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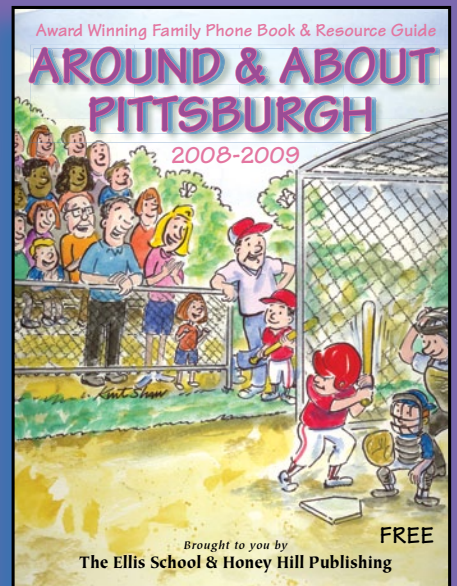
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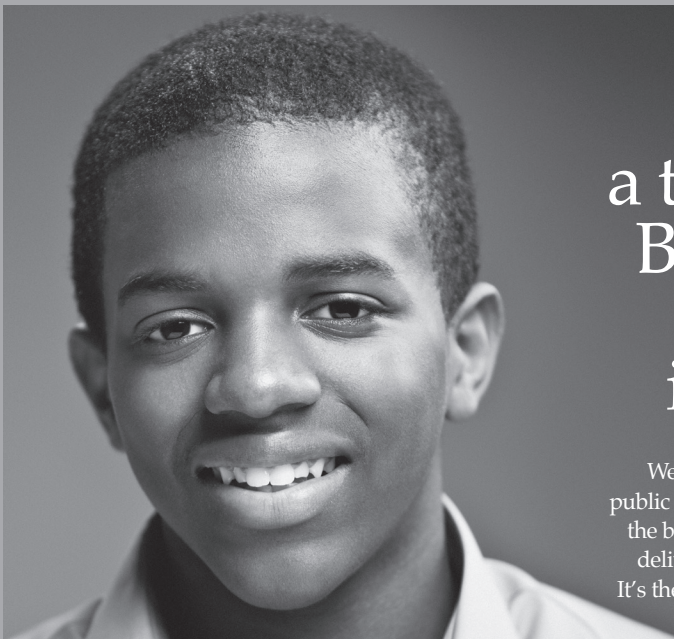
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# what's inside...

March 2009  
Volume 22 Number 3

*information for today's parents to help them care for themselves, their children and their extended families.*

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**Cover Photo:** Grace Christy, daughter of Rachel & Brian Christy from West Sunbury  
**Photographer:** Alicia Dal Lago

**Correction:** The phone number for the National Aviary is 412-323-7235

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## Maternity & Baby Guide



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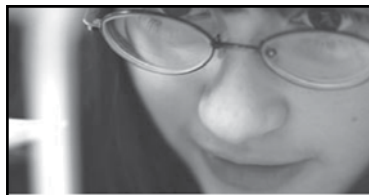


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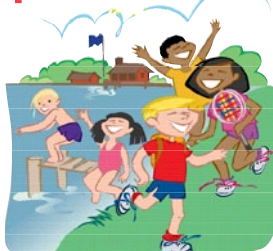
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# humor

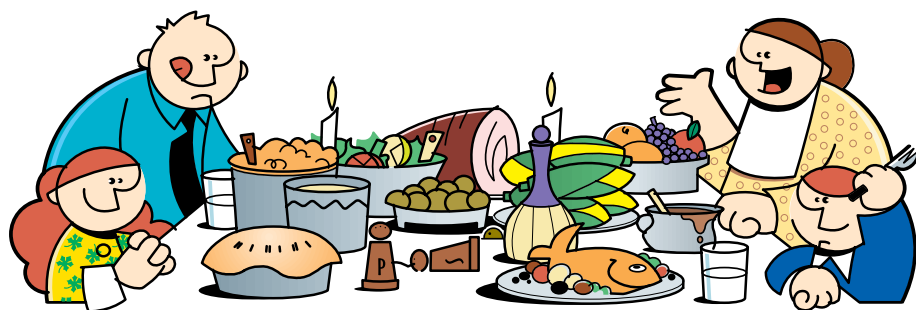
## Mayhem at mealtime

By Rick Epstein

**W**hen our cat was hunkered down at his dinner bowl, my father would warn, "Don't bother Mr. Mittens while he's eating. He'll turn around and bite you."

Does the definition of "bother" include marching a toy troll across Mr. Mittens'

abated, she could focus on mealtime misbehavior. Besides her general rioting and frat-house manners, Sally would clamor for whatever was on someone else's plate and beg to sit on my lap or her mother's. She'd stand up on her booster seat for half the meal yelling "Mommy!" or "Daddy!" on



furry shoulders? If so, Dad sure knew cats.

But when it came to the way people eat, he was not so well informed. My father spent his life chasing a mirage. He yearned for a family dinner that would be a happy and peaceful interlude when affection and merriment abound, events of the day are discussed and good food is eaten politely and appreciatively.

Certainly that's how Dad dines now, because he's in Heaven with my mom. But we never ate like that Down Here. My big brother did daring tricks, I babbled and gobbled, my little brother picked and whined, and all three of us bickered.

Yet somehow I inherited Dad's dream of harmonious family dinners, even though I know better. A college anthropology course (which I very nearly passed) taught me that the first humans used to wander around finding and eating berries, roots and bugs. Families only ate together when something really big had died. Then they'd swarm around the carcass, grunting and snapping their teeth, jabbing each other with sticks, and grabbing for the choicest bones or organs.

Take away the appetites and you'd have dinner at our house when our daughters were little. Children are primitive creatures who feed all day on whatever they can get their paws on. So when Mom and Dad try to get them to come to dinner and force them to eat more than they have use for, all they want to do is leap down onto the floor and scurry away to their caves.

Two-year-old Sally would come early to the dinner table, crawl under it, and graze on crumbs and old Cheerios. With hunger

the off-chance one of us would want to wrestle a wild monkey while trying to eat. (Sally was ready to use a fork long before we trusted her with one.)

At age five, her older sister Marie's main contribution to the dining experience was refusing to eat. She didn't like meat, vegetables or potatoes. That didn't leave much. She'd take a couple bites of spaghetti and then ask how much more she had to force down to qualify for dessert. Negotiations would ensue. Dessert had to be cookies or better – or we had nothing to talk about. But Marie would still find time to kick her little sister under the table and goad her to a shrieking frenzy with mere words.

Enlarging the chaos of dinner time, a third daughter, Wendy, arrived with a fussy appetite, plenty to say, and a special gift for dropping food and spilling drinks. The floor under her chair always looked like Gettysburg had been re-fought with food.

Then, before we could get ourselves organized, the older girls started disappearing into college. We still have the youngest one "at home," which is to say: almost never at home. At age 17, she counts the day a failure if she hasn't contrived to eat elsewhere.

So that leaves Betsy and me. She makes lovely dinners, but with mixed feelings – she's sad that no kids are around to throw it on the floor. I dig in with enthusiasm as we gossip companionably. I thank her for making dinner and then I wash the dishes. There's nothing to sweep up.

We're finding that serenity isn't every-

*continued on page 44*





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# publisher's commentary

By Marilyn Honeywill

If you haven't read about this already, let me alert you to look for it soon...**BPA—is it safe?**

In the latest issue of the February 2009 *Wellness Letter*, a health newsletter from the University of California, and also in *Consumer Report* magazine, January 2009, I was brought up-to-date on current testing of an industrial chemical, bisphenol-A (BPA) which is used in polycarbonate plastic, a plastic used to make many water bottles, baby bottles and sippy cups. And it's also found in the lining of most food and beverage cans.

This is not a new type of plastic, BPA has been widely used in developing countries since the 1950's. Over the years, many lab and animal studies have shown that exposure to the substance, BPA, in early life would cause cell and tissue changes in the animals, yet assessments of BPA in humans had been limited until recently.

Last year CDC (Center for Disease Control) researchers in a large study found that 93 percent of the people tested, mostly women and children, had the chemical BPA in their urine. And, last spring the National Toxicology Program at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) reported some concern (3 on a scale of 1 to 5) that BPA can affect the brain, behavior and prostate gland in fetuses, infants and children at current exposure levels.

Government agencies that test the safety of chemicals in our food supply have not been able to agree on the possible dangers of BPA. Even the FDA, who has been relying on two studies funded by the chemical industry, has been criticized for omitting key "unbiased" research in their "no risk" assessment of BPA, and the most disturbing aspect of this assessment is the FDA's solid support not only for this "biased" research paid for by the chemical industry trade associations, but also for

the chemical industry's definition of what makes for relevant and reliable science. Unfortunately their position is unlikely to change anytime soon.

On the other hand, Health Canada has declared BPA to be a toxic substance and is banning its use in baby bottles and infant formula cans. California and other states are attempting to ban its use in products used by young children and because of consumer demand, more and more manufacturers and retailers, including Wal-Mart are phasing BPA out of their products. However, the FDA is standing firm.

In the mean time, especially if you are pregnant or breastfeeding and to protect your young children, you should check plastic containers, cups, bottles, etc. with numbers 3, 6 or 7 stamped somewhere on the outside and they should be replaced with glass, stainless steel or aluminum containers. Plastic containers with numbers 1, 2, 4 or 5 are safe to use. If you do use polycarbonate bottles with BPA, don't put hot liquids in them, don't put them in the microwave or dishwasher, keep them out of the heat or sun and discard them if they discolor or develop spider cracks.

Here is a safety checklist from *Healthy Child Healthy World* website:

- Be aware of your child's surroundings...toys, rattles, pacifiers, high chairs, sippy cups, bottles, etc.
- Avoid PVC products, like vinyl chew toys identified with a "V" or "3."
- Use glass or ceramic containers to microwave food.
- Be cautious of cling wraps used for food storage and in the microwave.
- Avoid using plastics that aren't identified on the packaging.
- Wash plastic containers by hand with a mild soap.

continued on page 44

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## The February FAKE was...Vacation Timeshare...page 39

*Twenty elves and nine reindeer...that's something I'd love to see on Miami Beach!*  
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### More of our readers who found the Fake:

*You caught me off guard...I had to read it twice, then I was cracking up! Thanks for the laugh!...Sarah M., Carnegie*

*I have news for Mrs. Claus, with a tired husband, twenty elves and nine reindeer, nowhere she goes will be a vacation!...Terry M., Pittsburgh*

*Who couldn't use a condo on the beach about now?...Rachel B., Heidelberg*

*Santa, can we go with you to Miami? We'll even pull your sleigh just to get out of this cold Pittsburgh winter!...Claire W., Pittsburgh*

*If I had a large condo in Miami, I might exchange it for a lease at the North Pole! This was a good one!...Susanne T., Duquesne*

*I searched high & low and finally found it...the last ad in the magazine!...Laurie T., Valencia*





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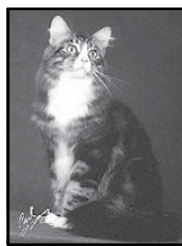
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## women

By Kathy Sena

### Tips for getting health-care after losing your health insurance

Almost every day, it seems, we see stories in the news about hundreds of people losing their jobs as employers resort to layoffs, companies downsize and businesses go out of business.

"Losing your job is scary enough all by itself," says Adam Goldstein, M.D., a professor of family medicine at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine. "But for people, such as those who have chronic health problems that require both medications and regular visits to the doctor, that fear becomes magnified by the loss of health insurance that goes hand in hand with the loss of one's job."

More than 45 million Americans had no health insurance in 2007, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Fortunately, if you find yourself in this situation, there are several things you can do to keep getting the healthcare services you need, Goldstein says. He offers the following tips:

- Check to see if you qualify to continue your current health insurance under COBRA. COBRA is a federal law that gives workers and their families who lose their health benefits the right to choose to continue group health benefits for limited periods of time after job loss. Qualified individuals still must pay the entire premium for coverage to continue. For more information, visit [www.dol.gov/ebsa/faqs/faq\\_consumer\\_cobra.HTML](http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/faqs/faq_consumer_cobra.HTML).

- Call your primary-care doctor and explain your situation. Most physicians will work with you to ensure you still have access to care while you work out a way to pay your medical bills. They may have a policy to allow those with fewer financial resources to pay less at each visit.

- Seek care at a community health center or free medical clinic whose mission is to serve patients, regardless of their ability to pay. Federally supported community health centers also provide a range of primary-care services on a sliding-scale fee basis. Also, take advantage of the free blood-pressure machines available at many pharmacies.

- Try to get your medications at reduced or no cost. Prices in pharmacies may vary widely, with the most expensive charging two to five times more than the

continued on page 44

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# The Redefinition of Dad: Stay-At-Home Dads and the Lives they Lead

by Kathleen Shoop, PhD

Fathers are often portrayed as bumbling, overbearing or distant in movies, but there's a world of real fathers who defy such characterizations. Many of these men are married to amazing women. These couples create cohesive family dynamics that allow the mother to work fulltime while the father is the primary caretaker at home. Such couples function as a unit rather than two people on different paths who only meet each evening for a recap of the day's events. The parents profiled below took a different path to the point where the father was the primary caregiver, but each family is finding great success in having done so.



Michael and Tracy Safran—Oakmont  
Jeremy (3)

Michael and Tracy Safran decided Michael would be the parent at home during the day early on in their planning. "It was simple," Michael noted, "in a practical sense, for me to stay at home. Tracy's a teacher with the 'steady' job and benefits. I'm a trained actor. My work is transient." Though Michael has given up the theater to be at home with Jeremy, he is not completely out of the workforce. "I work in voice-overs and commercials and I operate a flower company, Safflowers, out of our house. When work becomes available Tracy and I talk about what our family needs at the moment. We have a set value for when I head out the door to work."

And while Tracy loves her job and is able to focus on it because Michael is home with Jeremy, she admits, "I would give up my career in an *instant* if we could swing it. However, we feel very fortunate that Michael is home with Jeremy."

Overall, Tracy is at peace with their family structure. "I dedicate my entire evening to Jeremy. I get to go to 'happy hour' every day — as soon as I walk in the house and see his beautiful smile! I love to hear how much Michael enjoys being with Jeremy. It reaffirms why I fell in love with him in the first place. He's truly incredible."

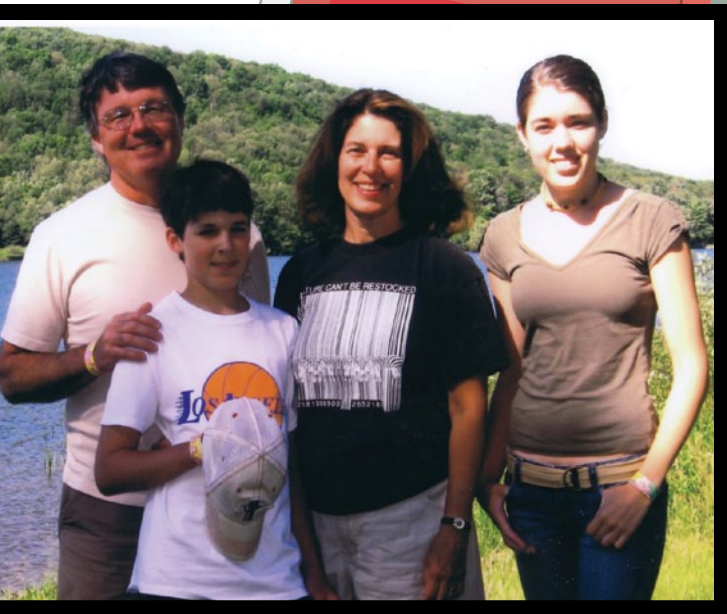
Though Michael packs his days with activities (yes, this includes cooking and cleaning) he experiences the same ups and downs as mothers do when they are home with children. "The repetition in my day can be excruciatingly painful and dull, picking up toys, dishes, constantly reminding him about being polite to others, etc. He may not have played outside due to weather, be tired or he may just want to challenge me. I give myself a time out. My rule of thumb is when my life feels like it is maddening, slow it down, take deep breaths, go play with Jeremy."

Sound advice for any man or woman at home with children.

*continued on page 12*



Jason and Erica Snyder—Oakmont  
**Christian** (11), **Ethan** (7),  
**Will** (3), **Meredith** (16 months)



Henry and Barbara Blyth  
—Upper St. Clair  
**Jesse** (16), **Charlie** (10)

### Stay-at-home dads...continued from page 11

As their family grew, Jason and Erica Snyder transitioned from two parents working outside the home to one. "Despite success and progress in my career in social work," Jason said, "we found ourselves having trouble running our household as smoothly as we liked. We wanted one of us home before and after school, someone here for homework and someone to augment their experiences outside the home. It's been extremely rewarding for all of us."

Erica agrees the arrangement benefits everyone. "I've always felt that I am a better parent (more balanced, stronger person, good role model) by working. So while I might be on the 'work' clock for more waking hours of the day, I am not distracted while on the 'mom' clock. I put a lot of stock in that I am so engaged and focused when I am with the kids. I think my being able to work fulltime gives the kids a wonderful opportunity to be well connected with their father."

While Erica sees her work as adding to who she is as a mom, Jason doesn't see his decision to stay home as resulting in a loss of any part of his identity. "I've always seen myself as I relate to those around me. My wife and family have always been the most important things in my life. I miss my experiences at work, but I am adding to my repertoire of characteristics that make me a good candidate for a job even though I am not being paid to do the one I have now."

Many women wonder if the experiences of fathers at home are different than that of mothers. Like women who are at home with their children, Jason takes his job seriously (yes, this includes mounds of laundry). However, he experiences the occasional rough patch. "Planning ahead makes all of the difference. The most difficult time for me is the late afternoon—just before my wife gets home. The winter months are especially hard, when getting outside is not always an option. I try to stay armed with a list of things we can do and try not to gauge my days based on anything other than how things are the current hour."

Jason embodies a self-assuredness that allows him to experience contentment in his day reconfiguring it when things don't go as planned.

Henry and Barbara Blyth live in Upper St. Clair though they spent a few years in Harrisburg when Barbara earned a promotion. It was this move and the birth of Jesse that began the process of Henry carving out part-time work while taking care of the children during the day. "When we moved I began to work in real estate in the evenings and eventually moved into appraising homes."

Henry recalls that it wasn't only that Barbara earned a promotion and had good benefits that made him want to take on primary care of the children. "I was married before Barb and I regret that I didn't parent my older sons like I wanted to. But now I've had a lot of influence on Charlie and I'm not sure I'm having any more impact. I sort of think kids are who they are without the interference of their parents." Henry paused and chuckled. "I don't know, even though Charlie resists my ideas I think it means a lot to him that I'm there."

Barbara, who is very satisfied with her job in human resources, but does yearn to be home from time to time, sees the positive in Henry's presence. "Henry doesn't always give himself enough credit. He's had a huge influence on the children. Jesse demanded her father be the parent volunteer with her on stage crew. Charlie loves that Henry coaches some of his teams and takes him to all the practices. Both children are completely different and each appreciates Henry for different reasons."

Even with all the positives, Henry and Barbara are candid about the rough spots they've encountered when dealing with daily household activities. "I tried to be very precise with meals, keep everyone on a particular schedule, but it didn't always work. At



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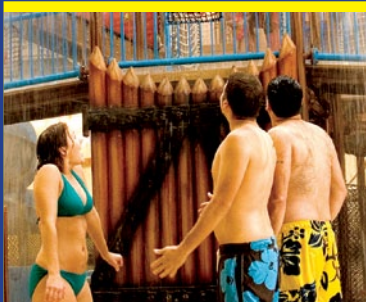
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one point I started just snacking with the kids all day with the biggest snack being the one in the evening."

This wasn't always easy for Barbara. "I don't discount how hard it is to be at home," Barb counted off the huge list that Henry accomplishes each day. "But, I have to admit, walking in the front door after a long day and having to make dinner was hard sometimes."

Though Barbara and Henry say they'd be willing to change places if the situation was right, over the years they've worked together to capitalize on their strengths and seal up the weak spots by always bringing things back to what was most important to them: family.

### Father's Influence

Although Henry Blyth questions how much his presence impacts his children, empirical research and Barbara's comments above suggest his influence is immense. The website for The Institute for the Study of Civil Society cites various studies (Radin 1994, 1986; Nugent 1991; Biller 1993; Clarke-Stewart 1978, 1980; and Amato 1986) that illustrate that the ways fathers are more inclined to interact with their children (wrestling, playing ball, encouraging children to experiment with strength) provide safe obstacles to overcome and goal setting opportunities among other things.

Michael Safran's thoughts support those findings. "I think I give Jeremy more slack than the mothers that I am around. I want him to 'push the envelope' in life." Tracy admits to protective mother status. "The hardest part for me is not to manage Michael's and Jeremy's day. I have to let go and trust. A friend once told us: While dads might instinctively have 10 'safety feelers' out for their kids, moms have 100!" Perceived safety aside, Michael and Tracy both challenge Jeremy. "In the kitchen with Tracy," Michael says, "Jeremy's motor skills are being tested. His self-esteem is being built. He is contributing to the family even at his age."

Jason Snyder sees play as more significant than it might appear to onlookers. "Play is the one of the best way of communicating with children, especially those who lack the cognitive and social ability to engage in really dynamic, interactive conversation. This is not to say that anything substitutes for talking - I am constantly talking to our one-year-old, even though I know she doesn't understand half of what I am saying."

Since the Blyth children are beyond the toddler/early elementary stage Henry's thoughts center on a different kind of challenge. "Part of me wants the kids to do everything and the other part doesn't

### In the moment

All three fathers profiled are flexible and insightful, seeing every moment as an opening, noting that what's most important to them is that they are responsive to the changing needs of their children.

**Jason** welcomes the test of a demanding, ever-morphing day. "I don't feel like I need to take 'breathers' away from my kids. There will be lots of opportunities later for me to do that. It's challenging to continually identify with what each child needs. I consider the children's behavior and if it indicates a need to change gears a little—sometimes moving to a new room, crouching down on the floor to play or suggesting an outing really helps."

**Michael** indicated that he views his daytime role as a creative endeavor. "When we create, we plant ourselves firmly in the moment and teach ourselves that what we do matters. Being a man and staying at home, a good day is to accomplish many things—cleaning a room, making dinner, laundry. This is balanced with playing with Jeremy. I meet him in the moment. Be there now, for him."

**Henry** finds contentment in knowing that opportunities always show up. "The worst thing that happens can also be the best. Prospects come and go and we'll create a new mosaic and move on as we have in the past." Henry extends that mindset to dealing with the children. "Barb and I agree that when Jesse or Charlie need to talk we should stop what we're doing, listen, and don't say 'I'll be up in a minute,' otherwise the moment may be lost forever."

want to push too much so I try to help Jesse and Charlie figure out how they want to spend their time. Both really enjoy music and pursuing that seems like a good avenue although those aren't the only activities they're engaged in."

### Family Bonds

A report on [medicalnewstoday.com](http://medicalnewstoday.com) (Schoppe-Sullivan, Cannon, Brown, Mangelsdorf, and Szweczyk-Sokolowski, 2008) finds that a mother's attitude toward the father's participation in parenting impacts how involved he is. "Mothers can be very encouraging," said Sarah Schoppe-Sullivan, "to fathers, and open the gate to their involvement in child care, or be very critical, and close the gate." People might wonder if a mother who encourages her husband to take on greater parental responsibilities might lose out on some closeness with their children.

The Blyths who have the advantage of looking back on sixteen years of parenting have seen bonds shift over time. Barbara says "Although there have been plenty of times I've wanted to switch roles and stay at home, I don't feel less bonded to my children because I was the one who worked fulltime. The kids come to me for more emotional things and to Henry for practical things." Both situations result in closeness. "Our bonds have also changed over time with a big part of our relationships centering on father/daughter and mother/son aspects."

Erica is equally as satisfied with her family bonds. "I am a big advocate of breastfeeding for as long as the baby wants. While it's extra work (pumping etc) the reward and strength I feel that I'm providing and connecting with my child in a way no one else can, is absolutely the most bonding experience I have had as a mother.

"I don't ever feel less bonded to Jeremy!" Tracy says, "I'm still the chosen one, in most circumstances. I'm the one who breastfed for two-and-a-half years. Michael's got nothing on me!" But Tracy admits, "I think the close bond that Jere-

my and Michael have would not be there if Michael worked all day and Jeremy were in daycare. So, really, Jeremy gets the best of each of us.

There is a thread of teamwork running through each family, creating strong bonds. Erica keeps Jason's needs in mind as much as the children's when someone is sick. "I know Jason will have the lion's share of the work all the next day, so I care for them all night."

Tracy tweaks her days when Jeremy is ill as well. "I stay home from work if Jeremy's sick, because he really only wants me. He hasn't thrown up on Michael yet. I've been the lucky one!"

Henry and Barbara demonstrate similar collaboration. "When there's an issue to address, we figure it out behind closed doors and then we tell the kids what's going to happen. We've both thought long and hard about how we want to raise the kids and we've taken the time to follow through."

### Conclusion:

The fathers interviewed here acknowledged some differences in their parenting styles compared to that of mothers they encounter, but the men didn't characterize parenting as being stereotypically male or female. They were more inclined to characterize their decisions as driven by the needs of the children, their willingness to put their own plans aside so they can offer their children every chance to grow and change healthfully.

Because this article isn't the result of a study, it's hard to say whether one parent's role could be defined as more traditionally male or female, but it's clear that these families work together. Each has created a scenario where the children aren't losing important time with mom (each mother makes sure of that) as much as they are gaining their father's time creating sturdy, happy, flexible households that may someday be more common than not.

*Kathleen Shoop, PhD is a writer from Oakmont, PA.*



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# Maternity & Baby Guide

A photograph of a pregnant woman with blonde hair, wearing a white tank top, sitting on the grass. She is looking down at her bare pregnant belly. A young child with blonde hair, wearing a yellow dress, is sitting next to her, also looking at the belly. The background is a blurred green field.

## Managing pregnancy & motherhood

By Jessica Fisher

**A**dding a child to your family is a wonderful, exciting event. And it's great fun to share this enthusiasm with your older child. Recently, my three-year old finally clued in that we were going to have another baby. He jumped up, turned to his older brothers, and exclaimed, "Guys! There's a baby in Mama's tummy!" The thrill on his face was just priceless.

As joyful a time as it is, the gestation period can be exhausting for you as the Mom. You want to be your best for everyone in your family, those you can see and talk to as well as the little one you haven't yet met. However, it's different the second time around. You can't just take a nap whenever you want. You can indulge your cravings by eating pickles and tortillas for dinner, but you still have to make sure the rest of your family has something decent to eat.

It's a great balancing act to manage pregnancy symptoms while caring for your family, and attending to household and work responsibilities. The following are some suggestions to help you manage these areas gracefully. During a normal pregnancy, a little planning and organization will make the nine months a little easier and more enjoyable for everyone.

- **Store up provisions.** As soon as you see that second little line appear on the testing stick, run, don't walk, to stock your kitchen with healthy, yet simple meal fixings. Nausea will hit in a few weeks or even a few days, so be prepared. Spend a few hours in a bulk-cooking session and prepare lasagnas, casseroles, stews and soups for storage in the freezer. You might even invite some friends to celebrate with you and head to your closest meal-prep kitchen for a night of cooking and laughing together. If food prep is the last thing on your mind, stock up on ingredients for easy meals. Grilled cheese sandwiches, pasta and jarred sauce and baked chicken and veggies will hit the spot and not take too much energy or thought to prepare when nausea hits at five o'clock.

- **Request transportation assistance.** Cars, commute times and congestion can contribute to stress on your mind and body. If you have school, sports or church events to drive to, enlist as much help as you can. Coordinate your schedule with your husband's and the grandparents' calendars so that you see as little drive time as possible. Investigate the possibility of carpooling with another family. Better


yet, if they can do driving duty for the first three months, you can volunteer to take it during the second trimester when you start to "glow."

- **Don't forget to say NO.** This is a season when it's okay to limit outside activities. Inevitably, the PTA or team mom will ask you to bring snacks or volunteer for some project. Be bold and resist the urge to say yes. Your body is already undertaking an extremely important task. Politely decline and offer to participate more in a few months when you will have more energy.

- **Maintain routines.** As much as you can, try to keep the regular workings of your household consistent. Observe regular bedtimes and weekend rituals. It may be difficult as you fight morning sickness and the other aches and pains that accompany pregnancy, but do your best to keep things on an even keel. This provides a sense of security for your child as well as helps her get ready for welcoming a new little one to the family.

*continued on page 18*





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Pregnancy...continued from page 16

• **Get plenty of shut-eye.** This is a time when your body is using lots of energy and needs abundant rest. Plan your day so that you can take a nap. If your older child still naps, commit to snoozing when he does, rather than trying to "get something done." A little rest in the afternoon will see you through the evening hours. Make



a point of going to bed earlier than usual. Bypass your late-night television watching. Do not touch the remote; do not collect bags under your eyes. Sleep is a necessity during this season.

• **Make date nights a priority.** It might be difficult to remember the last newborn phase, but alone time with your sweetie may be compromised once this little one arrives. Set aside time each week to enjoy one another and just be "a couple." It doesn't need to be a fancy or expensive night on the town. A simple lunch or dinner at your favorite faster food can be a great time-out from family life. Your relationship's growth and success is key to the happiness of your family as a whole.

• **Enjoy the journey with your older child.** Some have said that adding a second child can change the family dynamics more than the first. Make the most of this pre-baby season. Enjoy the moments to sit and read books with your little one or hop in the car for an impromptu run to the park. You may be curbing your activity once again in the postpartum season, so once the nausea and fatigue dissipate, get out and about with your child.

Increasing your family size is a thrilling time. Don't let the sometimes difficult aspects of pregnancy overshadow this. Plan and adjust as you are able. You will not only survive this pregnancy, but you – and your family – can thrive! ▶

*Jessica Fisher is a wife, mother of five, and a freelance writer, making her home in San Marcos, CA.*



## Baby sign language

By Jacqueline Bodnar

**H**ave an infant and not looking forward to the temper tantrums that will soon be coming along? Then you may just want to consider baby sign language. Teaching sign language to babies not only has lasting benefits but has now caught on across the country and has become the innovative way that parents are working to help their child get ahead.

Most programs that are offered for teaching sign language use everyday terms that are useful and relate to a babies life. The most common first terms usually taught include milk, more, eat and words that are related to meals, bedtime and bathing. Other common first words for younger babies include cat, dog, baby, more, mommy and daddy. The practice of signing gives babies the opportunity to label objects, express their needs and to explain how they are feeling. Children also get the chance to be a part of choosing the direction and focus of what they want to do and what they want to talk about.

Young children often throw temper tantrums as a result of feeling frustrated because they are not able to verbally express themselves. Learning sign language as a baby is believed to help cut down on some of those tantrums that toddlers experience because they have a way to communicate. Research has also shown that teaching them sign language stimulates intellectual development.

"There is a significant percentage of the children who speak earlier when their parents sign with them," explains Nancy Cadjan, president of Sign Babies ([www.signbabies.com](http://www.signbabies.com)). "And even those who speak at a normal rate have an easier time learning language and an increased vocabulary when they do begin speaking."

When babies have this ability to communicate to have their needs met it is also believed to increase their self esteem and confidence level and many believe that it strengthens the bond between the parent and child.

Usually within a couple of months after getting started you should see results from your teaching efforts. Keep in mind that the older the baby the faster they catch on to the signs. The recommended age to start teaching your baby sign language is usually around eight months, although some people do get started around six months. Even if your baby is a year old or more it's not too late to start teaching them sign language.

If you would like to teach your baby sign language you have a variety of ways

*continued on page 44*

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## A nursery for baby

By Belinda J. Mooney

**Y**ou and your husband have discovered you're about to become parents. It's an exciting time with lots of changes and preparation ahead of you. Amidst all the doctor's appointments, Lamaze classes and other adjustments you will need to make plans for a baby nursery. Planning a baby nursery is one of the best parts of having a baby. Your creative genius can truly come out as you prepare for your new arrival. But you do want to make sure you have the essentials for your new little one. Here is a list of suggestions for the new nursery.

### Setting up the nursery

If you can choose where your baby nursery will be consider the room closest to your own. This will allow you to hear the baby and get to the room quickly when needed. The baby bed should be placed away from the window and drafts. Paint or put in new carpet several months before the baby is born.

Decide on your theme before you start painting or preparing the room. This will



point of the baby nursery. You may start out with a bassinet and move up to a crib as the baby gets older. Cradles are another option for newborns up through about six months. Choose a style that goes along with your theme. Shop several stores and compare prices. Stay within your budget. Consider checking yard sales and children's consignment shops. You can often find good deals this way.

Another option is to start out immediately with a crib. Be sure to place bumper pads in a crib as a safety measure. Cribs that convert to a bed as the child grows cost a bit more than a traditional crib, but they pay for themselves in the years of use ahead. This is nice when converting the baby nursery into a child's room.

### A dresser

Another essential to the baby nursery is a good solid dresser. You can often find coordinating pieces that match the baby bed. If purchasing second hand furniture, painting them to match is another option. You want the dresser to be good and sturdy. Deep drawers with plenty of room is a must. The top will become your work area and hold all of baby's supplies.

### A rocking chair

Not every baby nursery will have room for a rocking chair but it is wonderful when you do. A rocking chair is perfect for those late night feedings or singing baby to sleep. They are a blessing when trying to calm a fussy or sick baby.

### A changing table

If you have room in the baby nursery you may want to purchase a changing table. Changing tables have shelves underneath that allow storage for linens, diapers or baby clothes. Your dresser can



give you time to pick out coordinating items such as wall decorations and crib sheets. Friends and family will want to know your theme before the baby shower. Many stores have registries, similar to wedding registries, which allow you to register your themes.

### The baby bed

The baby's bed is going to be the focal



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double as a changing table, if need be, by simply laying a changing pad and blanket on top. On the other hand, your changing table can work instead of a dresser. Add some baskets for small items and to help keep the clothes organized.

**A diaper stacker**

This handy item hangs on the wall and keep the diapers stacked neatly. Usually hung in close proximity to the changing table, a diaper stacker keeps diapers in easy reach but out of the way.

**Baby's supplies**

A basket that holds basic supplies is an important part of the baby nursery. You will want to keep baby powder, diaper cream, baby oil and baby wipes in your work basket. Place this basket on the dresser or changing table and keep it well stocked. Other items you might want to include in the basket are baby nail clippers, a thermometer, baby's comb and brush and soft washcloths.

**Items of contentment**

While not a must in your baby nursery, a soft nightlight and music player are very nice. A nightlight allows you to enter the

*continued on page 44*



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## Everyday learning for infants

By Elizabeth Osborn

While your new baby may be content to lie in his seat or gnaw on his fingers, don't take the contentment for his not wanting intellectual stimulation. Studies show that even the youngest among us learn heaps, even when the activities seem insignificant to grown-ups. One of the best ways to do this is to make reading a part of your daily routine. Even the youngest children benefit from reading. The closeness and attention you give them are significant foundations for growing. When reading:

- Keep your child in your lap so you can both see the book, even if it's only text.
- Don't be afraid to read grown-up books aloud. Language acquisition begins now: don't shy away from Jane Austen or C.S. Lewis just because there are no pictures.
- Show emotions by using changes in voice and facial expressions.
- Occasionally follow the words with your finger to teach the basics of reading: left to right, where to go when the page ends, etc.

When reading picture books, take the time to really look at the pages. Discuss things happening in the scene.

- Name objects, colors and shapes.

Peek-a-boo may not seem like an exercise in intellect, but it's one of the first ways a child begins to understand object permanence. Likewise, simply talking to your little one as you go about your day is a great way to grow communication and reasoning. Explain what you're doing and why.

Children between the ages of three to six months will begin to raise their heads, turn to find the source of a familiar voice or other sound and even learn how to make larger movements like rolling over intentionally.

Make the most of floor time by putting baby on a blanket to ensure no hidden objects will be found in the carpet or roll to him on a harder surface. Encourage the waving of arms and legs and take note when she begins to reach for the object. This is a bigger milestone than you might guess!

Turn the TV down and listen to the everyday sounds of the house: the fridge coming on, the garbage truck going past the house, the whirl of a ceiling fan. Identify these things for your baby. Keep fun toys around for blanket time. Include a shatterproof mirror or other reflective object, balls of different sizes, soft animals

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that squeak or talk, and cloth books to examine and begin to hold.

### Tummy time

In 1994, The American Academy of Pediatrics announced that the safest position for a newborn or infant to sleep is on his back. This resulted in a 40 percent decrease in the occurrence of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

The downside of this is that the occurrence of cranial asymmetry (misshaping and flattening of the head) increased. To combat this adverse side effect, let your child lay and play on his tummy for a total of about 30 minutes per day. Supervise this time so that if he shows any difficulty breathing, you're able to assist him immediately.

Let tummy time happen in short increments, and make sure it's a pleasurable time for your baby by not forcing it when your child is uncomfortable or cranky. Get creative with it! Position your little one on an exercise ball and hold him there, letting him roll forward and backward gently, with your hand keeping him secure. Or let him lie across your arms, lap or chest in such a manner that encourages him to lift his head, wave his hands and kick his feet. Other benefits to tummy time include increased neck and back muscle strength and the development of large and fine motor skills.

### The older they get

Your baby may begin to do exciting things within a few months, like sitting up, standing with help, bouncing on her own, moving to music, smiling at a familiar voice, showing personal desire and displeasure when a toy is taken away and picking up small objects with precision. As their skills increase, so can the fun!

Nursery rhymes and simple songs are great ways to teach baby about music, rhythm, math, language and meaning. Repeat the same songs and your infant will respond in new and exciting ways. Many nursery rhymes and children's songs have motions to go along with them, but if you're not sure of what they are, it's okay to make them up.

Kids this age love sound and motion. Playing with age-appropriate musical instruments or doing things as simple as rolling a ball (even if he can't catch it or roll it back yet), are ways to teach him relations between sound and space. And don't forget to let your child feed himself snacks during the scheduled time! Small, safe cereal, crackers or any easily soluble foods provide great ways for a little one to learn hand-eye coordination.

The best thing parents can do is pay attention to their little ones. This doesn't mean all of Mom's time needs to be spent playing sidekick to the newcomer—it's

*continued on page 44*



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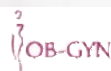
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## Health insurance for children

By Jill L. Ferguson

**H**istorically, on the world's stage, America has been seen as the land of opportunity and the land of wealth. But domestically, we often forget about those around us who lack basic necessities, like access to health care. According to the U.S. Census Bureau report "Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2007", 9.8 percent of all Pennsylvanians were uninsured during the three year average span of 2005-2007. Many of these uninsured Pennsylvanians are children, and often times these are children of working parents, and possibly even of parents who are insured.

In a special October 22/29 themed *Journal of the American Medical Association* issue called "Health of the Nation", Dr. Jennifer E. DeVoe, assistant professor of family medicine at Oregon Health and Science University in Portland, explained that more than nine million U.S. children are uninsured and some 18 million have a coverage gap at one time or another.

"This is millions of parents unable to access stable, continuous health-care coverage for themselves and their children. These are painful realities, choices to forego and delay care every day," said Dr. DeVoe. Some of these necessary choices result in unfilled prescriptions and unvaccinated children.

Because of these statistics, Pennsylvania's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) exists. CHIP "provides health insurance to all uninsured children and teens who are not eligible for or enrolled in Medical Assistance," according to their website, [www.chipcoverspakids.com](http://www.chipcoverspakids.com). Through their program, Cover All Kids, insurance is available to all Pennsylvania kids up to age 19, regardless of family income (meaning there is no income cap). Currently, more than 14,000 children per month in Allegheny County are enrolled in CHIP, and more than 180,000 children across Pennsylvania.

Melissa Fox, Deputy Press Secretary at the Pennsylvania Insurance Department, said, "CHIP is a program that puts parents in a worry-free zone. No family makes too much money for CHIP."

CHIP provides insurance to children in Allegheny County through Aetna, Highmark Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Unison Kids and UPMC for Kids, so parents have choices as to which insurance they want, according to Fox. The amount parents (or legal guardians) have to pay out-of-pocket



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to insure their kids through CHIP is determined by household size and income. For example, if the household consists of one child and one parent whose income is under \$28,000, the insurance for the child is free, with no premiums or co-pays. If that same family of two makes between \$28,001 and \$42,000 annually, the average monthly premium would cost between \$40 and \$64 per month per child, plus a nominal co-pay for doctor's visits, prescriptions, etc. If the family of two earns more than \$42,001 per year, the child's annual monthly health insurance premiums would be \$161 per month, with a \$15 doctor's visit co-pay. Charts on CHIP's website show the cost breakdown for household sizes from one to 20.

If your child qualifies for the no-cost insurance, he or she will be enrolled for 12 months. If your child qualifies for the low-cost or at-cost program, a federally mandated, six-month waiting period goes into effect. What this means is that unless a child is under the age of two, has lost health benefits because a parent lost his/her job or the child is moving from one public health insurance program to another, the child must be uninsured for six months before the CHIP insurance can kick in.

The reason behind the law was "so that employers or consumers would not drop private health coverage to enroll in a public program", according to CHIP's website. Enrollment in any of the programs is guaranteed for 12 months, unless the child's eligibility changes. Families must renew their coverage every year.

Fox explains that CHIP is somewhat anonymous. "Children enrolled in the program receive insurance cards with no mention of the program on them. To some, this is an added benefit to those who do not want others to know their family is receiving government assistance. Many times parents have told us how grateful they are to have CHIP for their children. With CHIP, children are able to get the glasses they need, the inhaler they might need for their asthma and those ever-important childhood immunizations. CHIP has a very comprehensive benefit package."

CHIP was created after former Governor Casey signed into law House Bill 20 on December 2, 1992. The program was designed to provide insurance coverage to children whose families earn too much to qualify for Medical Assistance, but yet who still could not afford to purchase private health insurance. Pennsylvania's CHIP program was the model for the federal government's similar program, called SCHIP. ▶

*Jill L. Ferguson is a freelance writer from San Carlos, CA.*





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# Cord blood banking facts

By Jill L. Ferguson

**W**hen you find out you are pregnant you have many choices to make: Do you want to work with a midwife or only the obstetrician? How many and what kinds of tests will you agree to on you and your unborn child? What kind of birth would you like to have? Do you want to know the baby's gender? Do you plan to breastfeed? And do you want to, or should you, either donate or bank your baby's umbilical cord blood?

Umbilical cord blood banking has become a hot topic during the last decade. Studies have shown that cord blood can treat leukemia and other blood disorders, plus some genetic diseases.

Two kinds of cord blood banking exist. "Private cord donation is storing the baby's cord blood for his/her own future use or use for a family member should the need arise. Alternatively, public cord blood banking, or donating, means that the baby's cord blood is stored in a cord blood bank and is available to anyone in need of a transplant or may be used for research purposes," according to the Frequent Asked Questions section of the American Academy of Pediatrics' web site.

More than 25 companies run private cord blood banks. These companies send parents a kit to take to the hospital as a part of their birthing bag. Once the baby is born and the cord is clamped and cut, then the obstetrician squeezes the blood into a container and it gets returned to the companies. Fees for this service run around \$2,000, not including the annual storage fees of \$100-\$200. (Health insurance does not cover the collection or banking of cord blood.)

One couple, who have four-year-old and two-year-old sons, said they banked their first child's cord blood. "But when we had the second child, the prices had gone up exponentially, more than twice the cost during those two years. We couldn't afford it," said the husband, who asked to remain nameless.

Lauren Rodrigues, whose baby Laszlo was born in June, also cited expense as the main reason for not banking her son's cord blood. "We could afford to do it," she said, "but it seemed more responsible to put the money towards his college fund, especially since we believe his chance of ever needing the cord blood is so slim."

The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests, if you are thinking of banking your baby's cord blood with a private company, you should consider "the finan-

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Who gets to use the cord blood isn't the only difference between private banking and public storage; the other main major difference between them is the cost. Public cord donation banks pay for the collection procedure and the storing of the baby's cord blood so there is no cost to the donating family. Rodrigues looked into donating Laszlo's cord blood but she couldn't find a public blood storage facility near her home. (Instead she and her husband opted to have the cord blood drained back into the baby, which some doctors and naturopaths think may be best for the newborn.)

The U.S. umbilical cord blood public donation registry is housed at the National Marrow Donor Program. On October 8, 2007, Magee-Womens Hospital announced “the institution of the Dan Berger Cord Blood Program to give parents an opportunity to preserve umbilical cord blood for possible future health care needs or donation to scientific research.” Magee's program is distinct in that the hospital offers parents three options from which to choose – a public bank, a private one or donation for scientific research to the Magee-Womens Research Institute <http://institute.mwrif.org>, according to their press release.

Also Cryobanks International [www.cryo-intl.com/](http://www.cryo-intl.com/) accepts donations from anywhere in the continental United States to be listed on the national registry. More than 50,000 samples already have been stored in that registry, and the federal government is hoping for at least 150,000, especially the cord blood from minority babies.

According to the National Marrow Donor Program, the reasons parents should donate include: “

1. Each year thousands of patients are diagnosed with life-threatening diseases that can be treated by rebuilding the patient's hematopoietic (blood cell producing) system with blood-forming cells. Umbilical

cord blood is being studied as one of the sources of blood cells.

2. Donating cord blood is medically safe. The cord blood is collected from the umbilical cord after your baby is born.

3. Donation does not change the birth process.

4. The umbilical cord and placenta are usually thrown away after a baby is born.

5. Donating cord blood is free to you and completely confidential.”

Because cord blood banking and donations is relatively new, research is still ongoing about the storage “shelf life” of cord blood. Other possible limitations to cord blood usage include a sample that is too small, cells that already contain the type of disease the child

has developed (though this blood may still be of use to family members) and cells that have lost their usefulness.

The AAP discourages parents from storing cord blood “as biological insurance...because there currently is no scientific data to support autologous [or self] transplantation.”

*Jill L. Ferguson is a freelance writer from San Carlos, CA.*



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By Patricia Poshard, Editor

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Atlas Elementary Academy will open in 2009 in the heart of the Treesdale community on the Allegheny/Butler County line. The community based school will begin with a Pre-K - Kindergarten and Early Elementary Program with plans of expanding to grade eight. Lisa Milan, founder and director, states: "The Atlas approach combines the brilliance of Montessori with core content of history, literature, mathematics and science." To learn more, plan to attend an open house on Thursday, March 19 at Treesdale County Club. To register call 412-913-4075 or go to [www.atlaselementaryacademy.com](http://www.atlaselementaryacademy.com).

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Electric Lounge featuring eight giant screens, a concert-quality sound system and lighting effects for a Guitar Hero experience unlike any other. Science Center visitors also can explore the popular musical video game every Saturday from 5-7pm in the same location during the Guitar Hero Jam Session, which is free with general admission. Starting at 8pm, the Works Theater converts into the Guitar Hero Electric Lounge, where attendees can sign-up to play their favorite song from the game head-to-head against another guitarist. Tickets for the Electric Lounge are \$8, or \$5 for Carnegie Museums members. Visitors can add a laser show or Omnimax film for only \$5 each.

### New string music location

The Carnegie Mellon String Preparatory Division has announced the opening of a new South Hills Satellite School. The new location, under the direction of MaryBeth Schotting, will be at Southminister Presbyterian Church on Washington Road. They will offer private string instruction and recitals to students 6-18 years of age.

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## Tips for new campers

By Belinda Mooney

**M**aking your child's first trip to camp one he will treasure can be quite a challenge. You want him to enjoy himself and look forward to next year yet this is a brand new experience for him. How can you assure he will have fun and you won't worry yourself silly while he is away? Here are some tips for getting your camper off to a good start.

**The first step:** Make sure your child really wants to go. If he is attending because it's what mom and dad want and he has no real interest, chances are he won't enjoy himself. On the other hand some hesitation is normal the first time. If your child is adamant about not wanting to go, don't send him. There's always next year.

Starting out with a small local camp can be a good choice. If your child is involved in 4-H or Scouts they often have summer camps or weekend overnights. Your little camper may feel more comfortable around people he knows. Churches often have camps for kids too. Other good options are local specialty camps such as baseball camp, soccer or music camp.

**Easing camp jitters:** If you're not sure your child is ready for overnight camping, do a trial run. Get together with some friends and arrange an overnight sleepover. You can get an idea from this as to how your child will react to being away from home at night. If you have to go get him or her in the middle of the night you might want to consider a day camp.

Having a buddy to go with can make a difference to some children, especially if they will not know anyone else there at the camp. Some camps will let friends bunk together in the same cabin, but they need to know also that their friend may have different interests and won't be with them all the time.

**Planning for fun:** Plan ahead for fun and make things easy for the camper. Pack things like disposable cameras, pre-stamped postcards or envelopes and even a favorite stuffed animal. Encourage them to record their week through pictures and notes to mom and dad back home.

But most importantly make sure your child knows you will be there if he needs you. Check with the camp on its policy for allowing children to use the phone and how they handle homesickness. Offer to provide a prepaid phone card if necessary. Most camps do a great job of helping kids get over those homesick moments.

By helping your child to enjoy and get the most out of his first camp experience, you are paving the way for years of summer fun. ▶

*Belinda Mooney is a freelance writer from White Sulphur Springs, WV.*

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## Summer camps without limits

By Mona Chabra

Summer camps come in all shapes and sizes to fit each child's interests and needs. Special needs summer camps facilitate fun for kids with physical and mental challenges by providing extra care and support. Special needs camps enable kids to be kids! Here's a list of special needs camps in and around the Pittsburgh area.

### Inter-Care Adventure Day Camp

Summer camp for children with social, emotional and behavioral problems ages six-12.

Location: Hickory Ridge, Bridgeville, PA  
For more information, contact Gail Killmeyer at 412-257-4238

### Monroeville Parks/Recreation, Camp Chipewee

Summer day camp for individuals with special needs ages six-21.

Location: Sunrise School, Monroeville, PA  
For more information, call 412-856-1006

### PLEA Agency (for individuals with developmental and behavioral challenges) Summer Program

Summer program for children who are developmentally and behaviorally disabled ages 3-18.

Location: 733 South Ave.  
For more information, call 412-243-3464

### Spina-Bifida Association of Western Pennsylvania, Summer Camp

This is a summer camp with various indoor and outdoor activities for physically disabled children ages 6 and up.

Location: Wexford, PA  
For more information, contact  
Jennifer Wolford at 800-243-5787

### Umbrella Service for Advancing Autistic Children, Inc., SPEAK Summer Program

Summer recreation program with speech, art and music therapies for children with autism ages five and up.

Location: St. Mary of the Mount School,  
Mt. Washington, PA  
For more information, contact:  
Terry Conner at 412-856-7223

### Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf

Summer camp for children with impaired hearing ages six-17. This camp

*continued on page 34*

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### Epilepsy Foundation, Western Pennsylvania, Camp Frog

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Location: Camp Fitch, Springfield, PA  
For more information, call 800-361-5885

### YMCA, North Hills Area, Camp High Hopes

Summer camp for special needs children with physical and mental challenges ages three to 21 offering various activities such as sports, games, arts and crafts.

Location: Marshall Elementary School,  
Wexford, PA

For more information, contact  
Sharon Blakley at 412-364-3404 or the  
North Hills/Baierl Family YMCA  
at 724-934-9622

### YMCA, North Hills Area, Camp Starburst

Summer camp for special needs children with emotional challenges ages six to 15.

Location: Marshall Elementary School,  
Wexford, PA

For more information, contact  
Sharon Blakley at 412-364-3404 or the  
North Hills/Baierl Family YMCA  
at 724-934-9622

### YMCA, South Hills Area, Camp Aim

Summer camp, with activities such as sports and crafts, designed for children who are mentally or physically challenged. This program has three 2-week sessions between mid-June and the end of July for ages three to 21.

Location: St. Louise de Marillac School,  
Upper St. Clair, Pittsburgh, PA

For more information, contact  
Bobbi Rimkus at 412-833-5600  
or [rirkus@ymca.org](mailto:rirkus@ymca.org)

### Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh, Camp STAR (Summer Time Amputee Retreat)

The goal of this program is to give support to youth with limb loss and amputations ages 8 to 18. This camp provides these youngsters with an opportunity to participate in sports and other camp activities to the best of their abilities. Sponsored and supervised by Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh.

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Location: Camp Kon-O-Kwee/Spencer,  
Fombell, PA  
For more information, contact co-director  
Cindy McCue at 412-370-5481  
or cindymcq1@verizon.net

**Children's Hospital of  
Pittsburgh Camp Chihopi**

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Location: Camp Kon-O-Kwee/Spencer,  
Fombell, PA  
For more information please contact,  
Beverly Kosmach, Dir. at 412-692-6115  
or beverly.kosmach@chp.edu



**Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh,  
Heart Camp**

Summer camp with various outdoor activities for children with heart disease ages 8 to 17. Campers are encouraged to make new friends, share their experiences, and participate in sports and other camp activities to the best of their abilities. Transportation is available. Sponsored and supervised by Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh.

Location: Camp Kon-O-Kwee/Spencer,  
Fombell, PA  
For more information, contact  
Cathy Conley at 412-692-6054

Camp Kon-O-Kwee/Spencer in Fombell, PA also holds special needs camps for children with blindness, severe burns, cerebral palsy, kidney disease, mental retardation, hearing impairment, muscular dystrophy, as well as social and emotional disorders. To find out more about these fun, interactive programs, please call the Camp Kon-O-Kwee/Spencer office at 724-758-6238 or 412-391-3328. ▶

*Mona Chabra is a freelance writer from Sewickley, PA.*

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# Children and grief

By Kathleen Shoop

When a parent, sibling or friend dies, the grief shatters like an earthquake. When the loss is felt by children, the tremors can alter their developing self-concept, making the effects last a lifetime.

So, what can you do to support a child who is grief-stricken? The answer is as complicated as the emotions surrounding death, but over the years experts have identified various strategies that offer a grieving child a way through the difficult times while honoring the life of their deceased loved-one. It's important to remember every child is different and the way each grieves will require patience, space and quiet support from the caregiver—tools that can be hard to implement when the adult is also grieving.

Decades ago Elisabeth Kubler-Ross delineated five stages of grief—denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. These stages seem straight forward, but experts warn against saying “Well Johnny’s been through denial and now he’s angry, so just three more stages and we’re good.” Jane Kinter, MACS, has lead numerous child/teen grief counseling groups throughout her career. She stresses that these stages are cyclical, over lap, and aspects of them will resurface over a person’s lifetime. That doesn’t mean grief can’t be manageable and happiness can’t be found while keeping a loved one in your heart and their memory alive. However, grief is messier than the stages are often interpreted as being.

So how do children process grief? First of all, it depends on the individual child, their age and the circumstances.

Shakola Hall, MSW, has counseled grief-stricken children of all ages including a pre-schooler named Ashley. Like children her age, Ashley experienced grief in an immediate way—the absence of her mother’s actual presence. Ashley’s too young to mentally process ‘what could have been’ or what she has lost in the sense of future experiences together. Hall says, “School drop-off and pick-up were difficult for Ashley, but during the day, when Mom wouldn’t have been there, she played ‘normally.’” Hall cautioned, “Although young

children don’t verbalize their pain as adults do, they feel it just as deeply, even while playing. This realization leads Hall to work with Ashely through art therapy, carefully gauging how much care she needs on a given day.

Hall has also worked with sixth-grader, Tiana, whose mother died of cancer. Because Tiana’s mother’s death wasn’t sudden, Hall had the opportunity to counsel Tiana beforehand. Hall also worked with Tiana’s classmates. “I prepared them with how to respond to Tiana’s grief, how to be there, quietly, not always trying to fill empty space with words.”

Tiana has many tools which she uses to deal with her mother’s death. She writes a journal, poetry, creates scrap-books, carries a photo of her mother in her backpack and participates in balloon send-offs among other things. Tiana aches at the loss of her mother and has days that are especially difficult. But, she is forging a path through the worst of the pain by constructing rituals that comfort her, making abstract memories concrete, bridging the pain of loss with the happiness she and her

mother shared.

Jane Kinter deals primarily with grieving teenagers and has found that even though they have the tools to articulate feelings better than their younger counterparts; they are no less surprised and troubled by the pain, unable to work through it themselves. Kinter says, “Dealing with death is confusing. They have a hard time understanding the range of emotions that they feel. For example—‘I love my grandma. She was so important to me. I miss her terribly.’ All these thoughts bring sadness. Then someone tells a funny Grandma story and the teen is laughing, feeling happy. This swing in emotions can be shocking and they need someone to help them verbalize and process it.”

Kinter adds, “Teens feel peace and acceptance when they share a thought or frustration—usually in response to a peer’s insensitive remark—and someone in the group can offer a way to get past it. Just being able to voice their anger and know someone “got it” is magical for them.”

Like younger children teens also struggle to create concrete memorials of the deceased. Kinter remembers, “In one instance a teen girl died and all her friends



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wore her clothing to keep her with them, to maintain a physical connection, while sorting through their feelings.”

Supporting children as they grieve requires slow, loving work on the part of adults who understand that grief is a natural outgrowth of love and connectedness—something that should be felt. There are numerous representations of the stages of grief and how to work through them, but all point to the following: Children require the presence of people who are willing to invite conversation about the death, but are also able to step back and understand that sometimes it’s quiet proximity that offers the child the opportunity to understand what he/she is feeling. ▶

*Kathleen Shoop is a freelance writer from Oakmont.*

## Supporting a child

### Adults should:

- Slow down and listen.
- Obtain professional or religious support for guidance.
- Validate the child’s feelings or experiences such as nightmares.

### Children can:

- Keep a journal.
- Make a collage and share it with others.
- Read books that explain what’s happening in their minds and bodies.

## Resources:

### The Caring Place (no cost to the family)

[www.highmarkcaringplace.com/  
information/about.shtml](http://www.highmarkcaringplace.com/information/about.shtml)

### Mental Health Association:

[www.mentalhealth.asn.au/resources/  
index.htm](http://www.mentalhealth.asn.au/resources/index.htm)

### The National Center for Children and Grieving Families:

[kidsaid.com/dougypage.html](http://kidsaid.com/dougypage.html)



# Who is caring for your child?

Courtesy of PSU Better Kid Care Program

**P**arents, you are making a very important decision when choosing child care for your child. Most important is the person or persons who will be caring for your child while you are at work.

The providers will spend many hours with your child each week and teach your child many things. It is important for you to find out as much as possible about the



child care providers before enrolling your child in child care.

Find a provider who has had experience with children the same age as your child. Quality child care providers are well trained and earn training hours every year. They consider themselves "life-long learners" and are eager to learn more about child development and other children's issues. They are good communicators and will take time to talk with you about your child each day. When looking for child care find out about the experience and types of training the child care providers have.

It is good to shop around and look at more than one child care. When you have found one you like, visit more than once at different times of day.

Watch the providers with the children. Do they get down to the children's level when talking with them? Do the children seem happy and do you hear laughter? These are good signs. Ask lots of questions and make sure you feel good about the child care providers before enrolling your child. ▶

*The Penn State Cooperative Extension Better Kid Care Program has a Web site at [www.betterkidcare.psu.edu](http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu) with information on children's issues for parents and child care providers. There is also distance education training available for child care providers. For more information call 800-452-9108.*

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## RESEARCH STUDY

### Does your child have ADHD? (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)

**Is he or she currently taking a long-acting stimulant medicine and still having trouble with ADHD symptoms?**

A Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic of UPMC research study of children is looking for participants who:

- are 6 to 17 years old
- have been taking the same dose of stimulant medication for the past four weeks
- are willing to complete a 14-week research study of a non-stimulant investigational medication for ADHD when used with your child's current ADHD medicine
- have a parent or guardian who is willing to complete questionnaires about their child's behavior
- meet the requirements of a brief, preliminary phone screen

**For more information, call Heidi Kipp at 412-246-5661 or Jennifer Baker at 412-246-5651.**

**The cost of your child's current ADHD prescription will be your responsibility. Participants will be compensated for their time.**

**Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic**

*of UPMC Presbyterian Shadyside*

# Super bugs — how to protect your family

By Kathy Sena

If you're like most parents, news reports about temporary school closings, and even deaths, from so-called "superbugs" have probably left you feeling a bit unnerved—and concerned about how to keep your child safe, whether at daycare, school or the football locker room. Here's the info you need to protect your family:

## What are these "superbugs?"

Several decades ago, a new strain of staph bacteria showed up in hospitals. It was resistant to the broad-spectrum antibiotics commonly used to zap it, according to the Mayo Clinic. Named methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), it was one of the first germs to defeat all but the most powerful drugs.

About 30 percent of the population carries regular staph bacteria on their skin or in their nose, according to Gregory Moran, M.D., a professor of medicine at UCLA School of Medicine in Los Angeles and a physician with the emergency-medicine and the infectious-diseases departments at Olive View-UCLA Medical Center. About one percent of the population carries the MRSA bacteria, he says.

Staph bacteria generally don't cause a problem unless they enter the body through a cut or other wound, and even then they often cause only minor skin problems in healthy people. In young children, older adults and people who are ill or have weakened immune systems, ordinary staph infections can sometimes lead to MRSA infections.

"Staph infections, and even MRSA infections, are actually quite common," says Moran. "But the vast majority resolve and don't turn into a life-threatening situation. We see these infections every day in ERs across the U.S.," he adds. "They are mild, self-limiting skin infections. We drain the abscess and they virtually always get better."

Life-threatening MRSA infections are rare, says Moran, noting that most occur in elderly patients who are hospitalized with other serious medical problems. But, as we've seen recently, sometimes these infections can be deadly in children and teens, too. It's just important to keep these news reports in perspective, he notes.

## Diagnosis and treatment

MRSA infection can appear as pustules or boils that often are red, swollen, painful or have pus or other drainage, according to the CDC. These infections commonly occur at sites of skin trauma, such as cuts and abrasions, and areas of the body covered by hair (back of the neck, groin, buttock, armpit, beard area of men).

Doctors often take a tissue sample or a sample of a patient's nasal secretions to check for MRSA bacteria. The sample

is sent to a lab where the bacteria can grow and be tested. It takes about 48 hours for the bacteria to grow with this type of test. But, according to the Mayo Clinic, newer tests, which can detect staph DNA in just hours, are becoming more widely available. Ask your doctor about the type of test she uses.

Mayo Clinic experts recommend keeping an eye on minor skin problems such as pimples and insect bites in addition to cuts and scrapes, especially in children. If

wounds become infected, see your doctor.

Almost all MRSA skin infections can be treated by drainage of pus — with or without an antibiotic — the CDC notes. More serious infections, such as pneumonia, bloodstream infections or bone infections, are very rare in healthy people who get MRSA skin infections.

Request that your doctor have any skin infection tested for MRSA before starting antibiotic therapy, advises the Mayo Clinic. Drugs that treat ordinary staph bacteria aren't effective against MRSA — and using them when not necessary can lead to more-resistant bacteria.

## How is MRSA transmitted?

According to the CDC, MRSA is usually transmitted by direct skin-to-skin contact or contact with shared items or surfaces that have come into contact with someone else's infection (towels, used bandages, etc.). MRSA infections can occur anywhere, but some settings have factors that make transmission easier, says the CDC. These factors are referred to as the 5 C's:

- Crowding
- Frequent skin-to-skin contact
- Compromised skin (i.e., cuts or abrasions)

## How should schools handle MRSA infections?

The decision to close a school for any communicable disease should be made by school officials in consultation with local and/or state public-health officials. However, in most cases, it's not necessary to close schools because of a MRSA infection in a student, says the CDC. MRSA transmission can be prevented by simple measures such as hand hygiene and covering open wounds.

"I've got two young kids, and I wouldn't freak out about this," says Moran. "I wouldn't pull my kids out of school (if a student at the school was diagnosed with an MRSA infection)."

In general it is not necessary to close schools to "disinfect" them when MRSA infections occur, the CDC says. MRSA skin infections are transmitted primarily by skin-to-skin contact and contact with surfaces that have come into contact with someone else's infection. Covering all infections will greatly reduce the risks of surfaces becoming contaminated with MRSA.

Cleaning and disinfection should be performed on surfaces that are likely to come in contact with uncovered or poorly covered infections, the CDC advises. Cleaning surfaces with detergent-based cleaners or Environmental Protection Agency-registered disinfectants is effective at removing MRSA from the environment. Environmental cleaners and disinfectants should not be used to treat infections.

If your child has a MRSA infection, talk with your school about its policy for notification of skin infections, the CDC advises. Unless directed by a physician, students with MRSA infections should not be excluded from attending school. Exclusion from school and sports activities should be reserved for those with wound drainage ("pus") that cannot be covered and contained with a clean, dry bandage and for those who cannot maintain good personal hygiene, according to the CDC.

- Contaminated items and surfaces
- Lack of cleanliness.

Locations where the 5 C's are common include schools, dormitories, military barracks, households, correctional facilities and daycare centers.

## Protecting your family

Careful hand washing remains your family's best defense, says the Mayo Clinic.





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ic. Scrub hands briskly for at least 15 seconds, then dry them. In public restrooms, use a disposable towel and use another towel to turn off the faucet. It's helpful to carry a small bottle of hand sanitizer for times when you don't have access to soap and water.

The CDC also suggests that teachers enforce hand hygiene with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers (if available) before students eat and after they use the restroom.

Wash all abrasions and cuts with soap and water and cover them until healed, Moran suggests. Avoid sharing personal items that come into contact with bare skin, the CDC advises. Use a barrier (clothing, a towel, etc.) between your skin and shared equipment such as weight-training benches. Establish cleaning procedures for frequently touched surfaces and surfaces that come into direct contact with people's skin.

If you or a family member has any cut or sore, wash towels and bed linens in hot water with bleach and dry them in a hot dryer, the CDC suggests. Wash gym and athletic clothes after each wearing.

For more information on MRSA infection, visit the CDC's website at [www.cdc.gov/Features/MRSAinSchools](http://www.cdc.gov/Features/MRSAinSchools). ▶

*Kathy Sena is a freelance journalist from Manhattan Beach, CA.*



## A Research Study for Mothers and Emotionally Healthy Children Ages 9-17

***Emotionally healthy children between the ages of 9 and 17 and their mothers are needed for a research study at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. Participants will complete questionnaires about emotions and behavior, video-taped parent-child discussions, computer tasks with measurement of eye movement, and receive telephone calls on a provided cell phone over three extended weekends.***

**Compensation is provided.  
For more information,  
please call (412) 383-8133.**



University of Pittsburgh

# all about March



Save your snowballs for the Summer Solstice on the first day of summer!

Information for our April Calendar must be in our office by March 1st.  
724-443-1891 Fax: 724-443-1877  
calendarinfo@pittsburghparent.com  
\*(PR): Pre-register

Put your snowballs in the freezer and on June 21, bring them to the Carnegie Science Center, get in free then launch your snowballs into the Ohio River via a giant slingshot or an air cannon from aboard the USS Requin.

## SUNDAY 1

**HORSE DRAWN SLEIGH RIDES** Daily, weather permitting, by reservation only, Dragon Run Forge & Livery, Cowansville • 724-543-3367.

**SEUSSICAL** A musical based on characters from the beloved books of Dr. Seuss, thru March 14, New Castle Playhouse production, Augustine Auditorium • 724-654-3437.

## MONDAY 2

**ICE SKATING SHOW** 7pm, South Park • 412-833-1499.

**PARENTWISE** *Parenting: Infant to Teens*, a comprehensive child development/child psychology class for parents of children ages infant to teens, Mondays, thru May 4, 6:30-8:30pm, New Kensington • (\*PR) 724-837-5410 x 702.

## TUESDAY 3

**MOSAIC PROJECT** For all ages including children 3-18, join resident artist Daviea Davis and help create a glass mosaic panorama of Pittsburgh, Tue-Fri thru March 31, Pittsburgh Glass Center, Friendship area • 412-365-2145.

**PARENTWISE** *Parenting a Challenged Child*, Tuesdays thru April 14, 6:30-9pm, Irwin • (\*PR) 724-837-5410 x 702.

**PROJECT STAR** *Orientation sessions*, 6:30-8:30pm, The Children's Institute, Pittsburgh; Mar. 10, Virginia Ave., Monaca • 412-244-3048.

## WEDNESDAY 4

**ANGER MANAGEMENT FOR TEENS** Ages 13-

16 will develop strategies to help them manage anger and challenge their irrational beliefs, 5:30-6:45pm, North Hills Youth Ministry Counseling Center • 412-366-1300.

**PARENTWISE** *Parenting Your Behaviorally and Developmentally Challenged Child*, a workshop for parenting special needs children, Wed's thru March 4, 6:30-8:30pm, Mental Health America Office, Greensburg • (\*PR) 724-837-5410.

**STORYTIME AT THE PHIPPS** Storytime for ages 3-10, every Wednesday, 9:30am & 1pm, Phipps Conservatory, Schenley Park • 412-622-6914.

## FRIDAY 6

**WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE** Tiny Tots Concert, 9:30am & 11:25am, Heinz Hall • 412-392-4900.

**OVERNIGHT ADVENTURES** *Go Buggy*, March 6, join some of our live insects as we search the museum for hidden bugs; *Dino-ROAR*, March 20, spend the evening in the world of dinosaurs with special activities, games, tours, etc.; *CSI*, March 27, be an overnight detective and learn who stole the artifacts, Friday, 6:30pm-Saturday 10am, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Oakland • (\*PR) 412-622-3289.

**CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY** This is your chance to tour Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory for some delicious fun, March 6, 7:30pm and March 7 & 8, 2:30pm, featuring the Valley Players, Ligonier Theater • 724-238-6514.

**HOT JAM** Free open house featuring heat defy-

ing acts of art, 6-9pm, Pittsburgh Glass Center, Penn Ave., Friendship area • 412-365-2145 x 202 or visit [www.pittsburghglasscenter.com](http://www.pittsburghglasscenter.com).

## SATURDAY 7

**ROOTS OF ROCK AND ROLL XXXV** Celebrate the 50th anniversary of Jimmy Beaumont & The Skyliners with an allstar cast, 5 & 8:30pm, Benedum Center • 412-456-6666.

**BLACK, WHITE & READ ALL OVER** Talk, reception & book signing, for ages 6 & up, featuring Walter Dean Myers who tells it as it is when he digs into African American lives and culture, 10:30am, Carnegie Library Lecture Hall, Oakland • [www.pittsburghlectures.org](http://www.pittsburghlectures.org).

**CALLIOPE CONCERT** Tommy Sands & His Irish Band, features Sands, a famous Irish songwriter, his son & daughter and Bruce Foley from Pittsburgh, 7:30pm, Carnegie Lecture Hall, Oakland • 412-361-1915.

**NORTH SUBURBAN SYMPHONIC CONCERT** *Into the Woods* featuring Marion Galluzzo, 3pm, Greater Pgh. Masonic Ctr., North Hills • [www.nssband.org](http://www.nssband.org).

**SPRING FORWARD & CHANGE YOUR CLOCKS & YOUR SMOKE ALARM BATTERIES!**  
**SUNDAY 8**

**BOWL FOR KIDS SAKE 2009** Big Brothers & Big Sisters event, March 8, Mt. Lebanon and Washington County; March 18 & 19, Pgh Athletic



Assoc. (PAA); March 29, Harmarville • 412-204-1214 or [www.BowlPittsburgh.Kintera.org](http://www.BowlPittsburgh.Kintera.org).

**THE LAKOTA SIOUX DANCE THEATRE** Native American dance troupe captivates with dance, music and storytelling, 3pm, Byham Theater 412-456-6666.

## TUESDAY 10

**CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG** Everything you want in a musical and more, for all ages, March 10-15, Benedum Center • 412-456-6666.

## WEDNESDAY 11

**PARENT WORKSHOP** For parents of children ages 4-8 with reading problems, 11am, Allegheny County Literacy Council, North Hills • (PR) 412-364-3777.

## THURSDAY 12

**FREE CAR SEAT SAFETY CHECKS** Donations accepted, 10am-1:30pm, Foxwall EMS, Fox Chapel • (PR) 412-881-8221.

**PARENT/CHILD WORKSHOP** Alone at Home, for ages 10 & up with parent, 6:30-8pm, Children's South, Bethel Park; March 19, Children's North, Wexford; March 26, Children's East, Monroeville • (\*PR) 412-692-7105 or [www.chp.edu](http://www.chp.edu).

## FRIDAY 13

**ANYBODY OUT THERE?** A zany comedy for older children & up, thru March 21 (except March 16), Butler Little Theatre • 724-287-6781 or [www.blitgroup.org](http://www.blitgroup.org).

**PLAY IN A DAY FESTIVAL** A Saltworks Theatre Young Actors Studio workshop for ages 9-16, create a story, develop characters and perform the whole thing for family and friends, experienced teachers and a unique environment, March 13-14, Ascension Church, Oakland; March 27-28, Christ Church at Grove Farm, Sewickley • 412-621-6150.

## SATURDAY 14

**ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARADE** 10am, Mellon Arena to Grant Street to Blvd. of the Allies.

**TREASURED GEMS CONCERT** Featuring our college-age Young Artist Competition Winner with the Butler Symphony Orchestra, 7:30pm, Butler Intermediate H. S. • 724-283-1402 or [www.butlersymphony.org](http://www.butlersymphony.org).

**PEANUT BUTTER & JAM SESSIONS** *Movement & Music* presented by Chatham Baroque for pre-schoolers, 10 & 11:30am, Calvary Episcopal Ch., Shadyside • 412-687-1788.

**WINDOWS THROUGH HISTORY** *Vicary Mission*, a hands-on historical series for girls ages 7-14, dress, eat and play like girls in the 1770's, 9:30am-1:30pm, Beaver County Historical Society • (\*PR) 724-775-1848.

# THE HORSE



**Saturday, March 21**  
**Equustravaganza**  
11 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Free with museum admission

This all-day festival of all things horse includes shoeing, grooming, conformation, and tack demonstrations, plus breeds, sports, video presentations and more!

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The Horse is organized by the American Museum of Natural History, New York ([www.amnh.org](http://www.amnh.org)) in collaboration with Abu Dhabi Authority for Cultural & Heritage; Canadian Museum of Civilization, Gatineau-Ottawa; The Field Museum, Chicago; and San Diego Natural History Museum.



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## SUNDAY 15

**WON'T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR DAYS@CLP** Celebrate Fred Rogers' legacy and the neighborhoods of Pittsburgh at an open house in select Carnegie Libraries of Pgh. thru March 29 • [www.clpgh.org](http://www.clpgh.org).

**THINK GREEN** Celebrate St. Patrick's Day by dyeing a t-shirt (bring a cotton all white shirt) green, plus stories and green treats, for ages 3-6 w/adult, 10-11am, Phipps Conservatory, Schenley Park • (\*PR) 412-441-4442 x3925.

## ST. PATRICK'S DAY

## TUESDAY 17

**GREEN BIRDS EVERYWHERE** Find all the Aviary's green birds during this interactive scavenger hunt, and get a special take-away, all day, the National Aviary, North Side • 412-323-7235.

**PSO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONCERT** 7pm, Wilkinsburg High School • 412-871-2125.

**TAP DANCE TO JAZZ** Featuring the Shelley Oliver dancers and the routines of the 20's & 30's accompanied by jazz master, David Leonhardt, 8pm, Succop Theater, BCCC • 724-284-8505.

## WEDNESDAY 18

**KIDWAY CLUB** Featuring Mrs. Goosefeathers from Fairyland, who will share songs and stories

with all the children, 10am, Shoppes at Northway, North Hills • 412-364-7900 or [www.shoppesat-northway.com](http://www.shoppesat-northway.com).

**BABYSITTING 101** For ages 11 & up, 9am-3pm, Children's East, Monroeville • (\*PR) 412-692-7105 or [www.chp.edu](http://www.chp.edu).

## THURSDAY 19

**PITTSBURGH BALLET THEATRE** *Anything Goes*, features Cole Porter's music, *Straight Life*, features Bruce Springsteen's music and the World Premier of *Doo Woop* with the Drifters and Pure Gold, fun for teens-adults, March 19-22, Byham Theater • 412-456-6666.

## FRIDAY 20

**DORA THE EXPLORER** The Search for the City of Lost Toys, an exciting musical for the whole family, interact with your favorite Latina heroine, thru March 20-22, Benedum Center • 412-456-6666.

**CELEBRATE MR. ROGERS' BIRTHDAY** Honor Fred Rogers with a free visit, 10am-5pm, Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, North Side • 412-322-5058.

**LIBERTÉ, ÉGALITÉ, FRATERNITÉ** This concert spotlights French masters and composers and Gershwin's *An American in Paris*, featuring the Pgh. Philharmonic and the Pgh. Youth Pops Orchestra, 7pm, March 20, Chartiers Valley H.S. and March 21, N. Hills Jr. H.S. • 412-818-7262.

## SATURDAY 21

**EQUUSTRAVAGANZA** The Horse, an all day festival of all things horse...shoeing, grooming, tack & more, 11am-5pm, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Oakland • CarnegieMNH.org.

**VERONICA'S VEIL** The 90th season of America's Passion Play, Sat., 8pm & Sun., 2pm thru April 5, South Side • 412-431-5550.

**BLACK, WHITE & READ ALL OVER** Talk, reception & book signing, for ages 6 & up, featuring Steven Kellogg who lives in an old farmhouse with his Great Dane, Pinkerton, the inspiration for his many tales, 10:30am, Carnegie Library Lecture Hall, Oakland • www.pittsburghlectures.org

**THE RENAISSANCE & BAROQUE SOCIETY** *Radici Musical Roots of Commedia dell'arte* featuring Luciadarium...something familiar, something peculiar, something for everyone, 8pm, Synod Hall, Oakland • 412-361-2048.

**CALLIOPE CONCERT** Greg Brown, a Grammy winner featured on *Prairie Home Companion*, 7:30pm, Carnegie Lecture Hall, Oakland • 412-361-1915.

**BABYSITTING 101** For ages 11 & up, 9am-3pm, Children's North, Wexford • (\*PR) 412-692-7105 or www.chp.edu.

**W PA CAT FANCIERS** March 21-22, Iceoplex at Southpointe, Canonsburg • 724-745-6666.

## SUNDAY 22

**OLD TIME FIDDLERS JAMBOREE** A FREE family outing for all ages, 2-5pm, Fayette County Fairgrounds • 724-439-2465.

**A ROYAL LUNCHEON** *An Enchanted Afternoon* with your favorite Storybook Princesses, 12-4pm, Grand Ballroom, Twelve Oak Mansion, Mars • www.galaeventpromotions.com.

## MONDAY 23

**PARENTING CLASS** *Positive Parenting...The Happiest Baby on the Block*, for expectant and new parents, 7-8:30pm, Children's South, Bethel Park • (\*PR) 412-692-7337 or www.chp.edu.

## WEDNESDAY 25

**PITTSBURGH PLAYHOUSE CONSERVATORY DANCE COMPANY** Featuring choreography of Martha Graham, George Balanchine and the Battleworks Dance Company, March 25-27, Byham Theater • 412-456-6666.

## FRIDAY 27

**SPECIAL SCIENCE EVENTS** *Space Out*, March 27-29, blast off in the Buhl Digital Dome, Carnegie Science Center • 412-237-3400.

**ASTRONOMY SLEEPOVER** Explore the wonders of the cosmos, 6:30pm-11am the following day, Carnegie Science Center • (\*PR) 412-237-1637.

## SATURDAY 28

**W PA KENNEL ASSOC. DOG SHOW** March 28 &

29, Lawrence Convention Ctr. • 412-565-6000.

**PITTSBURGH INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S THEATER** Presents *Russian American Kid's Circus* A fully staged, professional circus whose stars are ages 6-16, for the whole family, March 28-30, call for info on times & locations • 412-456-6666 or www.pghkids.org

**PITTSBURGH CIVIC ORCHESTRA CONCERT** Featuring winners of the PCO/PMTA Young Artists Solo Competition and the music of Bernstein, Dvorak and Beethoven, 7:30pm, Upper St. Clair H.S. • 412-279-4030.

**PARENTING CLASS** *CPR (Infant & Child)*, 9am-noon, Children's North, Wexford • (\*PR) 412-692-7337 or www.chp.edu.

**PITTSBURGH YOUTH POPS ORCHESTRA** *Bon Voyage*, 7:30pm, Carnegie Music Hall, Homestead • 412-403-0002.

**RAPUNZEL** Saturday & Sunday thru May 3, 1:30 & 3pm, Gemini Theater • 412-243-5201.

**PITTSBURGH OPERA** *La Boheme*...featuring some of the most beautiful operatic music, March 28-April 5, Benedum Center • 412-456-6666.

**PARENTWISE** *Dr. Dad* teaches new dads fathering skills, 8am-4pm, Excelsa Health, Westmoreland • (\*PR) 1-877-771-1234.

## SUNDAY 29

**SWIZZLE STICK DAY** Open House and free chocolate samples, free bunny ears and free tour, noon-4pm, Daffin's Candies, Farrell • 724-342-2892.

## TUESDAY 31

**PGH CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY** *Twilight* featuring the Ysaye Quartet, 8pm, Carnegie Music Hall, Oakland • 412-624-4129.

## MOST EVERY DAY

**Air Heritage Museum** Restored planes from all over the world, Beaver Co. • 724-843-2820.

**Angora Gardens** Rabbits, gardens and a restored Victorian farmhouse, FREE, White Oak Park • 412-675-8556.

**Animal Friends** Classes and special activities for all ages, for you & your pets, Camp Home Rd., North Hills • 412-847-7000.

**Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania** Programs for children and adults, year-round, at Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve and Todd Sanctuary • 412-963-6100 or www.aswp.org.

**Bushy Run Battlefield** Wed-Sun, 9am-5pm, Greensburg/Harrison City area • 724-527-5584.

**Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh** —

Free programs for all ages year-round  
Library information • 412-622-3114.

**Carnegie Museums** —

Museum information • 412-622-3131.

Museum of Art—ARTventures activities, Thur-Sun, for kids and families • 412-622-3288.

Museum of Natural History—programs, classes,

exhibits for all ages, free family activities, Thur-Sun; fun & exciting overnighters; Exhibit: *Dinosaurs in Their Time & Born of Fire: Pottery of Margaret Tafoya* • 412-622-3289.

Powdermill Nature Reserve—Sundays, 2pm, free year-round programs for adults and older children, Laurel Highlands • 724-593-6105.

**Carnegie Science Center** For all ages. **OMNIMAX®:** *Wild Ocean; Mummies: Secrets of the Pharaohs; Grand Canyon Adventure: River at Risk* and *Under the Sea; Buhl Planetarium: The Sky Above Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood; Laser Nights*, Fri & Sat nights; **USS Requin** submarine tour; call about Skywatch Sat's; Family Over-nighters—Grades 4-12; Homeschooling Programs and Pre-school & Family Workshops; Party Packages for ages 5-14 • 412-237-3400 or www.CarnegieScienceCenter.org.

**Children's Museum of Pittsburgh** Daily programs, a water play area, "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood" and ToonSeum cartoon workshop in its new home with three floors of new artworks and live entertainment all in expanded museum space; Exhibit: *Exploring Trees Inside and Out*, a kid-friendly work that will inspire children to explore the outdoors, thru May 17, North Side • 412-322-5058.

**Fort Necessity** Tours, programs, demonstrations, hands-on activities, Junior Ranger Program for ages 6-12, 9am-5pm, 11 miles east of Uniontown • 724-329-5512.

**Fort Pitt Blockhouse** Pittsburgh's oldest historic landmark open to the public, every Wed-Sun, 10am-5pm, Point State Park • 412-281-9284.

**Frick Art and Historical Center** Tour Clayton, the restored Victorian estate of Henry Clay Frick, ask about family and kids' programs, Point Breeze • 412-371-0600.

**Frick Nature Reserve** Cityparks Environmental Education Programs and workshops for all ages, Squirrel Hill • (\*PR) 412-422-6538.

**Friendship Hill National Historic Site** Tours, special events, Junior Ranger Program for ages 6-12, Point Marion • 724-725-9190.

**Gateway Clipper** Cruise the Three Rivers, for all ages, Gateway Clipper Fleet, Station Square • 412-355-7980.

**Hanna's Town** A Westmoreland County Historic site and park, Sats, 10-4 & Suns, 1-4 • 724-836-1800.

**Harmony Museum** Two Centuries of History, Harmony, Butler County • 724-452-7341.

**Hartwood Acres** Mansion tours, tractor drawn hayrides • (\*PR) 412-767-9200.

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SEE MAPLE SUGARING EVENTS ON PAGE 44

continued on page 44



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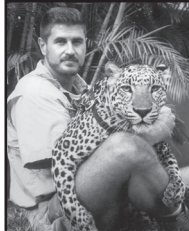
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**Humor...***continued from page 4*

thing. In fact, my idea of Heaven would include lively, noisy kids at the dinner table. They'd argue, sing, laugh and cry. For every Tater Tot eaten, two would roll across the floor. No meal would be complete until a tall glass of a staining beverage had been knocked over.

It seems Paradise can be hard to recognize while you are right in the thick of it. ▶

*Rick Epstein is a freelance writer from Frenchtown, NJ.*

**Commentary...***continued from page 6*

If you can't trust the chemical industry for honest evaluations and you can't rely on the government to do its own research to check for the true answers, then who do you count on to check the checkers?

Perhaps this is just another example of the fallacy that government run programs are always right...we all better check for ourselves. ▶ **MH**

**Women...***continued from page 8*

least expensive. Shop around. Many pharmaceutical companies offer medications for free for a limited time to patients with no income and few financial assets. The Partnership for Prescription Assistance offers access to more than 450 public and private patient-assistance programs, including more than 180 programs offered by pharmaceutical companies. For more information, visit [www.pparx.org/Intro.php](http://www.pparx.org/Intro.php).

Remember to focus on the things you can do on your own to stay healthy, such as exercising regularly, avoiding tobacco, eating fresh vegetables and fruits and avoiding excessive salt and high-fat foods. ▶

*Kathy Sena is a freelance writer from Manhattan Beach, CA.*

**Baby sign language...***continued from page 19*

that you can get started. There are books, videos and Web sites that offer a plethora of information on how to get started and links to online signing dictionaries that show you how to sign. "You can take a class from a certified infant sign language instructor or you can learn to do this on

**To Find More Info:**

- Do a search for videos at YouTube.com to see first hand examples of babies using sign language.
- Visit sites like [handspeak.com](http://handspeak.com), [kindersigns.com](http://kindersigns.com), or [tinyfingers.com](http://tinyfingers.com).

your own," says Cadjan. "Taking from an instructor is better because it gives you a chance to see how the signs are made." ▶

*Jacqueline Bodnar is a freelance writer who lives in Port Orange, FL with her husband and two children.*

**Baby nursery...***continued from page 21*

baby nursery without having to turn on the light and disturb your baby.

Playing soft music can be very soothing to a baby. It can be something as simple as a CD player that can play lullabies softly or a toy that fits on the crib and plays sweet music. Some CD's play music that allows baby to hear a heart beat sound in the background which is very soothing to newborns. ▶

*Belinda Mooney is a freelance writer from White Sulphur Springs, WV.*

**Learning...***continued from page 23*

perfectly okay to go about your usual routine as much as possible—but keep your kiddo close. Take a few minutes here and there to engage baby with play, a song or reading a quick picture book. If you catch your infant showing interest in anything in particular, explore it with her. ▶

*Elizabeth Osborn is a freelance writer from Youngstown, OH.*

**Calendar...***continued from page 42*

**Meadowcroft Museum of Rural Life** An interactive outdoor museum reliving 19th Century W. PA life, open weekends—Sat, 12-5pm; Sun, 1-5pm, Avella • 724-587-3412.

**National Aviary** 10am-5pm every day, Flite-Zone free-flight bird show, W-Sun, 11am & 1:30pm; *Little Peepers* story time, Mon & Tue, 10:30am; Trainer for a Day, ages 12 & up. Call or click for interactive feeding times. Penguin Connection and special group programs, North Side • 412-323-7235 or [www.aviary.org](http://www.aviary.org).

**PA Trail of History** 26 historic sites and museums in Pennsylvania—get FREE visitor guide • [www.phmc.state.pa.us](http://www.phmc.state.pa.us) or 1-866-PATRAIL.

**Phipps Conservatory** A 13-room Victorian glasshouse & gardens; Storytime for ages 3-10, Wed's, 10:30am & 1pm; The Garden Railroad display thru the Spring; New exhibit, Tropical Forest takes you to the headwaters of the Amazon; Spring Flower Show, March 21-April 19, Schenley Park • 412-622-6914.

**Pittsburgh Glass Center** Exhibits, classes, Young Artist Program for ages 13-18 • 412-365-2145 x 201.

**Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium** Visit the Kids Kingdom and the PPG Aquarium, open daily, 9-4, adults-\$8; ages 2-13-\$7; over 60-\$7; under age 2 and Zoo Members—Free; See the Polar Bear exhibit—parking is free, Highland Park • 412-365-3640 press 0. ▶

**MAPLE SUGARING EVENTS**

**March 14**

**MAPLE SUGAR FESTIVAL**

11am-Noon & 1-2pm, Boyce Park Nature Center • (\*PR) 724-733-4618.

**MAPLE SYRUP DEMOS**

11am-12:30pm, North Park Nature Center • (\*PR) 724-935-2170.

**MAPLE SUGARING**

Interactive discussions for all ages, 11am-12:30pm, Ellis Frye Barn, Marshall Twp. • (\*PR) 724-935-3090 x115.

**MAPLE SUGARING**

10am-1pm, Round Hill Park Visitor's Center • 412-384-4701.

**March 21-22 & 25-29**

**PA MAPLE FESTIVAL**

10am-5pm, Maple Manor, Meyersdale • 814-634-0213.

**March 22**

**MAPLE SUGARING BREAKFAST**

Learn about maple sugaring and have breakfast, 9am-1pm, Mingo Creek Park, Washington County • 724-228-6867.

**March 28**

**MAPLE SYRUP DEMOS**

10-11am & noon-1pm, North Park Nature Ctr. • (\*PR) 724-935-2170.

**MAPLE MADNESS**

Hikes, live entertainment, maple crafts, pancakes, 10am-3pm, Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve, Fox Chapel • (\*PR) 412-963-6100.

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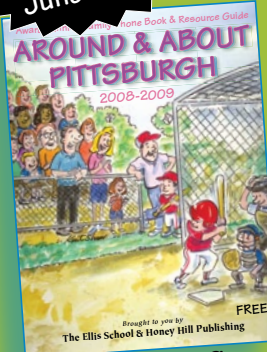
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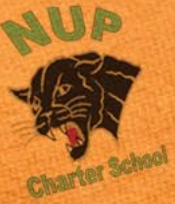
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