



December 2007
January 2008

Scoop!

It's our Annual
Birthday Party Issue!



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Birthdays Without Pressure



Decisions about children's birthday celebrations are, for those of us who are parents, as certain as death and taxes. We try our best to create a special celebration for our children that is unique and memorable. They'll only turn "that age" once, and there's a part of us that feels we'd be doing our children a personal – and social -- injustice by not having a huge event-filled party. Other parents are inviting the entire class...shouldn't we be doing it, too?

So, before we know it, we are stressing about who to invite, where to go and how much stuff to put into the "goodie bags." It's enough to send even the most budget-conscious and well-meaning parents in search of professional therapy.

Enter **Birthdays Without Pressure**, a group of parents and professionals who, under the guidance of licensed psychologist, marriage and family therapist, William Doherty, Ph.D., are seeking to start a "local national conversation on what's happened to children's birthday parties." Thanks to the University of Minnesota's College of Education & Human Development, the group launched a content-rich website, **BirthdaysWithoutPressure.org**, in January of this year. The group's mission is to get parents talking, in community settings all over the country, about the social consequences of "out of control" birthday parties. "It's a values issue," states Dr. Doherty. "It's about our values as parents and being able to articulate those."

Birthdays Without Pressure doesn't fault parents for throwing birthday parties. On the contrary, its website offers some great tips and activities for ways parents can throw fun, interactive parties for their children. **Birthdays Without Pressure** simply seeks to relieve – and put into perspective -- the escalating social and financial pressures that many parents feel regarding party planning for their children.

A stress-free party?! Now *that's* worth celebrating!

Lori McDonnal
Editor



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For information on advertising opportunities, contact Kim Georgalos (831) 595-6943.

MbayKids would like to thank each of the following contributors for sharing their *Scoop!* with us this month:

Jill Airola, M.D., FAAP - *House Calls*

Dr. Airola is a pediatrician with the Monterey Peninsula Pediatric Group, located at 23845 Holman Hwy., Suite 203 in Monterey. Jill is married and is the mother of two boys, ages 12 and 4.



Laurie Bend - *Sweet Stuff*

Laurie is a mom, community volunteer, Girl Scout leader and small business owner. As a mother of three, she loves to test out recipes on her kids so she can pass them on to *Scoop!* readers.



Corina DuBois - *MamaPreneur*

Corina is a successful MamaPreneur and has created the Celebrate Mama!™ event series and online resources. Corina has a background in public relations and is a mama to two boys.



Susan Oros, M.A. - *Special Needs*

Susan is cofounder and vice president of Special Kids Crusade and mother of three, with an 11 yr. old son with Down Syndrome, an 8 yr. old daughter with autism and a 6 yr. old son who is typically developing.



Sherry Pasquariello - *Homeschooling*

Sherry is a former apparel buyer for The Pebble Beach Company who left her job in 2000 to be a full-time mom. She has been homeschooling her daughter since 2005.



Carol Richmond - *Happenings*

Carol is owner of the Carmel Academy of Performing Arts and founder of Dance Kids of Monterey County, a not-for-profit youth dance and theatre performing arts organization.



Julie Sutliff - *Arts & Crafts*

Julie has a "craft room" in her home that is dedicated solely to the creation of all things "arts & crafty." Julie enjoys sharing her love of crafts with her husband and 11 year old daughter - and with MbayKids *Scoop!*



3-D Ribbon Trees

by Julie Sutliff

Simple ribbons can be crafted into adorable free-standing trees, making a beautiful centerpiece that will be the talk of your friends and family even after the holidays are over!

You'll need:

- | | |
|---|------------|
| Plastic food wrap | Ribbon |
| Clear tape | Foam brush |
| Straight pins | Wax paper |
| Fabric stiffener* | |
| Styrofoam cones in various sizes | |
| Glitter or tiny decorative pieces, if desired | |
| Star ornaments for tree tops | |



Directions for each tree:

Step 1: Wrap cone completely with plastic wrap and secure smoothly with tape.

Step 2: Beginning near the base, secure end of ribbon onto Styrofoam with a straight pin. Wrap the ribbon around the circumference of the base several times to make a sturdy bottom for the finished tree. (Avoid covering the head of the straight pin with the ribbon.) Continue wrapping the ribbon at various angles throughout the length of the cone to achieve the desired look.



Step 3: Cover your work surface with newspaper. Using the foam brush, carefully and generously apply fabric stiffener. If desired, sprinkle with decorative glitter while stiffener is wet. Place decorated cone on wax paper to dry overnight.



Step 4: After the cone is completely dry, remove straight pin. Gently but firmly, grip the cone and slowly twist the stiffened ribbon tree back and forth, loosening and removing it from the Styrofoam cone.

Step 5: Using a hot glue gun, fix any loose ribbon ends. Stand ribbon tree upright and, using hot glue, affix a star ornament to the tree top.



At Michael's craft store we found 6" to 9" Styrofoam cones (\$2.49 - \$4.49 each), Mini Glitter Stars (0.7 oz for \$1.99), Trim It Up® Ribbon (42 ft for \$2.99), Home For the Holidays® Gold Star Ornaments (12 pieces for \$1.99). At Beverly's we found Plaid brand Stiffy® Fabric Stiffener (8 oz for \$3.49).

***Note: Do not use liquid fabric starch in place of fabric stiffener. Ribbon will not stiffen properly.**



Holiday Challenges

by Susan Oros, M.A.

For many couples, the anticipation of starting a family is full of images of cuddles, laughter, love and celebration. Unconsciously, there are unspoken expectations and dreams of how the “perfect family” will look. When a child is diagnosed with a developmental disability,

however, those dreams seem to crumble. It’s unsettling not to know what the future holds. A different world suddenly opens up: a world of therapy, IEP’s, case managers, and a confusing realm of treatment options. These are the obvious causes of despair. Many don’t realize, however, that there are other triggers of grief and feelings of loss as a family with a developmentally disabled child tries to live in mainstream society. This can be especially pronounced during the holiday season.

The holiday season begins with Halloween, peaks with Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa, and winds down with New Year’s Day. The stores are filled with costumes, gifts, and delectable food items geared for children and family gatherings. The level of interest and understanding in these events for children with developmental disabilities can emerge in later years. Children with autism can have behaviors which make it difficult to participate in family gatherings and/or to celebrate with friends. This can spur feelings ranging from mild disappointment to depression for some parents.

I have experienced such feelings and see them as a normal response to that loss of the dream family. One of the joys of parenthood is to be able to celebrate as a family and provide your children with opportunities for fun. To see the gleam of excitement in my own children’s eyes fills me with a sense of fulfillment and a motherly satisfaction in knowing that I have made them happy. This was the first year that my 11 year old son Christopher let us dress him up for Halloween. My 8 year old daughter with autism does not understand the concept of “dressing up” but she loved trick-or-treating with my youngest son’s friends, running in packs through the dark with excitement at the prospect of what awaited them at the next door. These little fun occasions that are “routine” and expected fun for many families truly seem like miracles to me. Christmas still brings minor challenges for us. Decorating a tree is difficult since my oldest son and daughter usually end up playing with the decorations, but we have learned to adapt. Thank God for fiber optic trees!

If you are a parent experiencing such feelings this holiday season, you are not alone. Sometimes it feels like it will take a lifetime getting to the day when a Christmas present will be fun for your child. Consider professional help, however, if the depression inhibits your functioning in day-to-day activities.

Happy holidays to all and may the New Year bring wonderful surprises!



Celebrate these MamaPreneurs!

by Corina DuBois

Michelle Chisum & Teresa Nielsen
The Stork Ladies
www.stork-ladies.com



Michelle Chisum (standing on the left in the photo) and **Teresa Nielsen** (standing on the right) are MamaPreneurs in a business that touches just about every local mama in town. Their niche is announcing baby arrivals to the world, through yard signs (pictured), birth announcements, party supplies and unique novelties that help proud mamas share their joy.

Michelle is mama to Ryder, age 4, and Weldon, age 1. She began her business hoping for, as she says, “the chance to stay home with my boys and take my natural talent and channel it into a rewarding career with flexibility.”

And “naturally” is the way the business came to Michelle. “An opportunity came at the right time. When my second son was born, my mom ordered the ‘Stork’ from **The Stork Ladies** (from the previous owners)... I learned the business was for sale and thought the ‘Stork’ would be a great addition to my vision.” Michelle then joined forces with Teresa, who is mama to 3 year old Hayden, and together formed a powerful MamaPreneur partnership.

The Stork Ladies has plans for growth. “Teresa and I are getting ready to launch our boutique-style ‘Trunk Show.’ Look for us at upcoming vendor fairs, craft shows and home and office parties.” And while **The Stork Ladies** have concrete plans for business and marketing ventures, all this hard work happens at a mom’s pace in order for them to enjoy family time as well.

“Working from home is a blessing but can also be exhausting. Sometimes I feel like I have put in an 18 hour workday because I can’t sit down for longer than 15 minutes without hearing the words, ‘Potty, potty, potty’ or ‘Juice, please’ or the famed ‘Weldon is in the dog food.’”

Michelle’s advice for budding MamaPreneurs is this: “If you have never known the satisfaction that comes from working incredibly hard on something challenging and seeing outstanding results, go for it! Financial and professional rewards are great, but what a gift it is to find a career that pays you to have so much FUN!”

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MBayKids Celebrates Nonprofits with Heart

Award application deadline: January 10, 2008

MBayKids will, once again, be honoring six nonprofit organizations that have a special "heart" for kids in its 2nd Annual **Celebration of Local Heart** to be featured in the February 2008 issue of **Scoop!** magazine. Last year's awards were presented to **Community Oral Health Services, Freedom Reins Therapeutic Riding Program** (now Gaits of Hope at Rancho Cielo Youth Campus), **Girls Incorporated of the Central Coast, Harmony at Home, Jacob's Heart Children's Cancer Association** and **The First Tee of Monterey County**. These organizations were honored for their work with local children, their ability to accept support beyond financial gifts and, collectively, they addressed a broad spectrum of needs within our community.



**2007 Heart Award Winner
Community Oral Health Services**



**2007 Heart Award Winner
Jacob's Heart Children's
Cancer Association**

Nonprofit agencies who wish to be considered for this year's **Celebration of Local Heart** awards should complete an online application at www.MBayKids.com/nonprofit.asp.

The deadline for entry is January 10, 2008. For more information, contact Lori McDonnal at (831) 751-1678 or by e-mail at Lori@MBayKids.com.

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CELEBRATE BIRTHDAYS!



MBayKids is giving you the **Scoop!** on birthday party resources with this special **Celebrate Birthdays** pull-out section. For the latest up-to-date information on birthday party fun, be sure to visit www.MBayKids.com/Birthdays.asp.

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Mrs. Cardona, right
with student Maria Pangel



Teacher of the Month

Mrs. Patricia
Cardona
Alisal High School

"I don't *think* my teacher should be Teacher of the Month...I *know* she should!" exclaims eleventh grade student **Maria Pangel** in her nomination of **Mrs. Patricia Cardona** as **KWAV's Teacher of the Month**.

"She is the kind of teacher who takes her job seriously...the kind of teacher who actually cares about her work and, most importantly, about her students," explains Maria who has been a student of Mrs. Cardona's for two years in a row. "She gives her students the confidence to talk to her about anything. Her classroom door is always open."

For high school Spanish teacher Patricia Cardona, this is definitely a compliment of the highest order. "I really like to see that the students learn something in my classes, however I love to see the personal connection that happens with some students," says Mrs. Cardona. "It is very rewarding when a student stops by your classroom just to say 'hello' or when they trust you enough to come and ask for advice on a personal problem. That's the best part of teaching...you get to help!"

Mrs. Cardona enhances the grammar, writing and reading skills of native Spanish speakers in her Spanish classes at Alisal High. Long after her students have left her classroom, however, she hopes they've also learned to value the effort they've put forth in their studies. "Life is like a business," says Mrs. Cardona. "The first years you have to invest all your time and effort to get results. Then you enjoy your hard work when you need it most!"

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Cultural Riches at Bargain Prices

by Sherry Pasquariello

The Central Coast is brimming with culture. For homeschoolers, there are plenty of opportunities to take advantage of these cultural riches at very affordable prices.

Chamber Music Monterey Bay (www.chambermusicmontereybay.org) has a wonderful program designed for students in grades 4-12 called "Kids Up Front and Free." Purchase a full-price adult ticket (\$29) and receive a children's ticket for free. They reserve the first three rows of the center section for the children and their paid adult companions, so you get a great view of the musicians! Reservations are taken one month prior to the concert date by calling (831) 625-2212. For more information on Chamber Music Monterey Bay's upcoming concerts at the Sunset Center in Carmel, visit www.MBayKids.com and click on "Organizations" to find their listings.

The **Monterey Bay Aquarium** (www.mbayaq.org) offers five free "Homeschool Days" each fall. This opportunity is open to all homeschoolers, whether independent or part of a private ISP or charter. (Monterey County Home Charter School took a group of students in October.) Even if you're a member of the Aquarium and visit regularly, there are additional activities and behind-the-scenes labs offered



during Homeschool Days. To learn more, visit www.mbayaq.org and click on "Teachers" and then "School Programs" to find a link to their application. Space fills up quickly, so sign up early.

The **Seymour Marine Discovery Center** (seymourcenter.ucsc.edu) at Long Marine Laboratory in Santa Cruz is a wonderful little working marine laboratory with several hands-on exhibits and demonstrations throughout the day. A tour of the grounds includes an up-close view of a full-size skeleton of a Blue Whale named "Ms. Blue." Because of the smaller crowds, volunteers are really able to interact one on one with the children and answer questions. Admission is a bargain at anytime: \$6 for adults and \$4 for children (ages 4-16), seniors, and students with ID. They also offer free admission the first Tuesday of every month.

Continued on page 18

Monterey County Home Charter School

K-12

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CARRYING A FULL LOAD

by Jill Airola, M.D.



Q: "I'm concerned that my middle school daughter's backpack is too heavy, especially for her small frame. I've talked to the school and they can't do much about it because each teacher assigns homework independently and she often needs to bring all of her books home. How do I determine the weight she can safely carry on her back and is there any research on this that I can give the school to further justify my concern?"

A: Today, kids are carrying more in their backpacks than ever before! Some teens' backpacks carry several 2" binders packed full of assignments, papers and notebooks, numerous pencils and pens, hardcover books needed at home for homework, lunch and gym clothes!

Backpacks that are too heavy can cause problems with the muscles in your child's back, neck and shoulder area. If your child is experiencing frequent back and shoulder pains, this can affect their posture—especially if they wear the backpack incorrectly or don't have the right backpack for their body size.

The *American Academy of Pediatrics* has some excellent guidelines for backpack safety:

- 1. The weight of the backpack should not be more than 15% of your child's weight.** For example, if your child weighs 100 pounds, then the backpack should not weigh more than 15 pounds.
- 2. The backpack should have wide, padded shoulder straps and should have two shoulder straps—not just one that runs across the body.** It should also have a padded back and a waist strap that can help distribute the weight of the backpack more evenly.
- 3. The child should use both shoulder straps when carrying the backpack.** Putting the backpack over one shoulder causes strain on muscles and curvature of the spine. The straps should be tightened to keep the backpack about two inches above the waist. The waist strap should be used with heavier loads.

Continued on page 18



Christmas



Night tours at Wild Things

Photo with a real REINDEER
A special visit from the "Big Guy" himself
Refreshments after the tour

Dec 8, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23, 27
6:30pm - Reservations Required

A fun, educational evening you'll want to make a part of your holiday tradition.

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Easy Ice Cream Cake

by Laurie Bend

Prep time: 15 minutes

Freezer time: At least 1 hour before serving

Yields: 16 servings

What a quick and easy way to make a delicious ice cream cake using easy to find ingredients! The kids can help to to prepare the cake by unwrapping ice cream sandwiches and spreading ingredients over the top. At our house, the birthday kid gets to choose the kind of candy bar sprinkled on the top. This recipe used chopped Twix® but you can add your favorite.

INGREDIENTS:

- 16 to 18 ice cream sandwiches (chocolate, vanilla or Neapolitan)
- 1 (16 oz) container frozen non-dairy whipped topping (thawed)
- 2 (16 oz) jars hot fudge topping (room temperature)
- 1 (1.5 oz) chocolate candy bar of your choice (chopped)



DIRECTIONS:

1. Place 8 to 9 ice cream sandwiches side-by-side in a 9" x 13" baking dish.
2. Spread one jar of the fudge topping evenly across the sandwiches.
3. Spread 1/2 of the whipped topping over the fudge.
4. Repeat with the remaining ice cream sandwiches, fudge topping and whipped topping.
5. Sprinkle with the chopped candy bar of your choice.
6. Cover and freeze for at least one hour before serving. After serving, freeze unused portion and keep tightly covered.

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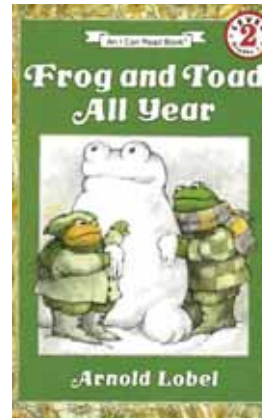
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Share Your Holidays with Frog and Toad

by Carol Richmond



Gail Higginbotham grew up in Los Angeles in a family frequenting many theatrical productions. It never occurred to her places existed without this opportunity. In 1975, she and her dentist husband moved to Salinas and began a family. She found quickly the prospect of theater designed for her young boys did not exist. Thirty plus years later, ARIEL Theatrical and Wilson's Children's Theatre in Salinas are tributes to the life and passion of this director and producer.

ARIEL has provided quality "literature on stage" for children all over Monterey County. In addition to its permanent home at Wilson's Children's Theatre in Oldtown Salinas, ARIEL has a 24-year history of performing a large production at Sherwood Hall in Salinas each school year, drawing 1,000 children per audience with as many as 16 shows per week.

Their holiday offering, "A Year with Frog and Toad," is the culmination of years of enjoyment by Mrs. Higginbotham of the "Frog and Toad" series of books written and illustrated by Arnold Lobel. Gail watched the transformation from book to the Broadway stage, always keeping ARIEL on the New York list for the rights to this musical delight. Her dream of staging this show will become a reality this season at the Wilson Children's Theatre, 320 Main Street, Salinas. The show runs through December 15, 2007.

"A Year with Frog and Toad" is a character-driven set of vignettes, spanning one spring to another, in the company of Frog, Toad, their bird friends and a scene-stealing snail!

"I have loved this book series for years," Gail commented. "The characters prove friendships of different personalities can be supportive and forgiving if necessary."

Tickets can be reserved at ticketguys.com or by calling the theatre at (831) 775-0976. Adults are \$10.00 and children are \$6.00. Shows are Friday evenings at 7:00 pm and Saturdays at 2:00 pm and at 7:00 pm through December 15.

Happy Holidays



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Homeschooling *continued from page 14*

The **Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History** (www.pgmuseum.org) offers free admission all the time but you can make a small donation to help support the museum, if you choose. With our rainy season approaching, this would be a great place to take the kids for the morning! There are permanent displays of native plants, animals, geology and aboriginal populations of Monterey County. There are also special temporary exhibits throughout the year. Last month, we attended a special showing of live big cats that was offered at Chautauqua Hall in conjunction with their current "Wild Cats of the World" exhibit.



The **National Steinbeck Center** in Salinas (www.steinbeck.org) is a Central Coast treasure for lessons in literature, local history, agriculture and art. Homeschooled families can take advantage of the center's free field trip policy for Monterey County schools by simply calling their education department (775-4739) and booking a self-guided tour. With many interactive exhibits, the National Steinbeck Center provides age appropriate activities for students in elementary through high school.

If you're studying California History, you truly can't beat our own backyard! Many of the historic sites in Monterey offer free tours. Monetary donations and the sale of items in their gift shops support children's educational programs. The **Pacific House Museum** and the **Maritime Museum** (www.montereyhistory.org/maritime_museum.htm), both located near Monterey's Custom House Plaza, are two of our favorites. For a list of historic buildings in downtown Monterey, visit www.historicmonterey.org.

Many other museums, zoos, and other areas of interest offer a free or discounted admission day once a month or more. Some local and Bay Area locations are **MY Museum** (Monterey), **Monterey Museum of Art** (Monterey), **Happy Hollow** (San Jose), **The Tech Museum of Innovation** (San Jose), **San Francisco Zoo**, **de Young Museum** (San Francisco), and many more. Check out MontereyBayHomeschoolResource in *Yahoo! Groups* - (you will need to create a user ID and join the group if you're not yet a member) to view the monthly calendar for all of the free or discounted dates and locations.



House Calls *continued from page 15*

4. Organization is key. Use all the compartments of the backpack and pack heavier items closest to the center of your child's back.

5. As with lifting any heavy object, teach your child to bend using both knees when picking up the backpack and not to bend over at the waist.



Purchasing a "rolling backpack" for your daughter is one possible solution. This will definitely lighten your child's load, but only if she doesn't lug it up stairs!! Some schools do not allow these type of backpacks due to the tripping hazard they pose in crowded hallways, etc.

Some parents buy a second set of books for their children to keep at home so that they don't have to carry them back and forth. My teen's school PTA bought a second set of books for all the students and they keep them at their homes during the school year.

Hope this helps answer the question! For more information, please visit the **American Academy of Pediatrics** website: www.aap.org and search under "backpack safety." You can print information from this website and use the information for your child's school.



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