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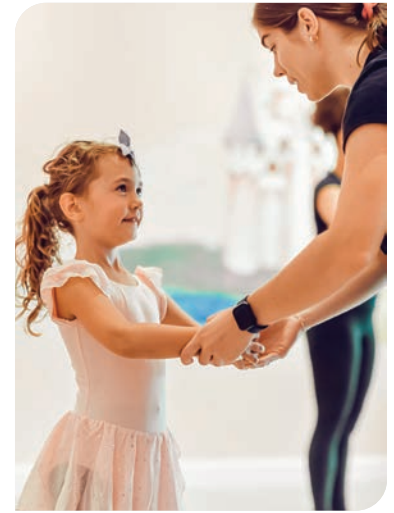
Lower School (Age 2-Grade 8): 6701 Wisconsin Ave., Chevy Chase, MD

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SEPTEMBER 2022



BRAM FALL FEST: C/O BRAMBLETON COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION



DAVID STUCK

The DMV has family fall festivals to get you into the spirit.
Pg. 10

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Bella Ballet Kentlands

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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**



SEPTEMBER 2022
VOL. 30, NO. 9
 WashingtonFamily.com/
 301-230-2222

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What Education Can Do

As children make their way back to school for the 2022-23 school year, there are a lot of responsibilities for parents to juggle—ensuring their kids have the proper school supplies, clothing, backpacks and even school-required vaccines (pg. 24).

But there is one element of back-to-school preparation that families might not have considered. Violence in public places such as churches, movie theaters and schools—with the most recent occurring this past spring in Uvalde, Texas, where 19 children and two adults were killed at Robb Elementary School—could leave children and teens reasonably wary of returning to the classroom. Contributing writer Megan Conway broaches this difficult topic with input from experts in adolescent psychology on how to help kids rebuild trust and feel safe (pg. 18).

Education can be a powerful tool for assuaging fears and giving children the strength they need to push through challenging circumstances. Parents will have the opportunity to educate themselves and work with their children to overcome traumas at a new center

designed to be accessible to all families (pg. 14).

Education can also build confidence through the arts, opening up the door to transferable skills that help your child in school and in life. Local dance studios in the DMV weigh in on the powerful benefits of this art form (pg. 18).

The school environment brings with it challenges, such as adjusting to a new school with a disability (pg. 22) but also opportunities. My Turn contributor Lana Yeganova, co-founder and math instructor at Avatar Learning Center, shares how beginning shadow education at a young age sets students up for success (pg. 30). In this issue, we celebrate education and the many ways it can transform us, with a special focus on the arts—an outlet for curious minds to explore creatively and learn about who they are.

Happy reading, and welcome back to school!

Lindsay C. VanAsdalan

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

BY ELENA EPSTEIN,
DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL
PARENTING PRODUCT AWARDS



Musical Sound Book Series

Each page has engaging illustrations, delightful music for kids to sing along to and lyrics that help enhance babies', toddlers' and children's language comprehension and motor skills. \$25 each, ages 0-5, calisbooks.com

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Happy Day

Family-friendly, rocking kids' tunes. Filled with positive messages about appreciating our environment, using our imaginations and validating the one and only you. \$15, jennccleary.com

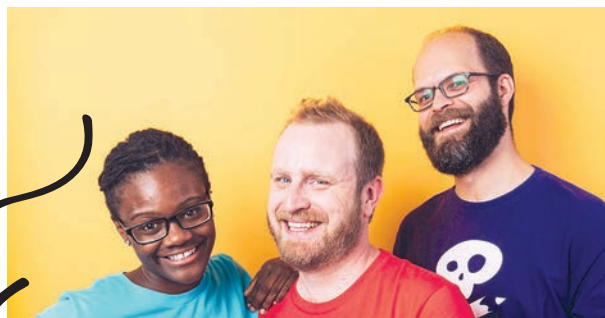
Toniebox Starter Sets

Using magnetic figures called Tonies, children can navigate storytelling and music independently, opening up their world to a library of education and entertainment. Filled with content from premium partners including National Geographic, Penguin Random House and Levar Burton; plus hours of storytelling, songs, mindfulness activities and more. \$99.99, ages 3+, us.tonies.com



Claire the Koala

Features adorable fuzzy ears handcrafted with special yarn. Each doll provides 10 meals to children in need. This product also empowers over 1,000 artisans with fair trade income since every doll is handmade with love by artisans in Peru + Nepal using natural, premium cotton yarn. \$68-89, birth+, cuddleandkind.com



Story Pirates Podcast

A wonderful mixture of funny stories and sketches based on stories written by kids, plus special celebrity guests. Perfect for car rides or just relaxing at home. Free, ages 4+, storypirates.com



120 Piece Pastel Creative Pack

Designed to encourage hours of limitless creativity, fun and learning through play. The magnet building tiles encourage STEAM learning and the development of fine and gross motor skills. \$149, ages 3+, connectixtiles.com



Jot Kids Lil' Helpers

A reusable writing tablet that's perfect for handwriting practice and drawing. Features fun colors and a limited edition Lil' Helpers collection design inspiring kids to explore fun hobbies around the house. Write with anything, and with a push of a button the tablet instantly clears. \$29.99, ages 4+, myboogieboard.com



Kahoot!

A platform that makes it easy for educators, parents and learners of all ages to create, share and host interactive learning sessions. Children create their own learning session in minutes and discover millions of ready-to-use learning experiences from educators and trusted publishers such as Disney, Star Wars™, Minecraft Education, Marvel and more. Free, kahoot.com

Listen and Learn: Animals

Engage little learners in beginning reading and writing skills with the help of fascinating animals. Each page includes an audio option for kids to listen to read-alouds. The fun activities provide practice of alphabet awareness, beginning sounds, counting, writing numbers and more. \$12.99, ages 4-6, evan-moor.com



For more product reviews, visit nappaawards.com

{TOP 10}

Family Events for September

Explore books, fall fun and special events this season in and around the DMV

BY HEATHER M. ROSS



1

THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

FREE SIGHTSEEING TOURS

Old Town Trolley Tours is offering the chance for D.C. locals to fall in love with their city all over again through their hometown pass program. District of Columbia residents and residents within a 50 mile radius ride for free when accompanied by a full fare adult guest.
Hometownpass.com

3

THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

SUMMER FUN AT RESTON MUSEUM

Explore history as a family with Reston Museum's Summer Fun days! Kids can enjoy activities and crafts while learning about the history of Reston every Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon through Oct. 29. Visit facebook.com/RestonMuseum for updates.

Free

Restonmuseum.org

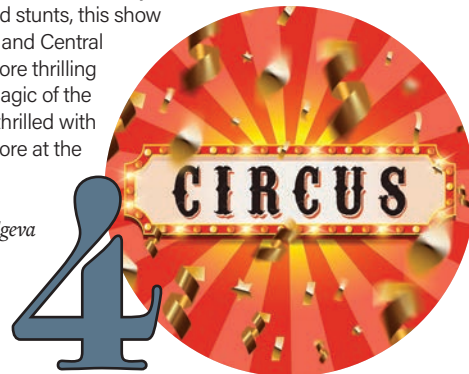
SEPT. 1-5

CIRCO HERMANOS VAZQUEZ

Help celebrate the circus' 50th anniversary. With new ideas, technology and stunts, this show which has toured Mexico and Central America for decades is more thrilling than ever. Embrace the magic of the circus and prepare to be thrilled with acrobatics, clowns and more at the Potomac Mills Mall.

Tickets: \$40-60

circusvazquez.com/woodbridgeva



4

2



THROUGHOUT THE MONTH

BOO! FAMILY-FRIENDLY HALLOWEEN EXPERIENCE

Have a delightfully-spooky family adventure at Six Flags America with its family-friendly fall day on select dates in September and October! Kids can enjoy a trick-or-treat trail, corn maze and crafts, while adults can take in the festive décor and get into the Halloween spirit!

One-day ticket prices vary seasonally; dates TBA
sixflags.com

5



SEPT. 3

NATIONAL BOOK FESTIVAL

Celebrate the Library of Congress' National Book Festival as a family. At the Walter E. Washington Convention Center from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m., learn from your favorite authors and attend discussions on beloved books. Purchase books and merch to take a little piece of festival home with you. ASL interpreters and CART caption services will be available for the speaking events.

Free

loc.gov

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SEPTEMBER 4, 11, 18, 22 & 29

MOVIES ON THE POTOMAC: FAMILY NIGHT – AMERICA

Watch America-themed movies all month long at National Harbor. See An American Tail, Miracle, American Underdog: The Kurt Warner Story, A League of their Own and Minari. Movies start at 6 p.m.

Free

piratesguidetoboating.com

SEPT. 10

HEALTHY FAMILY DAY 5K WALK

Encourage a healthy lifestyle for your kids by participating in this healthy-family 5K at Prince George's Community College, just 30 minutes from Washington, D.C. More than just exercise, this event includes chef demonstrations on healthy cooking and eating, too. The walk begins at 9 a.m., and the program runs until 2 p.m.

Tickets are \$25; registration and proof of COVID-19 vaccination/negative test required
wordconsultingllc.com

7



SEPT. 14-18

ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY FAIR

Experience a classic American fair with your family. Less than an hour from the DMV, The Anne Arundel County Fair features a livestock auction, exhibits showcasing local talent, Friday and Saturday night concerts, nostalgic carnival rides and that famous fair food! Hours vary by day.

Admission is \$10; ages 9 and younger enter free

Child discount entry on Friday

aacountyfair.org

8



9

SEPT. 17 & 18

COLONIAL MARKET AND FAIR

Discover an 18th-century marketplace where you can purchase handcrafted food and wares from colonial artisans and watch as they use period crafting techniques. You and your family can even hear live music from the colonial era! Visit the marketplace at Mount Vernon from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Included with admission to Mount Vernon; members enter free
mountvernon.org

SEPT. 21

FAMILY STORY TIME AT CLEVELAND PARK NEIGHBORHOOD LIBRARY

Enjoy songs and stories as a family with other parents and kids at the Cleveland Park Neighborhood Library. Space is limited, so guests are asked to check in at the front desk for a ticket. This half-hour event beginning at 10:30 a.m. is perfect for children ages 2 to 5 years old.

Free

dclibrary.org

10



Fall Festivals in The DMV

BY HEATHER M. ROSS

Fall is finally here! It's time for colorful leaves, warm sweaters and hot apple cider. With fewer COVID-19 restrictions, many communities are looking forward to the cozy fun of their returning fall festivals. Here are our picks of festivals to attend in the DMV to get your family into the fall spirit.



Bram Fall Fest



Family Fall Festival

Green Spring Gardens, 4603 Green Spring Road, Alexandria, Virginia | 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 17

Friends of Green Spring Gardens is inviting families to celebrate the beauty of fall. This festival will feature plant vendors, activities for kids and their families, a bake sale and more fun surprises to be announced! For updates and more information, visit facebook.com/GSFrogs or fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/green-spring.

Cox Farms Fall Festival

Cox Farms, 15621 Braddock Road, Centreville, Virginia | 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (5 p.m. in Nov.), Saturdays and Sundays, Sept. 17 through Nov. 8; closed Monday through Friday Sept. 19-23 and Tuesdays and Thursdays through Nov. 2.

Cox Farms welcomes anyone and everyone to enjoy a day of family fun on the farm with rides, delicious food, music and more to love! See a festival map online to explore attractions such as the Dino Slide and World Famous Hayride. Buy tickets at coxfarms.com beginning Sept. 1. Prices vary by day from \$10-25.

Fall Arts & Crafts Show

Occoquan, Virginia | Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sept. 24 & 25

Embrace creativity to celebrate the changing of the seasons as a family with this craft festival in historic Occoquan, about 40 minutes from Alexandria, Virginia. The two-day festival features more than 200 artisans and creators, with over 20 categories including home décor, jewelry, food and pet accessories. There will also be an Imagination Alley for kids to create their own art, with demonstrations, workshops and an opportunity to help paint a 32-foot mural. Free; shuttle service is available. occoquanva.gov

Silver Spring Arts & Crafts Fall Fair

Veterans Plaza, 1 Veterans Pl., Silver Spring | 1-6 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 2

Join more than 70 artisans, crafters and local small businesses in celebrating creativity and autumn at Veterans Plaza. Admire the changing leaves and enjoy the day with your family! For additional information and updates, visit facebook.com/ChicEventsDC or silverspringdowntown.com.

Fairfax Fall Festival

Old Town Square, 10415 North St., Fairfax, Virginia | 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 8

This iconic fall community festival is celebrating its 46th year. Beginning as a small hometown festival in Old Town Fairfax, it now features more than 400 arts, crafts, information and food vendors; children's activities and three stages of music to entertain all ages. A concert will follow in Old Town Square from 5:30-8:30 p.m. fairfaxva.gov

Bram Fall Fest

Evergreen Mills Road, between Belmont Ridge Road and Loudoun County Parkway, Brambleton, Virginia | noon to 6 p.m., Oct. 22; rain date Oct. 23

Do you enjoy live music, food and amusements? Get excited for axe throwing, rides, inflatables and more at this town festival. Tickets are \$10-15 for Brambleton residents and \$15-20 for non-residents. Save money with online presales. Children ages 3 and younger enter free. brambletonhoa.com

Fall Harvest Festival at Mount Vernon

3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway,
Mount Vernon, Virginia | 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.,
Oct. 22 & 23

Put a historic spin on your fall festival by attending this celebration on the farm at Mount Vernon. Kids can meet General Washington, explore the grounds and learn about 18th century crafts and jobs. Free for members; tickets range from \$13-26 for ages 6 through adulthood. Children ages 5 and younger enter free. mountvernon.org ■



Silver Spring Arts & Crafts Fall Fair

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Wednesday, November 16 at 9:00 AM - In Person

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HELPING CHILDREN REBUILD TRUST AMID NATIONAL VIOLENCE

BY MEGAN CONWAY

The United States has seen an inflation in gun violence, with active shooter incidents becoming alarmingly more common in recent years. They increased from just three in 2000 to 40 in 2020, according to FBI data. Heartbreakingly, Americans are seemingly inundated with mass shooting scares and alerts, even in societal situations that should be safe and peaceful, i.e. parades, shopping malls and—horrifically—schools.

It's easy to feel helpless amid such existential threats, and there are no easy answers for parents, who are often worried themselves in looking for ways to address children's fears of recent shootings.

Three local experts share their advice on this difficult topic below. They explain how parents can help kids process situations in which their trust in schools and other community locations has been broken by outside violence.

FIRST, IT'S NORMAL TO WORRY, AND IT'S ALWAYS GOOD TO BE PREPARED.

Dr. Aronica B. Cotton, medical director of child and adolescent psychiatry services at MedStar Montgomery Medical Center, wants parents to know that their fear and uncertainty surrounding community violence is normal and valid. "Just to throw in a little science...brains were made to scan the environment for danger, and so we have a bias to dangerous, negative thoughts and situations," she says.

But there are steps adults can take to ensure children are in capable hands, adds Dr. Dan Hoover, clinical child and adolescent psychologist at the Center for Child and Family

Traumatic Stress at Kennedy Krieger Institute. "I think parents and caregivers do need to do everything in their power to (ensure) that their child does have safety," Hoover says. "So, that means parents (and administrators and teachers) making sure school is safe to the degree they can."

This, of course, has its nuances. "As with so many things, being prepared is important, but there is a big difference between keeping water, energy bars (and) a change of clothes in the car and building a fallout shelter," explains Dr. Sherri Widen, developmental psychologist and research scientist, and manager at Committee for Children, a global nonprofit championing the safety and well-being of children. "Talk to your child about what to do and where to go in case of emergency. Help them identify adults at school or in the community they can go to if they need help or feel unsafe, but also assure your child that they are safe and can keep being a kid."

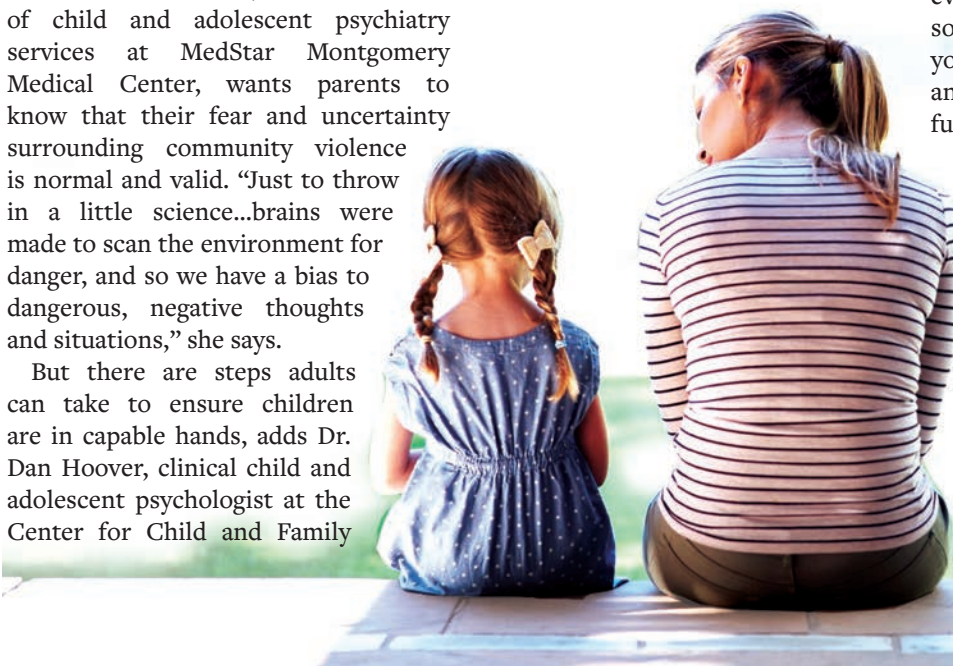
MODEL A MEASURED RESPONSE AND VALIDATE YOUR CHILD'S CONCERNS.

Today's parenting environment is tricky, acknowledges Cotton. "It can be difficult for parents to want to try and protect their children—to let their children know they're here for them and also to balance that with giving their kids confidence that they can handle difficult situations," she says. "So, my recommendation would be for parents to take a more mindful approach if they can—take a step back and think about how they handle difficult situations, because more often than not, kids are looking towards the parents about how to react."

Hoover agrees. "Children will often take their cues from the adults and their older siblings or their caretakers. If they sense, verbally or nonverbally, that the caregiver is really nervous...then it's going to make the child have a lot more difficulty trusting and going to school and trying new things," he says.

"To the best of your (ability), be calm when talking to your child about the event," Widen adds. "Modeling strong social and emotional skills will help your children respond in similar ways," and these skills will set them up for future success.

Cotton recommends beginning with validating your child's concerns about returning to school or other places. "You say it's understandable that they would be afraid and try to get them to think about other times when they've been to parades, when they've been to school, and nothing happened. So, yes, this bad thing happened this one time, but there's so many other times when a bad thing didn't happen."



NATASAADZIC / ISTOCK / GETTY IMAGES PLUS

BE INTENTIONAL IN HOW YOU GUIDE AND INTERACT WITH YOUR CHILD.

If the brain is wired to recognize the bad, “we have to be intentional about making sure that we take time to recognize when things are going well,” Cotton explains. “Even if that’s just like pointing out to your kid, ‘Oh, there’s so many pretty pink flowers,’ or ‘Oh, look at the sunset,’ or giving them a hug or a smile...If we take time to reinforce (pleasant things, it), start(s) to convey to the child that they’re safe.”

Families should encourage children to talk about how they feel, Widen notes, as talking about emotions aids in children’s emotional management (Garner 2010). This is a good time to discuss reliable vs. unreliable news sources with older children to help them “develop critical thinking skills and make good decisions based on data,” (CASEL, 2020) she adds. For children who are reluctant to discuss their thoughts about violent events, Widen advises parents to watch their behaviors for any notable changes in routines or activities, which may

indicate a child is struggling. “Talk to your child during times when they open up to you the most,” she advises.

Additional helpful strategies for nervous kids include doing things that help calm your child (i.e. snuggling with a pet or toy), encouraging things that burn off energy (i.e. physical exercise) and joining the child in these so “they feel safe and more connected to you,” Widen adds.

Cotton recommends leaning on what is developmentally appropriate for kids when discussing instances of violence, ensuring that news isn’t passive but comes directly from the caregiver. Cotton advises parents to watch what they have on the TV that children may see unintentionally.

HELP YOUR CHILD REBUILD TRUST GRADUALLY.

Managing a child’s response is essential in promoting healthy coping and reintroduction mechanisms, explains Hoover “A natural response to anxiety and worry is, of course, to avoid what’s scaring us, but the problem with that

is that the more we tend to avoid scary situations that make us nervous, the more scared we get. And so a big part of helping the children...is to help them face fears in a reasonable and perhaps gradual or careful way.”

Hoover advises parents to encourage children to go to school and push through discomfort, especially if they are sure the situation is as safe as it can be. Sometimes, he notes, for both children and caregivers this is best accomplished with a stepwise approach. “So, step one may be stepping outside your house for a few minutes and going back in,” then getting to a further neighborhood corner and going back in, etc. “In the end, the real job is to get back out there... and then the fears and anxieties tend to fall off when you do that.”

“If you or your child is really struggling with their thoughts or emotions about feeling safe at school or in public situations, consider looking for counseling in your community. A counselor or therapist may be able to help your family process the event and begin to move forward,” Widen adds. ■

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

National Alliance on Mental Illness
(nami.org)

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (aacap.org)

American Psychological Association (apa.org)

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (nctsn.org)

Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety
(bjs.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh236/files/media/document/iscs21.pdf)



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Removing Roadblocks to Trauma-Based Care

New DMV-based nonprofit focuses on children and families seeking mental health services

BY LINDSAY C. VANASDALAN



High costs no longer need to be a roadblock to families in search of trauma-based care.

TRUE Center, a nonprofit providing intervention and prevention services for children, will offer affordable mental health services, as well as education and training to community members and professionals.

“It has felt like there’s such a disparity,” says Stephanie Wolf, a psychologist who started the nonprofit with four other mental health professionals she connected with during clinical work at a child advocacy center.

They noticed in their work that families were discontinuing treatment because they could not afford it, could not make scheduled appointment times or had needs that went beyond one type of trauma.

“Many kids, especially underserved kids, tend to have multiple traumas,” Wolf says. “And the more traumas they have, and the more—what we call adverse experiences—they have, then the worse the outcomes are. Not being able to address all of them



Stephanie Wolf

together is a real disadvantage.”

TRUE—which stands for Trauma, Resilience, Understanding and Education—will address trauma more broadly, seeking

to avoid children slipping through the cracks while also making the same services accessible to all.

At one point, almost half of the children in Washington, D.C. had experienced trauma—47.1%, according to survey results from the National Survey of Children’s Health released in 2016.

Although the numbers have gone down since then—they were at 38.8% in the 2019-2020 survey results—they are still high.

The model used at TRUE involves sliding-scale fees based on families’ current financial situations and gross household incomes.

Renee DeBoard-Lucas, a psychologist and another founder of TRUE Center, encourages families to pay a small amount—even \$5. Research shows that investment keeps patients coming back.

But no one will be turned away if they can’t pay anything—and no one will be turned away for making too much either, she explains.

“The idea is that people who don’t have

the financial resources will be able to access it as much as somebody who could pay out of pocket,” DeBoard-Lucas says.

TRUE will have clinicians on hand who specialize in time-limited treatments—typically between 12 to 20 weeks—giving families a good idea of treatment length.

“We want them to feel well as soon as they can,” DeBoard-Lucas says, adding that those treatment plans are also flexible to extensions. No family needs to worry about not finishing a treatment plan in a limited time.

One example, Wolf notes, is Child and Family Traumatic Stress Intervention, created in Yale University’s Child Study Center, which focuses on identifying symptoms and finding coping strategies within the first three months after a trauma. If providers can reduce the top two or three symptoms, it’s less likely other symptoms will develop into something more severe such as PTSD.

TRUE will also provide training to schools, other providers who do not specialize in treatment of trauma, families and community members.

“We find that a lot of families will have questions about ‘what’s typical?’ ‘My child



Renee DeBoard-Lucas

is feeling more irritable. My child is having a hard time sleeping. Is that typical after a trauma?” DeBoard-Lucas says.

Sometimes the staff might find a child

does not need treatment, or that other ways exist to respond soon after the trauma that will make treatment less likely, she explains.

The training can also equip mental health professionals to treat more patients, increasing accessibility at other treatment centers.

“We want to help the whole community be advocates for kids,” DeBoard-Lucas says.

The center will be open for telehealth appointments this fall. The team also hopes to be able to offer trainings via Zoom and community centers down the road. A physical location is slated for Washington, D.C.

Collectively, the five founders are licensed to see patients in Maryland, Washington and Virginia, and TRUE will also be accepting professional volunteers who can donate a few hours of service to the team. Last spring, the founders were fundraising through donations and planing to seek sponsorships and grants to supplement operational costs and hire employees.

No insurance is required for treatment at TRUE Center, but DeBoard-Lucas says she plans to accept Medicaid and limited insurance plans in the future.

To donate, visit truetraumacenter.org. ■



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BY WF STAFF

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aidanschool.org
admissions@aidanschool.org
 202-387-2700
 2700 27th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20008
Open Houses: 9:15 a.m. Oct. 14 & Nov. 4; 7:30 p.m. Nov. 16 (virtual) and 9:15 a.m. Dec. 2.
 Aidan Montessori School is a co-ed, independent private school for children ages 18 months through grade 6 located in Woodley Park, DC. Founded in 1961, Aidan prepares children to learn confidently, think independently, and succeed wherever they go.

Basis Independent McLean

mclean.basisindependent.com
stephanie.cancienne@basisindependent.com (admissions)
 571.789.2256 (admissions)
 8000 Jones Branch Dr., McLean, VA 22102
 Information sessions: Virtual sessions at 12:15 p.m. Sept. 8 & 16; in-person session 9 a.m. Sept. 17.
 Grades: Preschool (age 2) - Grade 12 • Year Founded: 2016 • Coed • Enrollment: 470 • Student-Teacher Ratio 8:1 • Entrance Exam • Foreign Languages: Mandarin, Latin, Spanish, and French beginning in PK1 • Tuition Range: \$25,500 - \$30,000 • AP Classes • Enrichment Activities • Sports • Transportation • Extended Day • Summer Program Students, age 2-grade 12, receive a well-rounded, liberal arts curriculum with a STEM focus.

(The) Bethesda Montessori School

bethesdamontessori.com
admissions@bethesdamontessori.com
 301-986-1260
 7611 Clarendon Road, Bethesda, MD 20814
 Ages: 3-6

Open House: Tours by appointment; typically scheduled for 9:45am
 BMS, established in 1983, is located in the heart of Bethesda, offering two years of preschool and a kindergarten year. Open 8 a.m.-6 p.m., AMI trained teachers, art, French & computer offered, and after school activities.

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brookfieldschool.org
sarah@brookfieldschool.org
 703-356-5437
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Montgomery County
 20409 Seneca Meadows Pkwy
 Germantown, MD 20876
 301-540-4600
Celebree.com/Germantown-md/
 Ages/Grades: 6 weeks to 12 years
 Transportation: Gibbs, Snowden Farm, Germantown Elementary, Lake Seneca, Waters Landing, Ronald Menare

Congressional School

congressionalschool.org
gherbst@congressionalschool.org
 703-533-1064
 3229 Sleepy Hollow Road
 Falls Church, VA 22042
 Ages 6 weeks - 3 years
Open Houses: 9 a.m. Oct. 13 and Nov. 16; submit a form for an early childhood tour online and contact rdouglass@congressionalschool.org to schedule a tour for pre-K to grade 8.

A co-ed independent day school for infants to eighth graders in Falls Church, Va. Congressional School prepares young learners for future success, inspiring them to question, collaborate, create, and lead.

Feynman School

feynmanschool.org
admissions@feynmanschool.org
 (301) 770-4370 (ask for admissions)
 11810 Falls Road, Potomac, MD 20854
 Grades: Preschool-Grade 8
Open House: October 13, November 16
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glenbrookschool.org
membership@glenbrookschool.org
 301-365-3190
 10010 Fernwood Road, Bethesda, MD 20817
 Hours: 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Open House: Call or email to schedule a tour.
 At Glenbrook, we nurture our children in the

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guidepostmontessori.com/northern-virginia
 866-202-8593
 24328 Marrwood Drive, Aldie, Va.
 42945 Waxpool Road, Ashburn, Va.
 4550 Walney Road, Chantilly, Va.
 13251 Woodland Park Road, Herndon, Va.
 Ages: Infant to elementary
 Guidepost Montessori in Loudoun and Fairfax counties is among a growing, worldwide network of schools that offer language immersion for ages infant through elementary.

Holly Brook Montessori School

preschoolmontessori.com
info@hollybrookmontessori.com
 703-573-7800
 2455 Gallows Road, Dunn Loring, VA 22027
Tours available by appointment
 Children learn in an intimate and unpretentious atmosphere, where they respect themselves and others and care for the environment around them. We offer a complete educational and social environment and utilize the discoveries and methods of Dr. Montessori to help the child develop more fully the potential within him. The school provides a program specially suited to the needs of the child and offers individual attention to his whole development.

Hunter Mill Montessori School

preschoolmontessori.com
info@huntermillmontessori.com
 703-938-7755
 2709 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton, VA 22124
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goosecreekmontessori.com
info@goosecreekmontessori.com
 571-417-3999

42470 Rosalind Street, Ashburn, VA 20148

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preschoolmontessori.com
info@cedarlanemontessori.com
 703-560-4379

3035 Cedar Lane, Fairfax, VA 22031

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mcleanmontessori.org
 703-790-1049
 1711 Kirby Road, McLean, VA 22101
 Ages: 2-12
Open House: Call to schedule a tour.
 Preschool and elementary classes. Spanish, French, science, drama, music, P.E., computer, art, summer school, transportation available.

Nysmith School

nysmith.com; ebalberde@nysmith.com
 703-713-3332
 13625 EDS Drive, Herndon, VA 20171
 Ages Served: 3 yrs.-8th Grade
 Hours: 7 a.m.-6:30 p.m.
Virtual live tour/info session 10 a.m. daily; Contact Kmeadows@nysmith.com to schedule an in-person tour.
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Oldfields School

oldfieldsschool.org
admission@oldfieldsschool.org
 410-472-4800
 1500 Glencoe Road, Sparks, Glencoe, MD 21152
 Grade Range: 8-12; Type: Girls
 Average Class Size: 7
 Teacher-Student Ratio: 1 to 5
 Before-School Care: Yes
 After-School Care: Yes
Open House: Saturday, October 15.
 Personal information sessions and tours offered weekly by contacting admissions office

ONENESS-FAMILY
MONTESSORI HIGH SCHOOL
onenessfamily.org/
admissions@onenessfamily.org

240-426-2614

9411 Connecticut Ave.

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onenessfamily.org

admissions@onenessfamily.org

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Admissions: 301-652-7751

Ages 2 - Grade 8

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pincrestschool.org

admissions@pincrestschool.org

703-354-3446

7209 Quiet Cove, Annandale, VA 22003

Hours: 7:30 a.m.-6 p.m.

Ages: 3-12

Request a virtual meet-and-greet at 1 p.m.

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RESTON MONTESSORI SCHOOL

restonmontessori.com

info@restonmontessori.com

703-481-2922

1765 Business Center Drive

Reston, VA 20190

Hours: 7 a.m.-6:30 p.m.

Open House: Submit a form online or call to schedule a tour.

Established in 1986, Reston Montessori School is a private, coeducational school for children from 3 months through 6th grade. RMS provides academic school day, enrichment programs

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(THE) SIENA SCHOOL

thesienaschool.org

info@thesienaschool.org

Silver Spring Campus

1300 Forest Glen Road

Silver Spring, MD 20901

301-244-3600

Oakton Campus

2705 Hunter Mill Road, Oakton, VA 22124

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301-962-7262

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Kensington, MD 20895

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More than Dance

How dance education benefits students
beyond the stage

BY GINA GALLUCCI-WHITE

As artistic director for Dawn Crafton Dance Connection in Rockville, Kelly Welch has had parents come up to her with tears in their eyes saying how much their children have changed after just a year of dance classes.

“These performing opportunities build so much confidence in the shyest of kids,” she says, noting many children come out of their shells through performing. “That part of my job is so rewarding. Just watching the growth is amazing.”

Apart from physical strength, athleticism, discipline and knowledge of a new skill—all takeaways you would expect from an art form such as dance—there are other benefits that are more surprising.

Local dance studios in the DMV are seeing social and emotional development in dance students that permeates these young lives far beyond the stage.

Studio leadership delves into several ways dance has had an impact on their students, from building confidence and providing a safe space for self-expression to bridging a connection to the arts world.

Skills for Success

Gaining confidence is one of the biggest takeaways from a dance education,

according to local studio owners and directors. And it benefits children both socially and academically.

Jen Koonce notes parents have told her about the value of the transferable skills their children learn in dance from her Vienna-based Adrenaline Studio, such as confidence, teamwork, coachability, responsibility and speaking up.

Many parents enroll their children hoping dance will help them, she says, and after a year or two of dance, the feedback she receives is that the students have much more confidence and are participating more in school and other activities.

“There is just so much value in dance for kids,” she says.

Welch says once students master a skill and are able to demonstrate it, their confidence in that mastery spills over into other areas of their lives, too, such as being in front of others in interviews for jobs and colleges.

Dawn Crafton Dance Connection finds placement of dancers in age- and skill-appropriate classes allows them to thrive in that environment.

“If the class is too hard for them, it doesn’t build confidence,” Welch says. “If it is too easy, they are bored... So, giving them a venue where they are right in the sweet spot

gives them that opportunity to feel good about themselves, and I think especially in today’s world it is so important for kids.”

Creating a Safe Space

Hope McDonald, owner of Kentlands-based Bella Ballet, recognizes that students also feel good about themselves when they have an outlet for self-expression.

“Dance allows for children to create a safe space within themselves and within their dance community environment to really open up and express themselves and connect with the world through music and art.”

“Not every child fits the same mold,” she adds, noting that while some children enjoy sports, others might find the arts make them feel alive, connected and valued for exactly who they are. “(That is important to be) able to feel like they can express themselves through that outlet.”

Dance also provides an opportunity to connect with like-minded peers. Welch notes the friendships students develop during dance classes run deep.

“The parents become friends and the kids become friends,” she says. “You have your school friends, but you have your dance friends—and there is nothing like your dance friends. The friendships last into adulthood.”

McDonald says she hopes her students take away a feeling of empowerment and fulfillment from dance as well as a positive body image. "We try to work tirelessly to create that so that dance is that beautiful positive experience (and) when children leave they just feel good about who they are," she says. "That is the most important thing."

A Gateway to the Arts

Koonce finds dance unique in how it connects many different art forms. Welch, too, sees dance as a gateway to a passion for these art forms in her students.

"In my opinion, I feel like dance is the interpretation of music," Koonce says. "I feel like dance connects all of the (arts). It is visual. It is musical. It is physical. It is everything...For me, it helps foster a connection to all the senses."

Many children develop a love of rhythm and of feeling the music, Welch has noticed, which translates to a majority of her students participating in school activities such as band or chorus.

"I think it just cultivates a lot of their passion for the arts," she says. "It spills over into a lot of different parts of the arts."

To reach students who might not have had an opportunity to explore the arts, Adrenaline Studio has an afterschool community outreach program in which classes are taught in schools and community centers.

Koonce says many kids will reach out afterward about joining the



studio. The program has been running for nearly 20 years.

In addition to their annual recital and competition teams, Dawn Crafton Dance Connection also has a performance troop that holds shows in the community so others can see the joy of dance.

One group that has experienced a growing interest in dance is boys. Many local dance studios have seen an increase in boys participating in dance, which was once seen as more of a sport for girls.

Welch has older male students who have gone on to dance in college, with one receiving \$100,000 in scholarships and another now getting ready to graduate and pursue dance professionally.

"I am getting more and more boys, and it is so exciting for us to see," she says. "The boys just bring a whole different dynamic to class."

Adrenaline Studio has one of the largest dance programs for boys in the area, including having all-boy and co-ed teams on different levels.

Koonce uses neutral green, black, gray and white studio colors in her studio, as well as a lightning bolt symbol.

"I've learned how to create an environment where it feels safe and encouraging to boys," she says. "I feel like that has really helped and fostered the growth." ■

To find out more about the opportunities offered at these local studios, visit bellaballetdance.com, adrenalinestudionova.com and dcdcdance.com.



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BY HEATHER M. ROSS

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ismw.org; info@ismw.org

ISM North

11325 Seven Locks Road, Ste. 255, Potomac, Md. 20854

301-365-5888

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4701 Sangamore Road, Ste. LL-03, Bethesda, Md. 20816

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marylandyouthballet.org

info@marylandyouthballet.org

edd@marylandyouthballet.org

(early dance classes)

intro@marylandyouthballet.org (introductory classes)

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301-608-2232

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BY HEATHER M. ROSS

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Tip: Cover the area with newspaper or a disposable tablecloth to make cleanup easier!

Tip: Cover the area with newspaper or a disposable tablecloth to make cleanup easier!

Step 2 Set up your paints. You should have three separate colors. We used red, yellow and blue. If you don't have a palette, you can use a plate.

Step 3 Place your three canvases side-by-side with a bit of space in between. Dip one of your sponges in the first color and allow your child to gently blot the paint onto the canvas. If you have more sponges, you can work on another canvas while your child decorates theirs.

Tip: You don't need to make any specific designs. By using three strong colors, your paintings will be eye-catching no matter what (or how) you and your child paint.

Tip: Pick up the canvas and hold it so your child can paint the edges. This will make the painting look more complete and eliminate extra white space that would otherwise be left over.

Step 4 Before you add the second color, you can wait for the canvas to dry, but this is optional. If you don't wait, the paints will mix together—and they might even look really cool. So, it's up to you! Add the second color by dipping a different sponge into the next paint and then blot this color onto the canvas.

Step 5 Repeat Step 4 with the third color of paint. Let the canvases dry completely.

After your canvases are dry, you can hang them up in your home or office. If you hang them up in your office, be sure to take a picture of them so you can show your child how proud you are of their creativity! ■



The IEP and Beyond:

Navigating a Disability in School

BY HEATHER M. ROSS

Starting at a new school with a disability can be daunting. On top of new teachers, new classes and navigating how to get around in an unfamiliar space, your child will have lots of questions about how to make adjustments that would best serve them in the classroom.

As a parent of a special education student, you might be wondering, ‘Does my child need an IEP plan?’ ‘How can I best help my child succeed?’

Here’s what you need to know about the IEP and other official accommodations that can be put into place at the start of the school year—plus simple ways your child can advocate for their needs on their own.

Does My Child Really Need an IEP plan?

An IEP plan is a legal document developed for each special education student in the U.S. that describes adjustments the school will provide and goals for the child’s education.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) notes qualifying individuals have a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities. The Maryland State Bar Association adds emotional disabilities that cause a difficulty in learning to those criteria.

Services in Maryland are available for ages 3-21, with early intervention options for younger students.

Issa Kabeer, a teacher who works with students in the special education program at TECH Freire Charter School in Philadelphia, describes what to expect from the process.

“Specialists evaluate the student for needs and the parent agrees and consents for the student to have this plan to support them,” she says.

“Basically, once the evaluation is complete, the numbers show where the child is in their learning—not just English and math but social skills as well. In order to be approved for the IEP, they have to fall below a certain number compared to where they should be,” adds Amber Murray, whose child Alex, now 8 years old, went through the process before first grade in Franklin

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Township, about two hours west of Philadelphia.

The District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) also notes that special education services are designed to be adaptations that do “not necessarily mean a change in school or even a change in class.”

What if my child doesn't fit into those categories, but is still struggling?

There are some conditions that may make it more difficult for your child to learn but for whatever reason may not meet the state or school's requirements for an IEP.

Disabilities which cause difficulties in “caring for one's self, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning and working,” according to PDE, but do not meet the criteria for an IEP can still be supported with a 504 plan—from Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Just like an IEP, a 504 plan should be updated every year to reassess your child's needs, but students do not require specialized

instruction. Accommodations can be made under general studies.

According to OSSE, if you believe your child might need accommodations for a disability, DC law requires your school to act on verbal requests for an evaluation for an IEP or 504 plan within three business days.

How can your child be their own advocate?

Even with the best laid plans, it's important to be your own advocate.

If your child has another condition that doesn't qualify them for either of the above, there are still steps you can take to help your child succeed in the classroom.

First, schedule meetings with your child's teachers. Try to find out if another issue could be disrupting your child's learning. Is something in the environment distracting? Is your child always tired in their last class?

If your child is struggling with attention, consider asking teachers to move their seat closer to the front of the classroom. Perhaps your child could be seated next

to a learning-buddy if they are not asking questions in class. Sometimes, it can be less intimidating to ask a peer rather than asking for everyone to hear.

Teachers want your child to learn and succeed, so be open to their suggestions on how to best help your child learn. As a parent, one of the best ways to help your child learn is to communicate with their teachers.

However, the most important thing you can do when your child is struggling in school is to talk to them. Do not confront them about their challenges, but share your own difficulties. It's a good way to help your child realize that it's okay to have a hard time.

Another good way to help your child feel comfortable is to take them to a calm, safe place. This could be a place in your home, a park bench or even on a walk around your neighborhood.

Children want to do well and make you proud. Make sure they know that even if they need some help, you're proud of them. Their best is enough, and you'll love them no matter what. ■

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Back to School

Should My Child Get Vaccinated?

BY HEATHER M. ROSS

According to the World Health Organization, vaccination prevents 3.5 million to 5 million deaths globally each year. Yet, in recent years the number of unvaccinated children has skyrocketed.

We talked to pediatricians to find out why and to learn how parents can keep their kids safe.

Due to the pandemic, many kids missed their routine vaccinations. Local pediatricians note that it's critical to preventing the spread of disease and protecting their peers that children get caught up on their missed shots.

"It could get really ugly this year," says Scott Krugman, vice chair of pediatrics at the Herman & Walter Samuleson Children's Hospital at Sinai. "The overall numbers (of vaccinated children) have dropped significantly."

According to Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the number of children receiving their vaccines has dropped by 1 percentage point since the start of the pandemic. Children's National Hospital in Washington, D.C. also noted a significant decline in vaccination rates among children.

Why are vaccines so important?

"Vaccines reduced major diseases that used to be major problems, and killers in kids," Krugman says.

"Vaccines help teach the immune system how to recognize and fight off diseases that can harm or kill children. This helps keep children healthy and prevents the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases to others," says Katie Lockwood, a pediatrician at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP).

Pediatricians also note that vaccinating your child also helps protect children who might not be able to get vaccinated for other



health reasons or whose parents chose not to vaccinate them.

"Some of those problems can be found with children who are undergoing chemotherapy for cancer, who are taking immunosuppressant medications for autoimmune diseases, who have rare immunodeficiencies or who have diabetes," says Dr. Caren Kirschner, a pediatrician at Fox Chase Pediatrics in Philadelphia.

"Another consideration is that children under 1 aren't routinely vaccinated against measles, mumps, rubella or chicken pox," which are all required school-age vaccines, she adds.

"Sometimes parents tell me that they think their child's immune system isn't strong enough to handle vaccines because they have a chronic health condition like

asthma or sickle cell anemia, but these children actually need these vaccines even more to prevent complications from these diseases," Lockwood says.

You can find an updated list of school vaccination requirements from state health departments through the CDC at cdc.gov/vaccines/imz-managers/awardee-imz-websites.html. Philadelphia also has a local immunization program.

Maryland, Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia all allow parents to opt out of these requirements for religious or medical reasons. Pennsylvania also allows exemptions for personal reasons.

If you aren't sure vaccines are safe for your child considering their health history, talk to your child's doctor.

If your child has already had COVID-19 is vaccination still important?

While a COVID-19 vaccine is not required to enter schools this year in Maryland and Pennsylvania, it is required for ages 12 and older in Washington, D.C. State and local officials also recommend it.

While most people have been primarily concerned about older adults getting seriously ill from COVID-19, children aren't immune to serious illness. COVID-19 was the third to fifth leading cause of death between 2020 and 2021 across most age groups, according to Krugman, and an article published in the Journal of the American Medical Association cites COVID-19 as the fourth leading cause of death for ages 15-24 from January to October in 2021.

"The immune response might protect the child in the future or it might not," Krugman says. "Children with mild cases may not have a big immune response to the virus and may still be at risk of getting it."

According to Krugman, for the best protection, children who have had COVID-19 should still get the vaccine. After having COVID-19, you can wait three months after your infection before getting vaccinated, according to the CDC.

For the best protection heading back into the school year, parents should be sure to take their child to get a booster shot about five months after their COVID-19 vaccination, according to Krugman.

Why are vaccination rates dropping?

According to pediatricians, the primary cause for vaccine rates dropping is medical misinformation, aided by the ease of information sharing online.

"There was a lot of opportunity for people to provide misinformation to make parents scared of the vaccine. Once you go down the rabbit hole of vaccine misinformation on the internet for (COVID-19), it's easy to find that for all vaccines," Krugman says.

Because people are no longer used to

seeing many of the diseases vaccines protect us from, many don't understand how serious they can be. Krugman says that COVID-19 has exacerbated this issue greatly.

The best place to get information about vaccines, their benefits and any risks is directly from your child's pediatrician.

"It's important to share your particular concerns with your healthcare provider so that they can have a meaningful conversation with you that is individualized and builds trust," Lockwood says.

If your child is anxious about getting a vaccine, understanding why vaccines are important can help them overcome their fears.

For older children, Lockwood recommends a more scientific approach. For younger children, the answer could be as simple as, "to keep us healthy." Telling your children about your experience getting vaccinated can also help them see it's not bad or that scary. ■



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Matthew Breman

BY JESSE BERMAN

One of the aspects of Matthew Breman's new home-based business that he is most excited about is the opportunity to spend more time with his family.

In addition to daily activities such as getting the kids to and from school or helping them with homework, Breman is looking forward to incorporating fitness into their routine as well.

"Regular exercise, including weekly soccer pick-up games, will continue to be an important outlet for my mental and physical wellbeing," he says.

These activities tie in directly with Breman's new venture.

In July, the Silver Spring father of three became the owner of a franchise of Apex Leadership Co. in Montgomery County, which offers a two-week program that teaches children leadership and character lessons through fitness. The program's online fundraising platform helps schools and clubs to increase what they normally raise through

traditional means.

Breman lives with his wife Rachel and children Sebastian (a rising tenth grader), Aviva (a rising seventh grader), and Leora (a rising fourth grader).

He spoke to Washington FAMILY about fatherhood and what he's hoping to learn from his career in the coming months.

How do you balance the responsibilities that come with owning a franchise with the responsibilities of being a father and husband?

I am just starting out, so there will be much to learn over the coming months and years. Nevertheless, I have been a Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Dad for 10 years, with three kids currently in MCPS schools, so that will facilitate my entry into the business of working with PTAs and schools.

Has your role as a father given you any insight into how Apex can best serve students and young people? Or conversely, has the work Apex does with young people given you any insight into how best to be a father to your children?

Being a father has highlighted for me the importance of a) listening to, supporting, and validating our children for who they are, always with a positive attitude; and b) how critical socio-emotional or life skills are to our kids' success, at school, in the home and eventually in the workplace.

I am excited to see how Apex's leadership and character lessons, which are designed to meet student needs using Positive Behavioral Interventions Support (PBIS) best practices to improve student/school outcomes, can complement MCPS' new social emotional learning "Leader in Me" curriculum (also

grounded in PBIS). Apex has many fantastic testimonials from teachers and parents about the positive impact Apex has had on their kids, from how they began taking on leadership roles in the classroom to proactively doing chores and helping around the house.

To anyone reading this article who may have their own business and struggle to find time to spend with their family, is there anything you'd like to say, or any advice you might have?

I too am on a lifelong journey to balance work and family. I have always worked crazy hours, relying on exercise to keep me mentally and physically fit. Starting my own business will challenge me, yet I will strive to follow a few things I try to remind myself (of): 1) Plan Family Activities – planning and carving out time in the week to spend with family and/or getting a fun activity or trip on the calendar that everyone can look forward to keeps things positive when life gets stressful; and 2) Find Balance – work hard, yet stay positive and even keeled during the peaks and valleys, and try to laugh as much as possible. Laughing and smiling helps you to relax and elevates your mood and that of others around you too! ■

Family Favorites

Favorite Family Meal:

Taco Tuesdays at home or Chinese take-out.

Favorite Family Vacation Destination:

We enjoy Cape Cod summers at the grandparents' and traveling to different places. Over the years we have been to South Africa, Costa Rica, Sicily and Jamaica.

Favorite Way to Spend the Weekend Together as a Family:

Hiking and biking when the kids were younger, yet as they get older this becomes more difficult given different activities and interests. We try

to have family dinners together (Friday nights in particular), and (we) enjoy going to soccer (Washington Spirit and DC United) and baseball (Nationals or Orioles, when playing the Braves) games; also, going to see a movie and the occasional board game.

Favorite Sports Team You Root for as a Family:

I am an avid University of Georgia college football fan, along with Atlanta area pro teams (Braves, Falcons, Hawks), so my kids have had no choice but to join (or tolerate) my fandom, especially UGA football!

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Learning from the Arts

20 Books About Art's Impact on Kids and Teens

BY MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARIES STAFF: MICHELLE HALBER, CHILDREN'S LIBRARIAN AT THE DAVIS BRANCH AND MARANDA L. SCHOPPERT, HEAD OF CHILDREN SERVICES AT THE GERMANTOWN BRANCH

Welcome to September! It's a new school year, so break the mold, step outside your comfort zone and dream big. Maybe your child can take advantage of opportunities to learn or improve skills in music or the arts.

Here is a list of books about kids exploring music, dance and art while learning about life.

PICTURE BOOKS

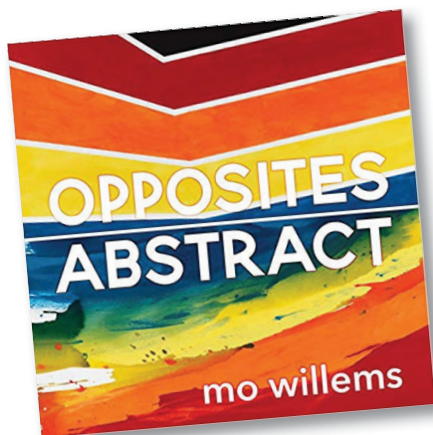
"Opposite Abstract"

written and illustrated by Mo Willems
This special book takes abstract art and creates conversations around the concepts of line, shapes and color. A read that could also be of interest to art teachers or therapists.

"Electric Slide and Kai"

by Kelly T. Baptist, illustrated by Darnell Johnson

Kai is the only one in the family who can't dance, and now there is a wedding coming up. Can he finally learn some moves and be granted a dance nickname like his brothers and sisters?



"We Will Rock Our Classmates"

written and illustrated by Brian T. Higgins

Penelope the Dinosaur wants to play her guitar at the school talent show, but dinosaurs don't play guitar. With some help, she realizes her rock and roll dreams!

"Not Quite Snow White"

by Ashley Franklin, illustrated by Ebony Glenn

On stage, you can be anyone you want to be, and Tameika wants to be Snow White more than anything. When she overhears someone call her "too chubby" and "too brown," Tameika doubts herself, but with a little self-acceptance and a lot of courage, Tameika takes the stage! This feel-good picture book reminds us that anyone can be a princess.

"The One and Only Dylan St. Claire"

by Kamen Edwards, illustrated by Jeffrey Ebbeler

Dylan St. Claire just knows that he is destined to be a star. So, when he is cast as a squirrel in the school play, it feels like the end of the world. Instead of pitying himself, Dylan is determined to be the best squirrel the world has ever seen. A bright



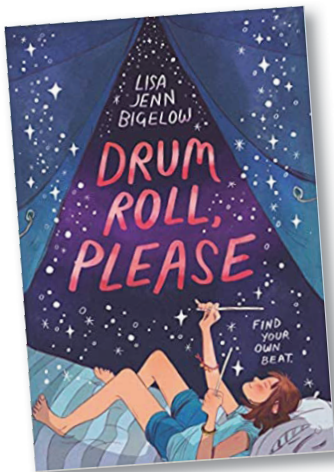
and funny book, sure to inspire everyone's inner performer.

EARLY ELEMENTARY BOOKS

"Tap Dance Troubles"

by C.L. Reid, illustrated by Elena Aiello

Emma has been taking tap dance classes and is really excited for her final performance of the year. However, due to the noise of the tapping, her cochlear implant doesn't pick up the final notes of the number. Practice and a friend help her discover a solution.



"Clark the Shark and the School Sing"

by Bruce Hale, illustrated by Guy Francis

Clark is excited to discover that everyone in the class will be singing a song. Trouble comes when he learns that not only will everyone be singing, but they will also be dancing! Part of the "I Can Read! Comics" collection.

"Sadiq and the Perfect Play"

by Siman Nuurali

Being in charge can be hard work. When Sadiq volunteers to be the director of a play, he thinks he needs to do all the work on his own, and the pressure becomes too much. With a little help from his big sister and her school show director, Sadiq soon learns that help can come in many different forms.

MIDDLE GRADE: FICTION

"Better Nate Than Ever"

by Tim Federle

Middle schooler Nate's parents are going away for the night just when Nate wants to go to an open call audition for a new Broadway musical. Can he travel to NYC by bus, audition and get home before being caught?

"Drum Roll, Please"

by Lisa Jenn Bigelow

After best friends Melly and Olivia are separated into different groups at music camp, Melly tries to learn not to hide herself and her music behind her drum set.

"Wink"

by Rob Harrell

Learning to play guitar and discovering new bands provides an escape for Ross as he handles both treatment for a rare eye cancer and starting middle school.

"The Chance To Fly"

by Ali Stroker

This heartfelt middle-grade novel is about a girl who loves theater and wants nothing more than to "defy gravity" in her new town's local production of "Wicked." When her parents worry about her ability to fit in, it is up to Nat to prove to them that she can take the stage.

"Violets Are Blue"

by Barbara Dee

Twelve-year-old Wren loves special effects makeup. She loves creating a new look and becoming a different version of herself—a version that doesn't have a best friend who hates her and a mom with a serious problem. A touching, realistic novel about forgiveness and starting over.

MIDDLE GRADE: NON-FICTION

"A is for Audra: Broadway's Leading Ladies from A to Z"

by John Robert Allman, illustrated by Peter Emmerich

For kids interested in some of the current and legendary female Broadway stars, this book highlights many of the greatest. Contains brief descriptions and colorful illustrations of the actors in some of their best-known performances.

"Boys Dancing: From School Gym to Theater Stage"

by George Ancona

Photographs enhance this profile of four boys who are chosen to be part of a dance boot camp run by the National Dance Institute of New Mexico, as they are given the chance to perform with 500 other students.

"To Dance: A Memoir" (graphic novel)

by Siena Siegel, illustrated by Mark Siegel

This true story follows Siena Siegel's love of dance as it takes her from Puerto Rico to training with the New York City Ballet during the time of founder and choreographer George Balanchine.

YOUNG ADULT

"Can't Take That Away"

by Steven Salvatore

Genderqueer Carey is finally brave enough to

audition for the role of Elphaba in their high school's production of "Wicked," but will the bullying and prejudice they continue to face at school stop the show? [This book contains discussion of suicidal thoughts.]

"You in Five Acts"

by Una LaMarche

Told from the perspective of five friends at a performing arts school in New York City, each "act" is filled with friendship, love, loss and drama. With a cast of diverse characters capturing the emotional roller coaster that is teenagerhood, LaMarche has crafted an intricate, socially-conscious narrative that is heartbreaking and sure to spark discussion.



"Instructions for Dancing"

by Nicola Yoon

Evie is having a rough senior year. Her parents are divorcing, she discovers her dad was unfaithful and now when she sees a couple kiss, she gets a vision of how they meet AND how their relationship ends! Her attempts to remove the visions lead her to La Brea Dance Studio, where she meets a boy named X and enters a ballroom dance competition. Can she learn to value love, even knowing it will end?

"Kingdom of Back"

by Marie Lu

Would you do anything to be remembered forever? Nannerl Mozart is just as talented, if not more so, than her younger brother, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. But, being a girl in 18th century Europe, she is not allowed to compose. Nannerl's dreams are crushed, until a mysterious stranger from a magical land offers her a chance... a chance that might just take more than it gives. ■

What is “Shadow Education” and Does My Child Need It?

BY LANA YEGANOVA

You may have come across the term “shadow education” while researching tutoring options for your child or while flipping through an education magazine, but what does it mean exactly? Shadow education is frequently used to describe private, supplementary tutoring aimed at improving student academic performance in various subjects. The term was coined in the early 1990s, and within the last two decades, shadow education has expanded to reach almost all corners of the globe, becoming a part of daily life in an increasing number of households.

Researchers noticed a large increase in enrollment in shadow education programs in Germany during this expansion. In another cross-national study, it was found that approximately one third of all 15-year-old students from 64 different countries/economies participate in shadow education.

At Avatar Learning Center, we see shadow education as an increasingly necessary tool for student success and academic achievement, especially among younger children, whether they are a rock star student or need a little extra help grasping concepts. Especially for young minds interested in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), we believe supplementary tutoring is becoming more and more essential.

Shadow education offers students a space to develop critical thinking skills and establish themselves as proficient problem solvers, key factors for academic success at any age. And, with access to technology and online resources becoming increasingly widespread, engaging in virtual forms of shadow education is rising in popularity. Online tutoring may also be more cost- and time-effective and even more convenient for busy parents and kids with



packed schedules.

Our experience shows that children respond positively when learning environments foster this critical, exploratory thinking that aims to help them understand the “why” before the “how.” By incorporating fun brain teasers, images that help children understand the problem and highly personalized lessons that require and encourage their participation, we see students come to class excited to learn. This can sometimes be the difference between strong students and those who may be falling behind their peers.

The importance of starting early

A common subject that many students seek tutoring in, and struggle with, is math. This is often due to the way it is introduced. As educators, we believe that introducing mathematics enrichment education in early elementary school (K-2) generally leads

to accelerated improvement in students’ knowledge, core proficiencies and logic and critical thinking skills, as well as an increased interest in mathematics.

Interestingly, we have observed that students who seek tutoring with the goal of remediating poor academic performance generally enroll later in life, from seventh grade and up. In these cases, while tutoring provides immediate help, it does not generally lead to the same progress that may be achieved when starting enrichment programs at an early age. By the end of middle school, students who have not connected with math in early years may develop an adverse attitude towards the subject and are overwhelmed with problems that are not necessarily complicated but require a systemic approach.

Introducing tutoring at a young age helps children build foundational skills needed for more complex problem solving, resulting in more time and space for creative thinking and discovery to take place, which are often much more interesting to a young learner.

Final Thoughts

Starting early and building the foundational blocks students need to succeed contributes to keeping students engaged and positive about not only math, but other STEM subjects as well. If we as educators and parents can work towards providing a supportive, stimulating environment where children are empowered to learn, students can do more than keep from falling behind; they can excel. ■

Lana Yeganova, Ph.D., is one of five women who co-founded Avatar Learning Center, an online tutoring center which includes families and instructors based in Washington, D.C. She teaches math at Avatar and lives in the Potomac area.

PROVIDED PHOTO

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 camera.

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