

Baltimore's CHILD

40 YEARS

BaltimoresChild.com
MAY 2023

DIY
Mommy & Me
Clay Figurines
PAGE 12

**Smart. Local. Parenting
for the Baltimore Area.**

**MEET BALTIMORE'S
TEACHERS**

**EPIC PARTIES
ON A DIME**

**FUN WITH
FAMILY PETS**

**mother
hood**

**BEL AIR SINGLE MOTHER SHANA KOSLOWSKY
SHARES LIFE LESSONS** PAGE 17



RISE and Shine!

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Pet-friendly outings in Baltimore. **Page 10**



ON THE COVER

Shana Koslowsky of Bel Air and family

PHOTOGRAPHY: PROVIDED

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

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WE WANT
YOUR
FEEDBACK

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Overall
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Special Section
Within a Publication



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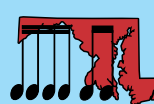


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Story Ideas
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We Love You, Mom

Mother's Day only comes once a year, but the love between mother and child is present year-round. That is certainly true for single mothers Shana Koslowsky and Chavonne "Jamari" Artis, who discovered they needed to learn how to love themselves in order to best spread that love.

Their stories of resilience and dedication in our feature story will inspire any mother. Take some time to bond with your child through our Mom and Me craft.

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

But summer break is almost here, and that means families are starting to think beyond school. Our B'More Healthy has all you need to know about traveling safely with children this summer.

Or if you're in search of a fun summer project at home, how about creating a backyard chicken coop?

Learn more in this month's My Turn. Our pets theme continues in our Family Fun, with events and activities to do with your pets.

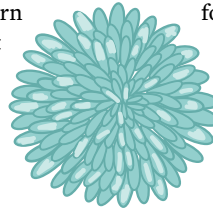
Spring and summer are also the perfect time for an epic birthday bash! Contributing writer Cheryl Maguire shares a family secret for the best birthdays. Find more party fun in our directory and Parent You Should Know.

In May, we also raise awareness for mental health and Asian American and Pacific Islander heritage with stories in our Book

Marked section. We reflect on National Foster Care Month with a feature about an overburdened system.

Learn everyday awareness for sensory sensitivities in our B'More Inclusive about neurodivergent-friendly salons and barbers. Together, we can all learn to know and appreciate each other a little more. ■

Lindsay C. VanAsdalan



Baltimore's CHILD

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June Issue!

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

BY ELENA EPSTEIN,
DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL
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Lost Loot: DIY Pirate Treasure Hunt Game

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



Skillmatics High Contrast Flash Cards

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



Naturepedic PLA Pillow

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





Troomi— Safe Smartphones for Kids

Provide kids with guardrails for safety and opportunities for growth, learning, personal discovery and preparation for the future. Powered by KidSmart OS, an Android-based operating system that empowers parents with an extremely easy, powerful and flexible set of parental controls—all while eliminating social media, addictive games and pornography. \$189.95, ages 6+, tweens & teens, shop.troomi.com



Mumaloo Craft Box

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



Ergobaby Evolve 3-in-1 High Chair

Support at every stage with an ergonomic highchair—a thoughtfully designed supportive chair (up to 220 pounds) and an interactive kitchen helper (add-on). It converts in seconds with no tools required and has a quick and easy fold for storage. Includes a removable dishwasher-safe tray. \$299, ages 6 months to 3 years, ergobaby.com



12little Luxe Clutch in Toffee

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

PIVOT Toddler Tower

Provides an easy way to give your curious child a view of the action. This kitchen helper step stool brings toddlers up to an ideal height to learn about cooking, baking and more. It folds flat and tucks away easily when not in use and features non-slip feet. \$129.99, ages 18 months to 4 years (up to 50 pounds), us.tomy.com



Rascal + Friends CoComelon Training Pants

Make change time and potty training easier. Engineered with unique 3D core technology, an extra-stretchy waistband, re-sealable tab and easy-tear sides for up to 12-hour leak protection and mess-free changes, these training pants are perfect for rascals on the go. Dermatologically certified, cruelty-free and vegan, they are free from nasties and made with feather-soft materials to be safe and ultra-gentle on sensitive skin.

\$19.97, ages 12-36 months, rascalandfriends.com



{TOP 10}

Family Events for May

Explore these fun spring activities in and around the Baltimore area

BY LINDSAY C. VANASDALAN

10



HALF-PRICE FRIDAY NIGHT AT THE NATIONAL AQUARIUM

THROUGHOUT
THE MONTH
FRIDAYS, 5-8 P.M.

National Aquarium
501 East Pratt St.,
Baltimore, MD. 21202

Every Friday, take the kids down to the Inner Harbor for a night of fun with the fishes! With a special half-price deal, families on a budget can more easily enjoy all the aquarium has to offer, including critter chats, educator talks and 4D films. Buy tickets ahead of time online or onsite during your visit to the harbor.

About \$20-25; ages 4 and younger enter free | aqua.org

FLOWER MART

MAY 5-6 | 11 A.M. – 8 P.M.

Mount Vernon Place, 699 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD. 21201

Let your family be a part of history by attending the oldest free public festival in Baltimore, founded in 1911 by the Women's Civic League. The festival is a celebration of spring with local flower and plant vendors, green-inspired arts and crafts, and of course, the famous Baltimore lemon sticks—a favorite tradition of young and old alike. Expect performances, learning opportunities and fun.

Free | mountvernplace.org

9

MUFFINS WITH MOM

MAY 12 | 10-11 A.M.

Pikesville Senior Center
1301 Reisterstown Road, Baltimore, MD. 21208

Mother's Day can be multi-generational for your little ones! Spend the day celebrating Mom and Grandma with a fun muffins and tea get-together with games for the whole family to enjoy at the Pikesville Senior Center.

Call for cost: 410-887-1245 | baltimorecountymd.gov



8

REISTERSTOWN BLOOMIN' ARTFEST

MAY 13 | 10 A.M. – 5 P.M.

Franklin Middle School, 10 Cockeys Mill Road, Reisterstown, MD. 21136
(Rain location - Franklin Elementary School)

Come see spring blooms and artistic creations at Main Street Reisterstown. Back for its 15th year, this family-friendly spring kickoff event features super sales at local businesses, nonprofits, artisans with handmade crafts, music, food and drinks for all to enjoy.

Free | bloominartfest.com

7





BOOKS IN BLOOM

MAY 13 | 11 A.M. – 5 P.M.

Color Burst Park, 6000 Merriweather Drive,
Columbia, MD. 21044

6

Reading stimulates critical thinking, and sometimes the best teaching moments come from the books that ruffled some feathers. This year, the region's largest progressive book and literary festival has a theme of "banned books," exploring race, gender, diversity and freedom of expression. Families can meet authors, hear speakers and enjoy an interactive, family-friendly lineup including a pop-up bookstore, kid's corner with crafts and activities and local food and drink.

Free | booksinbloommd.com

BALTIMORE BIRTH FESTIVAL

MAY 21 | 10 A.M. – 3 P.M.

Patterson Park Pagoda

S. Patterson Park Ave., Baltimore, MD. 21224

Parents, this family-friendly festival is for you. Meet and greet local birth workers, businesses and vendors who offer support for pregnancy, postpartum and parenting. And enter to win free baby, mom and parenting items (updated list on Facebook) or purchase a \$30 swag bag with products, samples, coupons and 20 raffle tickets. Must be at the 2 p.m. drawing to win. Proceeds support Maryland Families for Safe Birth.

Free | facebook.com/MarylandFamiliesForSafeBirth



5

WALLACE & GROMIT TRAVELING EXHIBIT OPENING WEEKEND

MAY 20-21

MUSEUM HOURS

10 A.M. – 5 P.M. SATURDAY

11 A.M. – 5 P.M. SUNDAY

Port Discovery Children's Museum
35 Market Place, Baltimore, MD. 21202

A family favorite stop-motion claymation series is brought to life at Port Discovery this May. Kids can see the new exhibit, "Get Cracking!" that's based on the beloved British series Wallace and Gromit, about a cheese-loving inventor and his dog. Built for ages 3 through 9, the exhibit created by the Minnesota Children's Museum builds on problem-solving themes, with STEM-based and social emotional content.

Cost TBA; museum admission free for members, \$21.95 for non-members | portdiscovery.org

ARBUTUS ARTS FESTIVAL

MAY 21 | 10 A.M. – 5 P.M.

Arbutus, 5407 East Drive, Halethorpe, MD. 21227

Celebrate the 50th anniversary of a Baltimore County tradition. This arts and crafts show also includes food and drink, local music, a beer garden and a children's corner located in the parking lot of the Arbutus Volunteer Fire Department. Kids can enjoy animals, face painting, games, crafts and more.

Free | arbutusartsfestival.com

3

GEEKING OUT: INTEGRATING GEEK CULTURE IN PLAY THERAPY

MAY 24 | NOON – 1:30 P.M.

Jewish Community Services,
Owings Mills and Baltimore (Virtual)

How many times have your children tapped into their imaginations during play? Creating stories with epic quests, brave heroes, resilience and a triumph of good over evil are par for the course for kids, and also present in today's geek culture. Learn how geek culture can be integrated into play therapy in this virtual course helpful to parents and educators in classrooms of all kinds.

\$50; \$40 for Jewish day school educators | jcsbalt.org

1

BALTICON 57

MAY 26-29 | SCHEDULE TBA

Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel
202 E. Pratt St., Baltimore, MD. 21202

The Baltimore Science Fiction Society presents a science fiction and fantasy convention all ages can get into, with 30 hours of science programming, guests including children's authors Adam Stemple and Jane Yolen (who kicked off her career with "Pirates in Petticoats") and a masquerade where kids can show off their favorite characters.

\$20-95; ages 12 and younger enter free | balticon.org



PET-FRIENDLY OUTINGS

IN BALTIMORE

BY JILLIAN DIAMOND



SPRING IS HERE,

and it's now easier than ever to get out with your pets. But you don't just have to stick to walking your dog around the neighborhood or visiting the local dog park — there are plenty of fun activities in pet-friendly locales in the Baltimore area that will keep you, your family and your four-legged friends busy.

Here are five pet-friendly events this May for any animal-lover.

FESTIVAL OF DOGS



2023 FESTIVAL OF DOGS
EVERGREEN MUSEUM & LIBRARY
4545 N. Charles St., Baltimore
May 21, 2-6:30 p.m.

The ultimate event for dog lovers, the second annual Festival of Dogs is an afternoon of competition and fun that benefits Johns Hopkins University Museums. Dogs can compete in a variety of different categories, including a costume contest and the “Best Pooch Who Can Smooch” competition. Less competitive festivalgoers can socialize and enjoy local food and drink. Stick around afterwards for a separately ticketed Yappy Hour in Evergreen’s Carriage House. Spectators may not bring dogs, but competitor tickets are good for one owner and one dog.

museums.jhu.edu/event/jhu-museums-festival-of-dogs-2023

TRIVIA TUESDAYS AT BARK SOCIAL

BARK SOCIAL
3822 Boston St., Baltimore
Tuesdays in May
7-9 p.m.

Check your knowledge of animals — and a variety of other things — at this weekly trivia event at the “world’s first social club for dogs,” held by Charm City Trivia. Competitors have the opportunity to win food specials and prizes! Dogs should be registered on the club’s website, and day and monthly passes can be purchased in person. Please bring your dog’s vaccine records if you do not register your dog using the online membership program.

charmcitytrivia.com/location/bark-social-canton

DEADLIFTS FOR DOGS

WESTMINSTER STRENGTH & CONDITIONING

61 John St., Westminster
May 6, 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Test your strength while helping your canine friends at this strength competition, where



BLUE PIT BBQ

you'll have three tries at attempting a max deadlift. There are three divisions to compete in: Open, Masters and Youth. All proceeds will go to America's Vet Dogs to support the training of service dogs for veterans. Volunteer spots are also open for those who want to help out.

eventbrite.com/e/deadlifts-for-dogs-tickets-523098059377

WHOOF ON THE WHARF GRAND REOPENING PARTY

WHOOF ON THE WHARF
48 South River Road
Pier 7, Edgewater
May 13, noon to 4 p.m.

Paddle season is here! Kick off the beginning of summer boating season at Whoof on the Wharf to raise money for the local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and Whoof Park, an in-progress dog park in Anne Arundel County. There will be treats for both

humans and dogs, such as food from the Harborque food truck and dog-safe ice cream. The SPCA will be there with its mobile unit and puppies up for adoption. For any dog adopted on-site, its new owner will receive free kayak lessons! Dogs must be on leashes.

eventbrite.com/e/grand-reopening-party-and-start-of-paddle-season-celebration-tickets-598951067767

DOG-FRIENDLY BBQ

BLUE PIT BBQ
1601 Union Ave., Baltimore
Wednesday through Friday, 3-10 p.m., Saturday, noon to 10 p.m., Sunday, 3-9 p.m.

There are several restaurants in Baltimore that welcome dogs, but only one with a dog-friendly back patio featuring water bowls and a dog-themed selfie board. The restaurant is even named after a blue pit

bull! Blue Pit BBQ frequently partners with animal-related nonprofits such as the Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter, Inc. (BARCS) and the SPCA, as well as other charities like Moveable Feast and STNL. Your dogs can enjoy provided treats while you dine on barbecue classics.

bluepitbbq.com ■





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Mom and Me

FIGURINES

BY HEATHER M. ROSS

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

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

YOU WILL NEED:

4-ounce packet of Crayola Model Magic

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

Paintbrushes (including a fine tip)

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

2 toothpicks

STEP 1: GETTING READY

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

STEP 2: DIVIDING UP THE CLAY

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

STEP 3: THE HEAD

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

STEP 4: THE ARMS

The arms will be simple. For this step, you'll want a long, thin piece of clay. Take a piece about half the size of the clay used for the head and roll it flat on the table until it resembles a worm. If your worm ends up too short, roll it until it is longer. If your worm appears too long, you can either mash it up into a ball and roll it again or pinch some of the clay off the ends.

STEP 5: THE BODY

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

STEP 6: THE HAIR

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

STEP 7: ASSEMBLY

To assemble your figure, place the arm segment behind the main body so the sides are equal lengths. Then, press to blend the pieces. To attach the head, use the toothpick



to push one end into the body piece where the neck would go and the other end into the "head" piece.

No part of the toothpick should be visible. Press any pieces of the hair not against the head to the body for added stability. Before setting your figure out to dry, stand it up and gently press the "feet" to the flat surface.

STEP 8: DRYING

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

STEP 9: PAINTING

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

Ta-da! ■



Baltimore's CHILD



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newsletter**

Camp Holiday Trails

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APPRECIATING OUR TEACHERS



A Q&A with Baltimore Educators

BY JILLIAN DIAMOND

Teachers have one of the most important jobs. They help guide children towards adulthood and teach them things about the world. But compared to other public service providers, they often go unnoticed. Teacher Appreciation Week, which runs from May 8 to May 12, shines a light on teachers and the impact they have on their students.

We asked teachers from winning schools of our Readers' Choice Poll (July 2022 issue) to share what they love about teaching and their favorite stories of appreciation.



CHRISTIAN LEITCH ▲
**Art Teacher at Notre Dame
Preparatory School**

*Leitch also won the Baltimore Style
Readers' Choice Award for Best
Middle School Teacher in 2021.*

**Q What do you enjoy
most about teaching?**

A There are so many things, but the first is getting to know my students and watching them in the process of creating art in class. [In my class, studio mode] is a really great time to kind of sit down as a class and collaborate with one another. And I bounce from table to table and sit down with them, and it's really great to watch them create and work on ideas together that they're super proud of. So, I would say the problem solving in the art room and the creative process is very personalized and very autobiographical.

TEACHER PHOTOS PROVIDED

Q How do you connect with your students on a personal level?

A After studio mode comes process mode. I go from person to person, asking questions about their work. And since a lot of the work is autobiographical or very self-expressive, I get to hear a lot of their stories and a lot of who they are as individuals and we really do focus on that in our classroom. It's very much about appreciating one another and each other's stories and kind of growing in that whole sisterhood, because I get to teach them from sixth through eighth grade.

Q Are there any specific stories of students showing appreciation for your work that you could share?

A Two or three years ago, we were going through COVID and had the girls in designated classrooms. I was with 13 girls multiple times a day. At the end of the year, I received a letter from one student who was actually moving out of state after COVID, thanking me in-depth for — these are her words — 'being the light among the darkness' or something like that. She was a bit of sunshine in the classroom as well. That's something I will always cherish.



SUDIP SAUNDERS ▲

**Eurythmy Teacher at
Waldorf School of Baltimore**

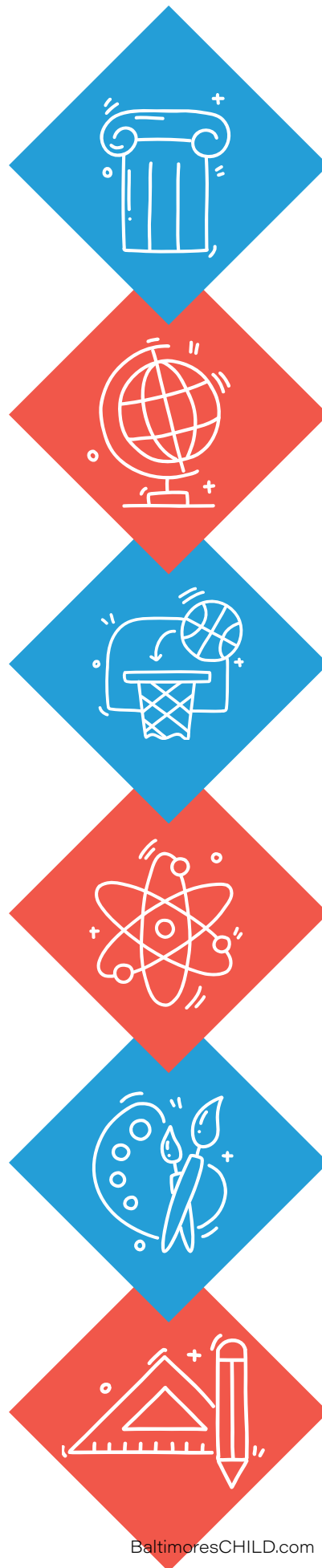
Eurythmy is a movement art commonly practiced in Waldorf schools, combining active movement with the spoken word and music.

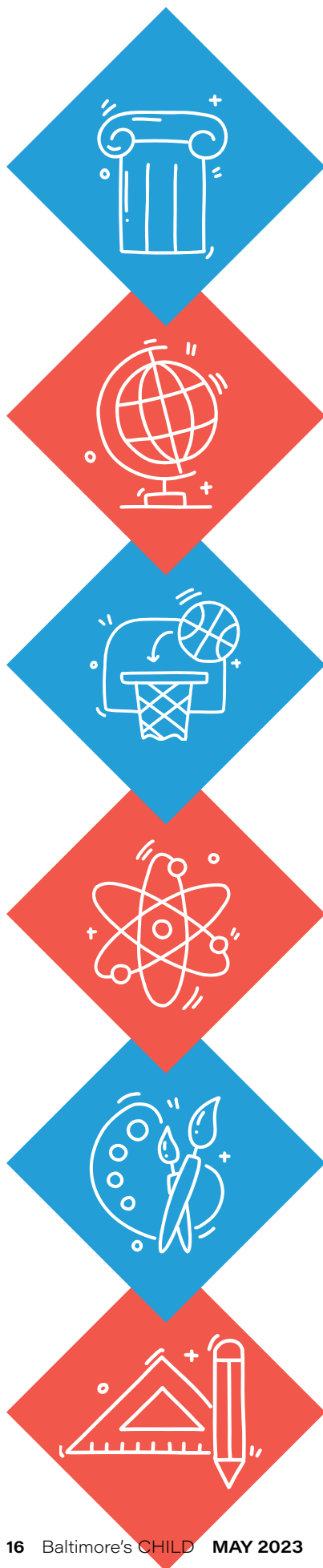
Q What do you enjoy most about teaching?

A I enjoy growing with the different age groups, seeing them go from kindergarten all the way through eighth grade. Teaching them as they get older and change, mature and develop. I just feel very honored to be part of all these kids' process of coming into their own individuality.

Q How do you connect with your students on a personal level?

A Every morning, as soon as students start walking through the door, I say 'good morning' to them with a big smile. I make sure that they know that I'm really happy to see them, and that it's [going to] be a great day. Before we enter and leave, I shake all the children's hands — except for the kindergartners; we meet in a circle. I try to share some things about my life during discussion time like stories from my childhood or adulthood. Students have a chance to share what's going on with them as well, as it pertains to lessons.





Q Are there any specific stories of students showing appreciation for your work that you could share?

A Last year, the fourth graders learned maypole dancing as part of the May Day and Cinco de Mayo celebration we teach. Afterwards, they all unexpectedly gave me cards with colorful drawings about May Day. One was this beautiful 3D illustration of women dancing around a maypole. I still have it up on my wall, along with other things students have made for me. Getting cards from all the fourth graders was huge.



MATT BAUM ▲
**History Teacher
at Gilman School**

Many teachers at Gilman School are also sports coaches.

Baum coaches Gilman's junior varsity basketball team.

Q What do you enjoy most about teaching?

A There's a long, long list of things. Certainly the interaction with students. I think that was especially the appeal of being a high school teacher as opposed to a professor or something like that. But getting to know my students and being able to interact with them about history, but also about other things, and getting to know them. So that's really at the top of the list. And I love the subject matter. The fact that I get to read good books and discuss them with my students is a real perk of the job.

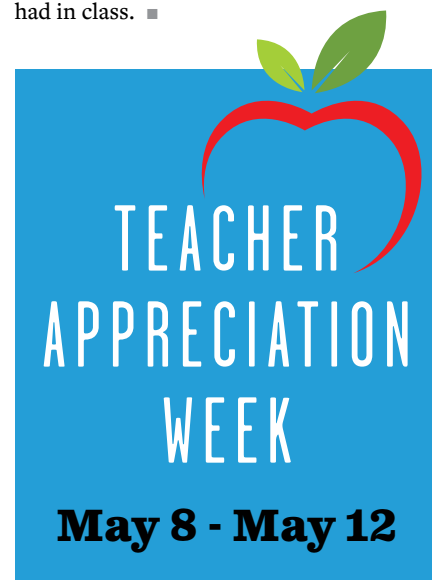
Q How do you connect with your students on a personal level?

A I got advice a while ago that you [as a teacher] should try to be in the classroom first and greet everyone by name, so I try to do that. We have a schedule at Gilman that really facilitates connection because we have 20 minutes between classes. It's a great time to catch up with my students, sometimes about the material, often just about what they were up to over the weekend, whatever game was on last night or whatever music they like — just some of those conversations before and after class. I think they're really important and a good way to get to know each other.

I try to go to as many school games and concerts as I can. Not because I feel like I have to, but because I want to see how they perform outside of the classroom.

Q Are there any specific stories of students showing appreciation for your work that you could share?


A The ones that affected me the most are our alums. Sometimes I'll run into students five, ten years after I've taught them. One of them [at a reunion last spring] said that he remembered feeling really welcomed in the class and really intellectually stimulated in the class. He was a freshman, so this was nine years after the class just hearing about how much he remembered and the feeling he had in class. ■



Love & Resilience

Journeys through single motherhood

BY HEATHER M. ROSS



Mother's Day is how we honor the sacrifices mothers make every day for the sake of their children. This Mother's Day, we're shining a light on two local mothers who fall within a minority—single-parent mother-only households.

Single-mother households account for only 18% of mothers in the United States, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. And, as with any single-parent household, there are a number of reasons why they form—couples break up or divorce, one parent dies or sometimes children have a parent who was never in the picture.

Whatever the reason may be, these nearly nine million mothers are doing their best for their families in often challenging circumstances and experiencing motherhood in a unique way.

Baltimore's *Child* spoke to Chavonne "Jamari" Artis and Shana Koslowsky about motherhood—its challenges and its joys.

Shana Koslowsky with her daughters.



'It's OK to mess up'

Many of the challenges that accompany single motherhood stem from one person managing all the responsibilities for the family's finances, decision-making, travel and extracurricular needs.

"You have to take things one day at a time," Chavonne "Jamari" Artis says of managing her time. "Don't be too hard on yourself. It's OK to mess up. It's OK to just breathe and not be on go-mode all the time."

Artis, 35, lives in Baltimore with her 10-year-old daughter, Kylie-Bri. She is always on the move, working hard and preparing to go back to school—thanks to support from The Jeremiah Program.

The national nonprofit organization—which includes a campus in Baltimore—is dedicated to helping single mothers invest in themselves and their futures by providing coaching and community and helping them access higher education, affordable childcare, housing, skills training and career development.

But Artis says she also learned one of her most important lessons from her daughter.

Working from home, the lines were often blurred between her work day and free time. "I'd pick up Kylie, and I'd come home, but I'd still be working," she says.

Then, she remembers her daughter one day looking at her from across the table and saying, "Mom, you're still working?"

That day, Artis says, she made a vow to be finished with work by the time she



Chavonne
"Jamari" Artis
with her
daughter,
Kylie-Bri.

picked up her daughter. "It was tough, but I managed it. My laptop is closed by the time I pick her up," she says.

Artis credits her own mother—who was also a single mom—for being her support system and setting a good example for her in parenthood. "I wouldn't be the mom I am today without [God and] my mom, and the things she taught me," she says.

'You have to take care of yourself to be a good mom'

Being a mother often means doing it all, all the time. But taking care of yourself has to be a priority, too. This is something Shana Koslowsky knows well.

"I've been sober for 14 years. I've had all my kids in sobriety, but there seems to be this mommy-wine culture where parents get together and drink to decompress and have this social aspect, and that's something that I can't participate in," Koslowsky says.

Koslowsky, 38, lives with her three girls, ages 8, 4 and 2, in Bel Air.



“What happens in motherhood is you lose a little piece of yourself,” she says. “They become the priority. Making myself a priority always came last, but being in recovery, that’s not really how it works. You have to take care of yourself to be a good mom.”

According to American Addiction Centers, approximately 13.6 million adults age 26 and older have struggled with a substance use disorder.

In 2006, Koslowsky went through Harford County -based Ashley Addiction Treatment’s program, where she met and built a community with other women in recovery. Today, she’s Ashley’s director of marketing and communications.

“I think being in recovery really gives me an opportunity to lead by example. I hope [my children] don’t struggle with substance abuse disorder or addiction in the future, but if they do or if they have friends who do, they’re getting a good example of how to deal with that situation,” Koslowsky says.

Koslowsky believes recovery has made her a better parent because she’s tuned into things like letting go of resentment,

making amends and doing self-care—which are all things she hopes her daughters learn from her.

Celebrating the joys

While the challenges of being a single mother are many, so are the joys of motherhood.

“One of the joys began for me when I first saw Kylie on the sonogram. When I saw that itty bitty little body on screen, it was just a feeling I had never experienced before,” Artis says.

Now, Kylie has made the honor roll at school, she excels in math and reading and she inspires and brings Artis joy every day. “Those times when I have a stressful day at work, I’m so excited to pick her up and hear about her day,” Artis says.

Artis and Kylie love trying new foods, playing Uno and Life, being silly, doing hair and doing nails.

For Koslowsky, what she loves most about being a mother is seeing how her children grow and change every day, which she says is always interesting, and sometimes humbling, to watch. She loves

being outside with her girls, seeing them participate in dance and gymnastics and cooking together as a family.

Both mothers have been on a journey, navigating life’s ups and downs through whatever circumstances are thrown their way, and they want other moms to know they aren’t alone.

“Try and connect with like-minded people,” Koslowsky says. “The recovery community is huge. You might have to look harder, but we’re out there. Take care of yourself.”

Artis reminds mothers to prioritize their time wisely.

“When it comes to work-life balance, try your best to manage that time and make sure you’re spending time with your child,” Artis says. “Make sure they don’t feel like work is more important than them.” ■

Learn more about Ashley Addiction Treatment at ashleytreatment.org and the Jeremiah Program at jeremiahprogram.org. For a comprehensive guide to navigating the finances of single motherhood, check out singlemotherguide.com/state/maryland.

“Don’t be too hard on yourself.
It’s OK to mess up. It’s OK to just breathe
and not be on go-mode all the time.”

— Chavonne “Jamari” Artis



SECRETS TO THROWING AN EPIC BIRTHDAY PARTY ON A DIME



BY CHERYL MAGUIRE



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

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

The pirate party isn't the only impressive at-home event my sister, Tara, and brother-in-law, Mike, have hosted. They've had other parties for my nephew and two nieces. The themes of their parties have included knights and princesses, western cowboys and cowgirls, fairies and gnomes, Star Wars—and of course, pirates. For all their parties, they created a life-size cardboard centerpiece, such as a castle or western town, for the kids to play in and games centered around the theme, along with a favor to take home. Homemade treats and

a cake are abundant at every gathering.

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

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

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

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

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

Tara and Mike Stull work together to create the life-size centerpiece, games, favors and homemade baked treats. They also include their kids in the process of coming up with ideas and creating items. By



working together, they don't become too overwhelmed with the planning and creating that's involved. It also makes the process more fun for the entire family.

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

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

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



Tara and Mike asked local appliance stores for free cardboard boxes to create the centerpiece, games and favors for each party. They also got deeply discounted “mistake paint” for a quarter of the price (around \$9 instead of \$40) from colors shoppers didn’t like and returned to Home Depot and Lowe’s.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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FOSTERING CHANGE

Nope for the Foster Care System

BY HEATHER M. ROSS



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Despite the positive change that would come from keeping children

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

An Overburdened System

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

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

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

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

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

— ROB SCHEER



Rob Scheer remembers his own trash bag from childhood

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



FOSTER FACTS

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

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

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

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



FOSTER RESOURCES

COMFORT CASES

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

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

ONE SIMPLE WISH

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

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

AFC KINSHIP CARE

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

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

How To Keep Your Family Healthy While Traveling

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

BY HEATHER M. ROSS

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

We asked Dr. Joydip Roy, chief medical officer of UnitedHealthcare of the Mid-Atlantic (covering Washington, D.C., Maryland, Virginia and West Virginia) and Dr. Rachel

Plotnick, a pediatrician of 17 years at the Greater Baltimore Medical Center Pediatric Group, for tips on staying healthy in the air, over the sea and on the road.

KNOW THE RISKS

Both Roy and Plotnick say the most important place for families to start when preparing for travel is with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), where they can find an up-to-date guide for

travel concerns and what vaccinations are recommended online before traveling to their destination. Plotnick recommends all new vaccines be applied at least one month before travel so that they will have time to take full effect.

AVOID COMMON TRAVEL PITFALLS

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

Jetlag

Jetlag happens when our bodies are out of sync with the time zone we're going to, Roy says. This usually happens when traveling to a time zone with a difference of two or more hours

from the one you're used to. Roy says jetlag can leave people feeling tired and discombobulated—and children are just as susceptible to jetlag as adults.

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

Infectious Illnesses

Getting sick is always a concern in a family. It seems like once one kid catches a cold, it's just a matter of time before it spreads to the rest of the house. On vacation, the risk of catching a bug increases because of the stress travel places on our immune systems and because of the increase



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of high-traffic areas little hands just can't stay away from.

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

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

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

Food Safety

Nobody books a ticket just to see the inside of a bathroom



stall. Taking care of your digestive health can be the difference between a relaxing day at the beach and a frantic search for the next restroom. When you're on the go, it can be easy to let nutritional standards slide in favor of quick and easy foods, but Plotnick warns parents to make sure they and their children are getting at least one to two meals per day that are nutritious and high in fiber.

Parents should also make sure everyone in the family is staying hydrated. Being dehydrated can cause children to feel irritable, in addition to being a potentially serious health concern, according to hopkinsmedicine.org. One trick to staying hydrated is to let everyone pick out their own

refillable water bottle before the trip and remind everyone to fill theirs up before leaving the house or hotel in the morning. (This works best if the parents are doing it, too!)

Food allergies add an additional layer of risk for many families. Allergens can be more challenging to avoid if there is a language barrier. Some allergens are more prevalent in different parts of the world, and there is always a risk involved when trying foods you've never had before. Be prepared by having any allergy medication your family uses with you and finding out ahead of time where the nearest emergency care is. Restaurants in some states are allowed to

keep epinephrine on site for use in emergencies.

Your Travel Health Kit

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

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

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

Have a safe trip! ■

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How to Create a Sensory-friendly Haircut Experience

BY HEATHER M. ROSS

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

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

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

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

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

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

Haircuts involve a wide variety of stimulation from touching a child's hair to

washing it, to the sound of the clippers or other customers to tolerating close physical contact with someone the child may not be familiar with.

What Parents Can Do

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

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

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

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

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

Parents can also prepare their children by introducing them to the idea of getting a haircut beforehand. Let your child know as much of what they can expect as possible. This might include showing them a video of another child getting a haircut, letting them watch you get your hair cut or reading them a story about a



Haircut Heather (Heather Parker)
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haircut. Reading books like “Even Monsters Need Haircuts,” by Matthew McElligott, or “Haircut for Lion,” by Michael Dahl, can be a great way to bond with your child and help them warm up to the idea.

For some parents, the best choice for your child’s hair may be learning to cut it yourself. For parents looking to go this route, visit clamingclipper.com for free tips on giving sensory-friendly haircuts. Calming Clipper also sells a 17-piece kit including a haircut guidebook.

Where to Go

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

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

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Julia Inzerro

BY JARRAD SAFFREN

Julia Inzerro has written more than 10 children's books. Her most recent one, a picture book called "Can You Catch a Birthday Birkle?" celebrates the excitement of birthdays through a child's eyes. Her inspiration came from a beloved family tradition.

"Four years ago, the Birthday Birkles started visiting our kids on their birthdays," explains Inzerro in a news release about her new book. "They'd leave notes, little gifts or even play pranks to remind the kids that they are loved, they are special and it's their birthday." Knowing that not every kid receives a visit from the "sneaky, silly, colorful troll-like creatures," Inzerro and her children decided they wanted to share the story of the birkles so that everyone could enjoy them.

Inzerro, a self-published author and stay-at-home mother, shares about her life in Severna Park with her husband, 11-year-old and 8-year-old twins.

What do you love most about your job?

I love the creativity of it. Because I self-publish, I am involved in every aspect of the process, and I have come to really enjoy every aspect. It's always great getting to hold a book in your hand at the end. But coming up with a new idea can be equally exciting.

(My books) definitely are influenced by my kids. It's just random things they say. It's not so much about lessons. If I write a lesson into a book, I want it to be a very subtle lesson. I want it to be about the enjoyment of the characters and what they're doing.

What do you love most about being a parent?

I love the constant activity. It's like living in a circus. There's a lot of noise and a lot of stuff going on. And some days you want to live in the circus, and some days you don't. I just have to find quiet moments and enjoy them for however many minutes I get them for.



Julia Inzerro (left) and her children holding up her books (right).

It's like once you figure something out, you're onto the next thing. It's constant learning. It's a new adventure every day whether you want to be on an adventure or not. It's kind of like skiing down a mountain. Once you jump off, you're going down the mountain. You might as well hold on tight and enjoy as many moments as you can.

How do you balance work and family life?

I'm lucky in that I can work from home. I can write while they're at taekwondo. I can write after they go off to school in the morning. I can do it in little chunks. If I only have 30 minutes here or 30 minutes there, at least I can do something. I always have a notebook with me. I always have my phone.

While they're at school, that's a nice chunk of time. But I sometimes have to do other things. So I'll do things at night or in the morning or whenever I can squeeze in a minute.

My husband has the nine-to-five job, and I squeeze in all the dental visits and doctor visits and whatever else we need to do. Grocery shopping and laundry and all that stuff.

What is the biggest challenge you have faced as a parent?

Recognizing that each kid is going to have different needs at different times, and they might all be at the same time. So I would say the biggest difficulty is making sure my kids get what they need from me, when they need it.

I would also say, like many mothers, carving out time for me that isn't about writing, laundry, groceries, parenting, anything like that — that's something you almost have

to do willfully and purposefully. Otherwise, it doesn't happen. I love to read. Time with girlfriends. And sometimes just quietly sitting with no disturbance.

What do you hope your children learn from you?

I hope they learn to be patient with themselves and with others. I hope they learn to be kind and curious, willing to be constantly learning new things and exploring new places. That's basically it. ■

FAMILY FAVORITES

MEAL

Noodles. Pasta of some kind.

DESSERT

Ice cream parties are a big thing in our house.

VACATION SPOT

We loved Oman. It's very untouched, but it has beautiful beaches and deserts and old forts.

LOCAL PLACE

We're fans of the Poconos and LEGOLAND in New York.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Swimming, biking, going on day trips. Finding some place new to explore.

BOOK/GAME

Bananagrams is a definite favorite game in our house. And we love all books. Every night we read different books.

All About Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

10 Tales from Around the World

BY STEVIA MORALES, CHILDREN'S INSTRUCTION AND RESEARCH SUPERVISOR;
AND CARMEN JESSOP, SENIOR TEENS' INSTRUCTOR AND RESEARCH SPECIALIST
AT HOWARD COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

In May, we celebrate Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month with stories across cultures throughout Asia and the Pacific islands of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia. Howard County Library System blends mental health awareness with tales of family, empowerment and justice. Learn more about kids of all different traditions and backgrounds by seeing the world through their eyes.

BOARD BOOKS

"Sloth & Smell the Roses"

by Eunice Moyle and Sabrina Moyle

Author and illustrator duo Eunice and Sabrina Moyle are sisters, and growing up in places like Malaysia and Taiwan allowed them to gain perspectives from so many different people. Join Mindful Mo the sloth as she practices mindfulness, keeping in touch with your emotions and stopping to smell the roses.

"You are Home"

by MacKenzie Porter, illustrated by Xin Li

Xin Li brings this story to life with sweet illustrations of a happy young child enjoying the day with their parent. From newborn to toddler, your little one can explore these pages with you as the characters play outside in the garden, navigate their emotions and enjoy spending time with each other.

PICTURE BOOKS

"The Rabbit Listened"

by Cori Doerfeld

When Taylor's block castle is destroyed, all the animals think they know just what to do, but only the rabbit quietly listens to how Taylor is feeling.

"The Most Beautiful Thing"

by Kao Kalia Yang, illustrated by Khoa Lee

Author Kao Kalia Yang draws on her own childhood experiences as a Hmong refugee and dedicates this book to Grandma. In her story, little Kalia grows unhappy with her circumstances, tired of making do with ice cubes for ice cream or a hand-me-down dress. Her grandmother, who Kalia helps to take care of, helps her to realize what is truly beautiful in life.

ELEMENTARY BOOKS

"Beautifully Me"

by Nabela Noor

Young Zubi is excited for a special day—her very first day of school. Unfortunately, all day she overhears her family and classmates criticize their own bodies and each other's. After Zubi declares she wants to go on a diet, her family members realize how unkind they are to their bodies and to each other. Together, they realize how beautiful they all really are.

"The Invisible Boy"

by Trudy Ludwig, illustrated by Patrice Barton

Meet Brian, the invisible boy. Nobody in class ever seems to

notice him or think to include him in their group, game or birthday party until Justin, the new kid, comes to class. Justin is the first to make him feel welcome. And when Brian and Justin team up to work on a class project together, Brian finds a way to shine.

MIDDLE GRADE BOOKS

"Guts"

by Raina Telgemeier

Raina wakes up one night with a terrible upset stomach. When Raina returns to school, she's dealing with the usual highs and lows—friends, not-friends and classmates who think the school year is just one long gross-out session. It soon becomes clear that Raina's tummy trouble isn't going away, and it coincides with her worries about food, school and changing friendships.

"Each Tiny Spark"

by Pablo Cartaya

Sixth-grader Emilia Torres manages ADHD, her controlling abuela, her mother's work commitments, her father's distance after returning from deployment, evolving friendships and a conflict over school redistricting. Told with authenticity and compassion, this story shines a light on issues such as

immigration, microaggressions and mental health through the lens of its budding activist main character.

TEEN BOOKS

"Yolk"

by Mary H.K. Choi

Jayne and June are nothing alike. Their family moved from Seoul to San Antonio, and finally to New York. The sisters don't want anything to do with each other, until June gets cancer. And Jayne becomes the only one who can help her. Now, flung together by sickness and bound by family secrets, they learn more about themselves and each other than they may be willing to confront.

"Patron Saints of Nothing"

by Randy Ribay

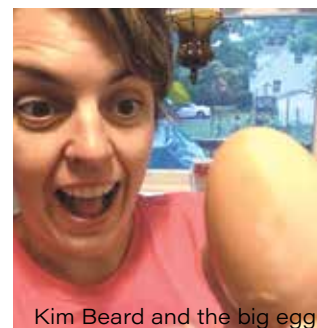
When 17-year-old Jay Reguero learns his Filipino cousin and former best friend, Jun, was murdered as part of President Duterte's war on drugs, he flies to the Philippines to learn more. Equal parts coming-of-age story and political exposé, this book shares the brave story of a young man of color's earnest pursuit to uncover the truth. ■



Mom, Where Do Eggs Come From?

Raising backyard chickens as a family

BY KIM BEARD



Kim Beard and the big egg

WHY DID OUR FAMILY GET CHICKENS?

Raising and educating children in the age of TikTok and YouTube is challenging. Parents and educators are competing against millions of livestreamed videos to engage their children and raise them to be good citizens. Our family decided that showing our kiddos the satisfaction of caring for backyard chickens would teach many life lessons, and hopefully would be both rewarding and tons of fun.

It was time to research. We were in this thing together. No one in our family since my grandmother in the 1940s and 50s had raised chickens. As parents and children, we were starting from ground zero. What kind of chickens should we get? How big does the coop need to be? What do they eat? How many eggs will they lay? WHO IS GOING TO CLEAN THE COOP?

The preparation became the most exciting math problem our family had ever tried to solve. We plotted, we researched, we drew up plans and we went chicken prep shopping. One snowy April morning, we went to the post office to pick up our dozen chicks. Life lesson No. 1, baby chicks do not always make the delivery trip safely. Our little basement brooder was warm and cozy and made a nice little home for our 11 new little chicks. As parents, we learned a lot about our daughters' natural skills and interests. My oldest (then 15) had no problem cleaning the chick's "pasty butt," which I also learned was not my strong suit. My youngest (then 10) kept detailed notes about their food and warming light schedule.

A few weeks in, it was time to introduce the hens to their outdoor home. I am sure many families who have chosen to bring home a puppy have a similar story. The kids promised to do most of the chicken chores. They did not. But the youngest did collect eggs most days, and the oldest did take their turn cleaning out the coop. There is something wonderfully satisfying about seeing your child clean up after others. I claim that as Life Lesson No. 2.

We spent hours weekly laughing at chicken shenanigans. As a family, we kept those hens alive and healthy (well, except for "Aquafina," another life lesson). Our preteen and teen went to school and taught their friends and teachers about raising chickens. They even explained to many neighbors how we didn't need a rooster for our hens to lay eggs, and that our eggs tasted much better than the grocery store eggs.

We raised the hens next to a backyard vegetable and herb garden and discovered this wonderful cycle of reducing waste. We fed the veggie scraps and leftovers to the chickens. In exchange, the chickens provided a wonderful gift as well: lesson No. 4 ... superior fertilizer.

The Backyard Chicken Caucus

But with all of our "chicken research" came a tough lesson. We missed a critical step. Baltimore County had strict acreage requirements to own chickens, and our property was under the minimum size, so we had to rehome our hens. While applying for an exception and gaining support from our neighbors, we met so many chicken lovers. We learned that

many people had been working for years to change the restriction.

A small group of us from different areas of our large county joined the efforts and so formed was the Backyard Chicken Caucus. Groups from years past shared their extensive research as well as the obstacles they were unable to overcome. Hundreds of residents in our county were in support and signed our petition, and they shared their many reasons for loving chickens.

February 1, 2023 marked one year since Bill 113-21 went into effect, ending an over 50-year ban on backyard chicken keeping on lots under one acre in Baltimore County.

Sadly, our yard size still does not fit the new minimum acreage. But the great news is that we have heard from so many residents that can now have backyard chickens, and it is wonderful. The change in the law is broadening children's education all around our county and supplementing many homes with healthy food. And even more will enjoy their backyard flocks as pets. Looking to try it yourself? You can learn more about the requirements for backyard chickens, plus tips on chicken raising them and common misconceptions at backyardchickencaucus.com/backyard-chickens-guide. The Backyard Chicken Caucus plans to continue further education through webinars and workshop classes. ■

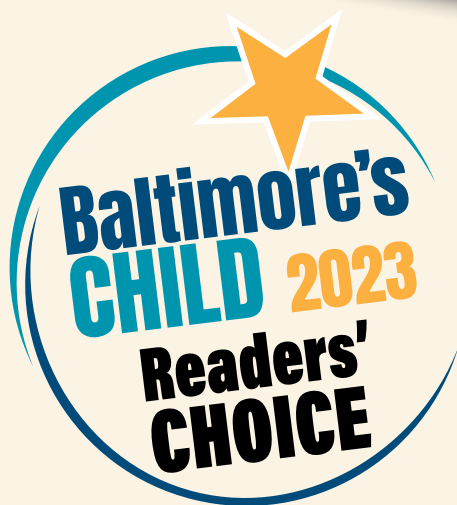
Kim Beard and her family live in Lutherville, Maryland. Her children recently helped to choose the seeds for their large backyard garden and hope to have a bumper cucumber and tomato crop this year.



Kids and chicks

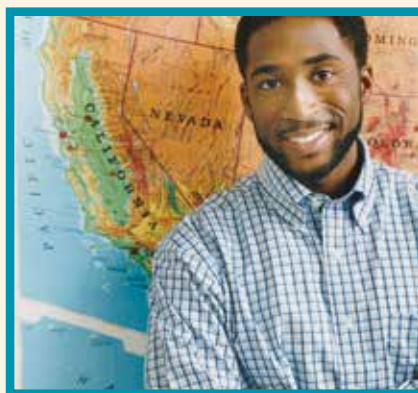
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Voting ends May 15

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