pay they receive. They're in the classroom because they love children and the learning process. There's nothing more rewarding to us teacher types than to see a little face light up during a read aloud or when a new concept is grasped. It's pure gold.

Here's wishing you and your child a most successful school year. ■



Winning the Scripps National Spelling Bee requires a little bit of luck and a whole lot of effort. Time magazine reports that this year's winner, 14-year-old Zaila Avant-garde of Louisiana, spends seven hours a day studying words. She also has three spelling tutors and special computer programs to help her prep.

Your child may not aspire to be the next Zaila, but they might improve their spelling with these tips from Akshita Balaji of Merrifield, Virginia, a semifinalist in the 2021 Scripps National Spelling Bee.

Learn a second (or third) language

When it comes to deciphering unusual words, it helps to be familiar with various languages. English is, after all, a West Germanic language with influences from Latin and French. It also borrows words from nearly every other language on the planet for good measure. Of course, if English followed a simple set of rules, there wouldn't be much need for a spelling bee, would there?

Many bee contestants try to be as polyglot as they can. Scripps National Spelling Bee participant Akshita Balaji, who tied for 51st place in 2019 and came in 102nd this year, takes Spanish as her school elective but also studies French and German in her spare time. The rising ninth grader learned French by watching YouTube vlogs and using the Duolingo app.

Expand your vocabulary

Although reading the dictionary might seem tedious — the Scripps National Spelling Bee partners with Merriam-Webster, and all 476,000 words in its unabridged dictionary are in play — Akshita sees it as an opportunity to learn new things.

"Even when you're studying spelling, you actually get access to a lot of other topics," she says. "I know that when I find a word and I search it, I find another word. And that's a really interesting word, and I learn something new."

Spellers also take advantage of spelling and vocabulary apps, such as Word Club from Scripps and Spell Pundit, which was designed by a former spelling bee contestant.

Have a good study partner

While study apps are helpful, super spellers don't always go it alone. In fact, there's a cottage industry of former spelling bee competitors who act as coaches.

But anyone can call out words during a study sessions. Akshita's younger sister is also getting into competitive spelling, and the two quiz each other.

As it turns out, great spelling often runs in the family, and it's common on the spelling bee circuit to see siblings compete against each other. In fact, both the 2015 and 2016 Scripps National Spelling Bee co-champions were siblings of previous winners. —Orrin Konheim ■

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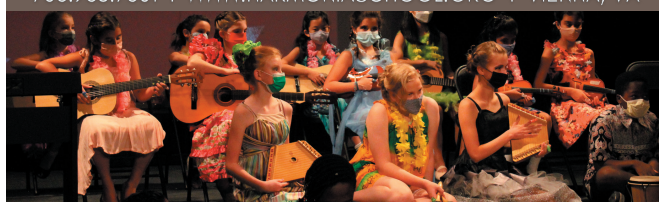
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Should Your Child Go Gluten-Free?

Two local dietitians explain why gluten-free diets can cause more harm than good

BY CEOLI JACOBY

For children with celiac disease, cutting out gluten — a protein found in wheat, rye and barley — can prevent digestive issues and dramatically improve quality of life. In recent years, though, the gluten-free diet has become a popular (albeit unproven) remedy for health conditions ranging from eczema to autism spectrum disorder.

Such experimentation is usually safe for adults. But placing your child on a gluten-free diet for reasons other than a wheat allergy or a gluten-related medical condition can actually cause more harm than good.

Kids need calories

Often, restricting the types of foods that children are allowed to eat inadvertently reduces their daily calorie intake. According to the USDA, school-age kids require anywhere between 1,200 and 2,600 calories per day, depending on factors such as sex and activity level.

“Grains provide good energy while children are still growing and their brains are still developing,” says Brittany Shapiro, a registered dietitian and owner of Capital Pediatric Nutrition in Washington, D.C. She specializes in the treatment of food allergies, picky eating and weight management.

Children who do not consume enough calories each day may fail to meet developmental milestones. They may be thinner and shorter than expected for their age. In severe cases, undernutrition in childhood can limit adult height and brain growth.

“We should really reconsider making any kind of changes that are going to negatively affect growth — both weight and height — in the pediatric population,” Shapiro says.

Grains are important

The USDA also recommends that school-age children consume between four and nine ounces of grains per day. At least half of



these should be whole, or unrefined, grains.

Grains provide essential nutrients, including B vitamins, that help the body release energy, iron that carries oxygen in the blood and minerals such as magnesium and selenium, both of which promote bone health.

Children on gluten-free diets may struggle to

consume enough of these nutrients, especially since some of the most popular sources of unrefined grains — like whole-wheat bread or bran flakes — contain gluten.

“There is definitely a risk of vitamin deficiency in simply eliminating this category of important foods,” says Nancy Tringali Piho, a registered dietician nutritionist at Good Food Nutrition Group in D.C., of the gluten-free diet.

Dietary fiber, which aids in digestion and prevents constipation, is another component of grains. Adults on gluten-free diets can easily meet the recommended daily amount by consuming high-fiber foods like beans, peas and raspberries. However, this goal can be a challenge for gluten-free children, who are notoriously averse to fruits and vegetables.

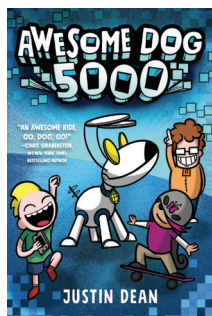
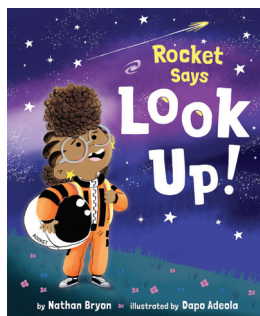
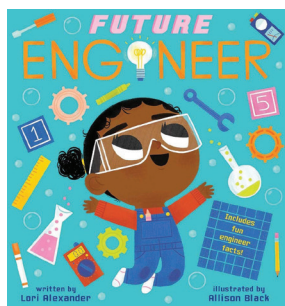
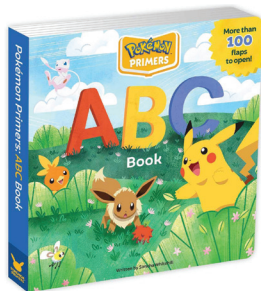
“If we have a child that thrives and survives on pasta, bread and cereal, and we have to go gluten free, we’re going to have to work really hard to find alternatives — and a lot of children will reject those alternatives,” says Shapiro.

The best way to ensure that a child’s nutritional needs are met is to offer a variety of foods — including wheat, rye, spelt, barley and other gluten-containing products.

“As dietitians, we would emphasize that there is no reason to put a child who does not have celiac disease or a diagnosed gluten intolerance on a gluten-free diet,” says Tringali Piho. “This is not something that parents should simply play around with as a test.”

The only circumstance in which parents should take steps to remove gluten from their child’s diet is under the supervision of the child’s medical team, which might include a primary care physician, an allergist or a gastroenterologist.

“If their medical team thought that it was warranted to trial, then a dietitian should help guide the family on how to effectively carry out that kind of a diet,” says Shapiro. ■



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"Pokémon Primers ABC Book"

Written by Simcha Whitehill

Screen time is a no-no for babies, so this board book ticks the boxes for avid gamer parents who can't wait for their tiny tikes to get started. With over 100 flaps to lift on candy-colored pages, your baby will discover a range of beloved characters and alliterative vocabulary. Collect all the primers in the series so that your Trainers-in-training can learn shapes, colors and numbers, too.

"Future Engineer"

*Written by Lori Alexander,
illustrated by Allison Black*

Who creates the video games we love to play and the machines we play them on? Engineers, that's who! This board book explores various engineering jobs and compares job skills with baby's skills: asking questions, building and learning from mistakes. A diverse cast of scientists and babies will spark confidence in aspiring engineers.

"Rocket Says Look Up!"

*Written by Nathan Bryon,
illustrated by Dapo Adeola*

Rocket is always looking up at the stars, while big brother Jamal is always looking down at his phone. Can Rocket convince her family and neighbors to unplug and enjoy the natural wonders of earth and sky? The story is interwoven with facts about space and exploration, with expressive illustrations that bring the characters to life.

EARLY ELEMENTARY

"Morgan's Got Game"

*Written by Ted Staunton,
illustrated by Bill Slavin*

When all of the coolest kids bring their Robogamer Z7s to school, Morgan is left out until he gets one of his own. But when the class bully accuses awkward Aldeen of having a fake Robogamer, Morgan finds that some things are more important than fitting in. The "Be Brave, Morgan!" series of chapter books for young readers includes dyslexia-friendly features.

"Awesome Dog 5000" series

Written and illustrated by Justin Dean

In the first three books of this popular series, video gamers Marty, Skylar and Ralph encounter nosy spybots, an evil mayor and a supervillain toy-designer with an army of robotic kittens. Luckily, their superhero pal Awesome Dog 5000 is around to help them save the day. These hilarious illustrated chapter books will appeal to gamers and fans of Dav Pilkey's "Dog Man."

"The Boy Who Thought Outside the Box: The Story of Video Game Inventor Ralph Baer"

*Written by Marcie Wessels,
illustrated by Beatriz Castro*

Kids love to play them, but do they know how video games came into our homes? A Jewish refugee from pre-World War II Germany, Ralph arrived in the United States and worked his way up from radio and television technician to "The Father of Video Games." This nimbly illustrated biography spotlights the creator of the first console that connected video games to TV sets.



MIDDLE GRADE

"Level 13": A Slacker Novel

Written by Gordon Korman

Steer Jeff Kinney's "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" fans in this direction — they will delight in the escapades of slacker Cameron Boxer, who thinks he can become an internet sensation by gaming online with Elvis, a rescued beaver. Hilarity ensues as Cam gains followers while risking his reputation as a slacker in order to attain the game's mythical highest level.

"The Gauntlet" and "The Battle"

Written by Karuna Riaz

These companion novels pit the Mirza family against an evil game architect. In "The Gauntlet," Farah's aunt sends her a beautiful box containing a dangerous game where players can easily become trapped. Four years later, in "The Battle," her younger brother Ahmad must foil a dastardly plot that freezes time when the game is unboxed. Evocative of Chris Van Allsburg's "Jumanji," these thrillers are notable for their exquisite writing.

"Glitch"

Written and illustrated by Sarah Graley

Like many girls, Izzy enjoys playing a good video game. Unlike those girls, Izzy can actually enter her game! But as Izzy becomes enmeshed in her secret life, she alienates her best friend, Eric, and tensions escalate when Izzy loses a "life" in the game. This vibrant graphic novel will draw upper-elementary readers into a deliciously gruesome virtual universe.

Coin Slot Chronicles series

Written by Rashad Jennings

Arcade Livingston and his sister Zoe have

an unusual arcade game token that takes them time traveling all over the globe. During these magical adventures, they learn a lot about history, geography and themselves ... but someone else is after that token. For older readers ready to move up from "The Magic Tree House," these four books provide plenty of action, humor and heart. Start with "Arcade and the Triple T Token."

"Get Coding 2: Build Five Computer Games Using HTML and Javascript"

Written by David Whitney, illustrated by Duncan Beedie

For kids tired of playing the same old games, this manual provides detailed steps to design and build personalized games of their own, including graphics and animation. Best for ages 9 to 12.

YOUNG ADULT

"Girl Gone Viral"

Written by Arvin Ahmadi

Teen tech-prodigy Opal risks her future and her friends to discover the fate of her missing father. It starts with one simple hack, then another and another, until Opal is entangled in a world of deception and, possibly, murder. Best for older teens due to mature themes and language.

"Ready Player Two"

Written by Ernest Cline

In a world addicted to virtual reality, the "Ready Player One" sequel takes VR questing to a dangerous level, packed with action and peppered with romance. For an enhanced experience, listen to the audio version expertly narrated by Wil Wheaton of "Star Trek: The Next Generation," a renowned master gamer in all formats, from video and tabletop to arcade. For mature readers.

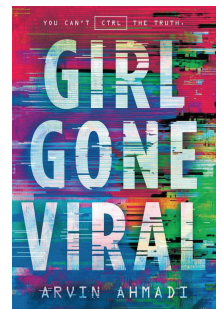
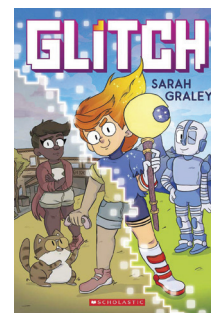
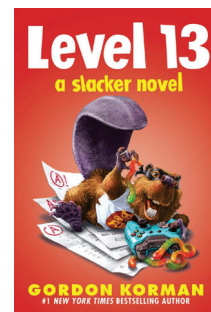
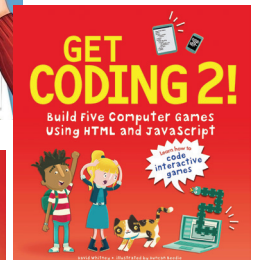
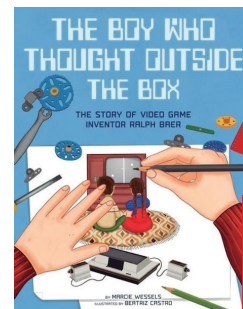
"Don't Read the Comments"

Written by Eric Smith

Divya is a popular sponsored-gamer, but her followers have no inkling of her grim home life. Aaron faces different challenges, but they become virtual friends. When online trolls incite real-life violence, the two must combine forces to keep themselves and their families safe. Older teens will identify with the angst of college looming. ■

BOOK MARKED

WF



205 Miles

How daily walks helped my son and me connect during COVID-19

BY CHLOE YELENA MILLER



During the pandemic school year of 2020, my son and I walked a mile most weekdays, up the hill to his elementary school and around the campus before heading home for virtual learning. Over the course of 205 miles, wearing face masks and carrying hand sanitizer, we learned more about our Glover Park neighborhood and each other.

At first it was a slog, partly because of nature's intensities. "It's too hot," he'd accurately whine. But we started to appreciate how the seasons added surprises. In the winter, he invented "boot skating" on the flooded, frozen baseball field. In the spring, we counted cicadas until he decided there were "just too many!"

My second grader lived more deeply in his

imagination during the lockdown, or maybe he just shared it with us more. He talked about needing dinosaur DNA to build an improved Jurassic Park and vividly described games the kids used to play on the playground. "On our walk, can we fight Hydra?" he'd ask.

While we were mostly sequestered in our condo during lockdown, these walks helped us feel more connected to our neighbors. In the beginning, the streets were fairly empty. Then we started to see some regulars, and by spring this year, we were nodding to them as we passed rather than crossing the street to add distance. We could feel our anxiety lessening.

We found teddy bears in our neighbors' windows on treasure hunts and later the many Biden signs. The rainbow flags came out in June. We admired or collected things put out on the curb and books from the Little Free Libraries. I hadn't remembered noticing as much around our neighborhood as I did on our walks.

Halloween was the most exciting time to explore. The invention of distanced candy distribution amused us. We felt like a team as we looked for new decorations every day. Our favorite was a pair of googly eyes affixed to a window on 40th Place.

Overall, the walks were a bright spot in our days. But sometimes someone had to pee or we argued or someone tripped. Once we walked past my son's school at pickup — we choose to stay virtual when in-person learning started again — and saw his friends, now taller. He stood there holding my hand, naming who he could recognize. We returned home in silence that day.

My son and I probably needed more daily exercise and fresh air than 1 mile up and down some hills, but at least we had that. We got out of our two-bedroom condo with one child in virtual school and two adults working from home. During our walks, I didn't have to nudge him to log into school or put on his shoes. We were simply together, and I could listen to who he was and his dreams. ■

Chloe Yelena Miller is a writer and writing teacher living in Washington, D.C., with her family. Find her online at chloeyelenamiller.com and @chloeyemiller on Twitter.

CHLOE YELENA MILLER

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

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