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FOREVER FAMILY: AN ADOPTION JOURNEY

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MOVING BEYOND COLOR: DISCUSSING RACE WITH YOUR CHILD

SIMPLE TRADITIONS TO BOND FAMILIES TO TRY TODAY

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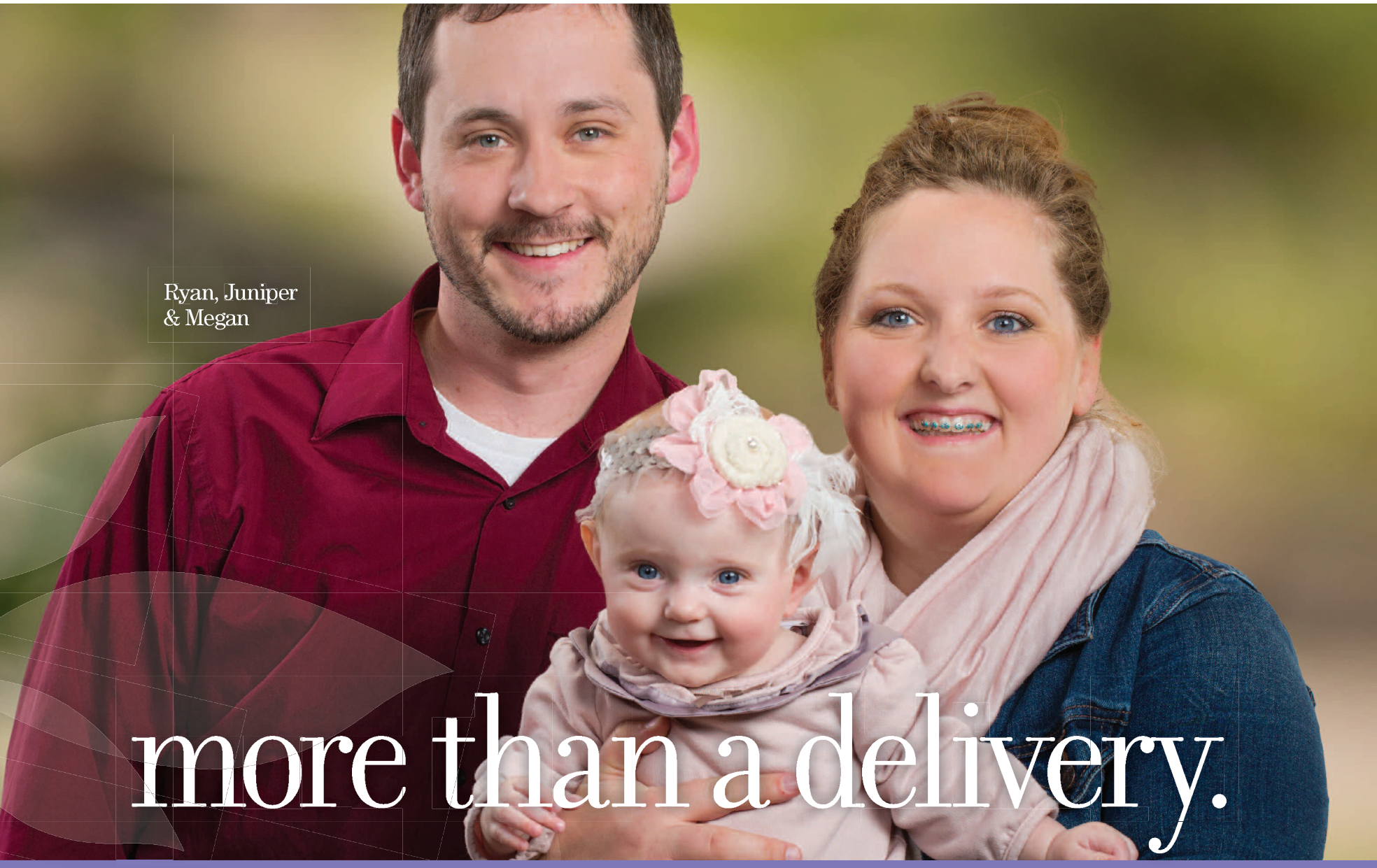
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To sign up or learn more about the Helmerich Women's Center Labor of Love program, visit LaborofLoveOK.com, call 918.579.8085 or e-mail LaborofLove@Hillcrest.com

A diagnosis of high-blood pressure led Megan to be hospitalized several times during her pregnancy. While any complication is stressful, first-time mom Megan found reassurance and comfort in her providers at the *Peggy V. Helmerich* Women's Health Center at Hillcrest South. When it was time to deliver, Megan was surrounded by a supportive team. And when baby Juniper had to spend a few extra nights in the hospital, the team did everything they could to accommodate the family. Megan knows that when it comes time to expand their family, she'll choose Hillcrest South again because of her incredible experience.

To learn more about Megan's life-changing experience at the Peggy V. Helmerich Women's Health Center at Hillcrest South, visit Hillcrest.com.

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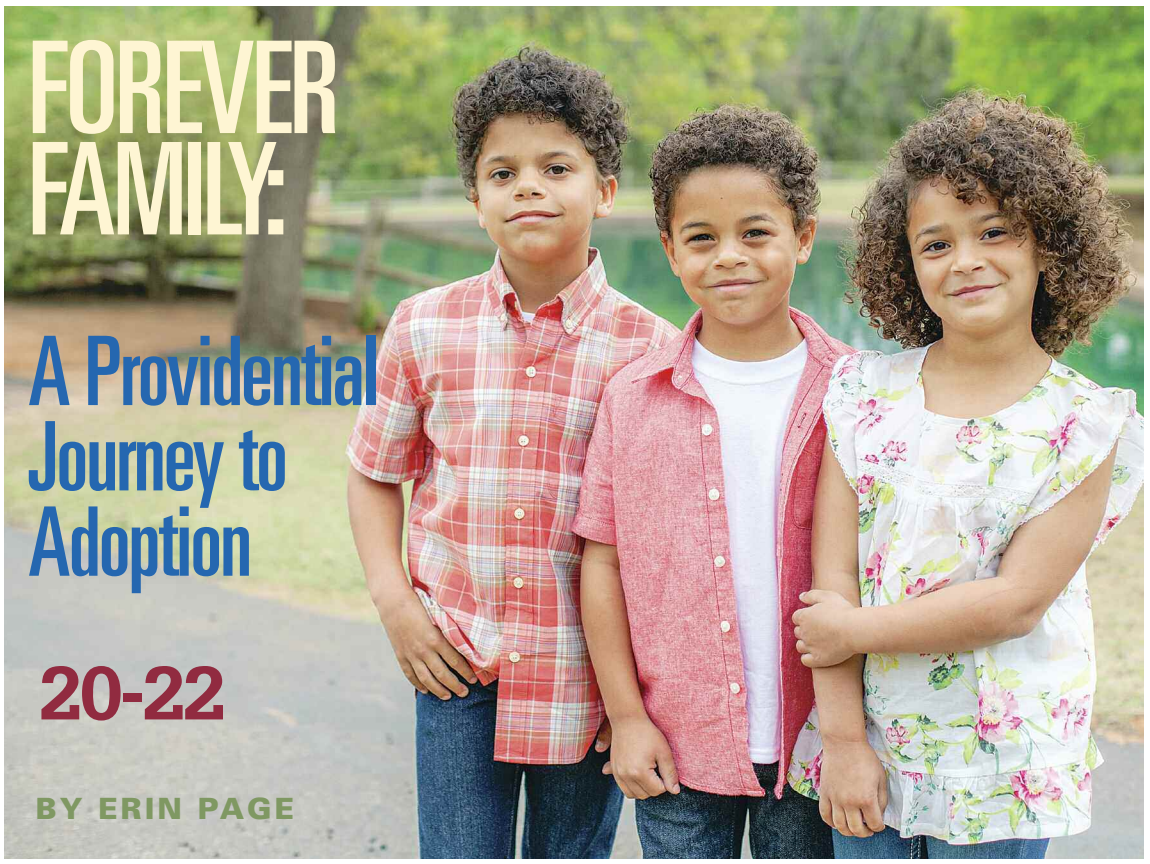
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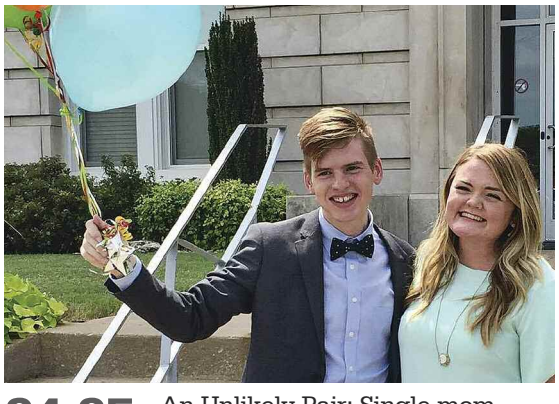




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editor's note

Thankful for Families

The adoption and foster family features in this issue reminded me of the many manifestations of family, ranging from the traditional nuclear family to a single parent with children to foster families and everything in between. Family can be expressed in a multitude of ways but, for the families interviewed in these pages, "family" means love.

And, as we gather for the Thanksgiving holiday, many of us turn to family traditions to express that love. Some traditions are as comfy as a worn flannel shirt that we would never think of discarding. Others may be turning into the itchy old, outgrown sweater that should have been given up long ago. Sometimes family structure changes due to divorce or remarriage, making the timing right for incorporating new traditions like the ones suggested in Diane Morrow Kondos's column. If you're looking for changes, you might want to try one of Natalie Mikle's recipes or look through the 13 ways to entertain kids on Thanksgiving Day to find new food or activity traditions for your family. I always ask my adult children what side dish or dessert they really want me to make and, whatever it is, even if it doesn't exactly fit the traditional meal, I make sure that it's on the table.

Speaking of traditions, Tulsa has more than its share of holiday fun, and much of it begins this month. Santa sightings are all over town – he'll be turning on the lights at Utica Square on Thanksgiving night. And every year Philbrook's festival transforms the museum into a magical place for all ages. Performances abound, but new this year is the Broadway touring production of Elf The Musical. I had an opportunity to talk with Ken Clement who plays Santa in the show. See what he has to say about his fourth year of playing the guy who helps Buddy bring Christmas spirit to New York City.

There are so many ways to enjoy being with family this season. As we count our blessings, let's remember those who may be less fortunate than us. If your family would like to learn how to help others in the community, go to tulsakids.com for a list of ways to give back this holiday season.





ON OUR COVER:
COVER KID WINNER DAISY PEPIN SMILES FOR THE CAMERA.

PHOTO BY: LESLIE HOYT PHOTOGRAPHY

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If you like to read TulsaKids, you may not know that you can watch us, too! Every Thursday morning on Tulsa's Channel 8, the local ABC affiliate, join Editor Betty Casey on Good Day Tulsa for tips to plan your family's weekend and more. Watch Good Morning Oklahoma on Tuesdays for tips on timely topics and family information you'll want to know.

POET BILLY COLLINS RECEIVES 2016 HELMERICH AWARD



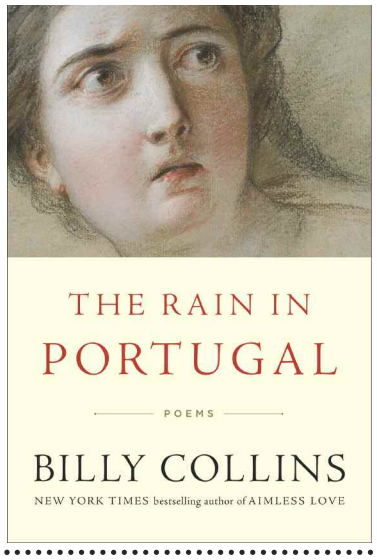
PHOTO CREDIT: SUZANNAH GILMAN

"All children are poets and painters, singers and dancers. These natural abilities are the makings of what is later called 'art,'" said former U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins, who is coming to Tulsa Dec. 2 and 3 to receive the Tulsa Library Trust's 2016 Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author Award.

"What child doesn't love to clap, bang on something, draw, paint, mold clay? We are born artists," said Collins, who is the first poet to receive the prestigious Distinguished Author Award. "But then adolescence arrives and we seize up with self-consciousness. No one needs to explain poetry to children. You just read some good ones to them and they're in. The real challenge for parents and teachers is to save this natural love of word-play from the psychic ravages of adolescence."

Collins grew up around poetry and wrote his first poem at the age of 12. For Collins, childhood was a happy time.

"I was a late only child, which sums me up pretty well," he said. "They say people who claim to have happy childhoods are just good at repressing, but mine was pretty sweet. Just the three of us, and there never seemed to be a need for another, like a fifth person at the bridge table. I was a loner, a bookish kid, an altar boy, a paperboy, and a really unambitious Boy Scout with only two merit badges to his name. They didn't have one in poetry. What was up with that?"



Collins will receive the Distinguished Author Award, which consists of a $40,000 cash prize and an engraved crystal book, at a black-tie dinner in his honor on Friday, Dec. 2 at Central Library, Fifth Street and Denver. He will give a free public presentation on Saturday, Dec. 3 at 10:30 a.m. at Central Library.

The author of 12 collections of poetry, including his latest volume, *The Rain in Portugal*, released this fall, Collins is an American phenomenon – no poet since Robert Frost has managed to combine high critical acclaim with such broad popular appeal. His works frequently are best-sellers and his readings normally are standing-room only.

Collins is famous for his approachable, witty and conversational style. He has an extraordinary ability to balance humor with serious themes.

Regarding Collins' inspiration for writing poetry, he said: "What drives me to write poetry is other poems. Most of us write poetry because we have read poetry. It's as simple as that. Plus, I would like to get better at it."

For more information about Collins' visit to Tulsa or the Peggy V. Helmerich Distinguished Author Award, visit www.helmerichaward.org or call 918.549.7323.



CAROLS AND CRUMPETS DEC. 3

If you're looking for unique handcrafted gifts or holiday decorations, plan on a visit to Carols and Crumpets, the Tulsa Herb Society's annual craft fair, which will be Sat., Dec. 3, 2016, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Tulsa Garden Center, 2435 S. Peoria Ave. Admission is free.

The Tulsa Herb Society booth will feature delectables such as flavored vinegars, jams and jellies, and Hot Chocolate on a Stick. While you're there, pick up some fresh greenery and craft items for home decorating and treat yourself to coffee, hot spiced cider and cookies. Other vendors will offer mosaic garden items, Hypertufa pots, original art/cards, fused glass dishes, herbal soaps and spices, metal garden sculpture, table runners and much more.

Lunch will also be available from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

For more information, call 918.496.8019 or go to the Tulsa Herb Society Facebook page.

CHRISTIAN MINISTERS ALLIANCE COLLECTING THANKSGIVING FOOD

Every year the Christian Ministers Alliance, Inc., a 501 3c organization, provides food for low-income families at Thanksgiving. The alliance is currently collecting food donations such as turkeys, hams, chickens, bacon, sausage, mac & cheese, sweet potatoes, green beans, cranberry sauce, potatoes, corn, stuffing mix, onions, celery, dinner rolls, etc. Cash donations are also welcome.

For information on contributing food or cash, please call Rev. W.R. Casey at 918.951.7407.

Food will be distributed on Nov. 22 at 6 p.m. at the Booker T. Washington Historical Building, 1631 E. Woodrow Street, Tulsa, OK.

continued next page

RIB CRIB GOLF TOURNAMENT RAISES $100,000 FOR CHARITY

Rib Crib BBQ & Grill presented $100,000 to local Tulsa charities from proceeds of their 14th annual golf invitational, the 2016 Pitmasters Golf Tournament

Five local non-profit organizations benefitted from the Pitmasters event. More than 140 golfers came out in support of The Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma, The Children's Hospital at Saint Francis, the Oklahoma Animal Care Foundation, the Tulsa Zoo and 12&12.

"We are excited to present the tournament proceeds checks to these wonderful community service and enrichment entities on behalf of all of our golfers, sponsors and employees," said Bret Chandler, Rib Crib founder.



(L TO R) MARC CHASTAIN, RIB CRIB PRESIDENT; DANIELLE PALM, RIB CRIB GOLF TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR; TERRIE CORRELL, CEO & PRESIDENT AT THE TULSA ZOO FOUNDATION; MONICA ERICSON, TULSA ZOO MANAGEMENT, INC. DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR.

CASCIA CHRISTMAS WALK DEC. 4

The 34th annual Cascia Christmas Walk is set for Sun., Dec. 4, 2016, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. The event begins at the Cascia Hall Performing Arts Center located at 25th St. and Utica Ave. In addition to a tour of four homes decorated for the holidays by area florists or interior designers, the event will feature approximately 60 vendors with unique gifts, clothing, jewelry, food and décor. A catered meal, desserts and coffee will also be available in the Cascia Bistro, and Cascia Hall students will provide holiday musical entertainment in the performing arts center and at the homes on the tour. Transportation to the homes is included in the ticket price.

Tickets are $15 in advance and $20 at the door. They may be purchased online at www.casciahall.com, at Cascia Hall Upper School or Middle School offices located at 2520 S. Yorktown Ave., or at Chinowth & Cohen locations.

TULSA BOYS' HOME HOSTS OKLAHOMA FOSTERS

The Tulsa Boys' Home is assisting the Oklahoma Fosters Initiative by offering the use of their campus for filming. Oklahoma Fosters is a multi-sector campaign dedicated to ensuring that every child has a safe, loving home. It provides information about foster care and adoption in addition to programs, support, activities and services for foster parents and children.

The Oklahoma Fosters videos and photos will highlight over 100 children so that prospective foster and/or adoptive families will have the opportunity to see the children and hear their stories. A professional crew will film the children fishing, engaging with horses, and playing across the Tulsa Boys' Home's 160-acre campus. The children will also be able to share their interests and personalities through on-camera interviews.

Founded in 1918, the mission of Tulsa Boys' Home is to provide the highest quality residential care for young boys needing placement outside their home, for the purpose of developing well-adjusted, responsible adults and strengthening the family.

For more information about Tulsa Boys' Home, visit www.tulsaboyshome.org. For information about Oklahoma Fosters, go to http://okfosters.org.

WASHINGTON HIGH SCHOOL BLUE RIBBON

Four schools in Oklahoma, including Booker T. Washington High School in Tulsa, were named National Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education. The annual designation recognizes academic excellence in schools throughout the United States.

Oklahoma's 2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools are Booker T. Washington High School (Tulsa Public Schools), L. Mendel Rivers Elementary School in Altus (Altus Public Schools), Northwood Elementary School in Piedmont (Piedmont Public Schools) and Sadler Arts Academy in Muskogee (Muskogee Public Schools).

The U.S. Department of Education named 329 National Blue Ribbon Schools this year. They will be honored in a ceremony Nov. 7-8 in Washington, D.C.

letters to the editor

THANK YOU, PETE THEBAN

I was asked to comment on the impact Mr. Pete Theban has made on the local community. His passing is a shock to all of us who have had the pleasure to work with or be a student in a school where Pete was teaching. This was Pete's 41st year in education. Most of his time was spent at Monte Cassino, 20 years, and he followed that up with 11 years as the Principal of Marquette School. He started his career at St. Anne School in Broken Arrow, now known as All Saints Catholic School.

To know Pete is to have a profound respect for his craft. He had that God-given talent to make everyone feel special. He knew your name and more importantly remembered it. It did not matter where I was with Pete, he would have to stop and talk to everyone he knew. That made him very unique and loved by all in the community.

His time spent as an administrator, 31 years in two schools, serves as the testament to his commitment to Catholic Education and his knowledge of the Ministry of Catholic Education in our church. He could never say no. He saw challenges and worked through obstacles to create an environment of love and care for the students entrusted to his care. Every student knew of his care and concern and Pete's only regret in his career was that he did not reach all of them. Who has? What parent does not want that for their child when they are in school?

Not many of the people who have gone before us had the opportunity to receive the fruits of their labor like Pete experienced. He was profoundly moved by the outpouring of love and support from his family during his illness. In his humility, he would ask, why are they doing this? The simple answer is: we love you and appreciate your giftedness and having the opportunity to have known you.

Pete Theban, you taught us how to care for each other in a world most in need of this lesson. Thank you!

Jim Pohlman
Superintendent of Catholic Schools
Diocese of Tulsa

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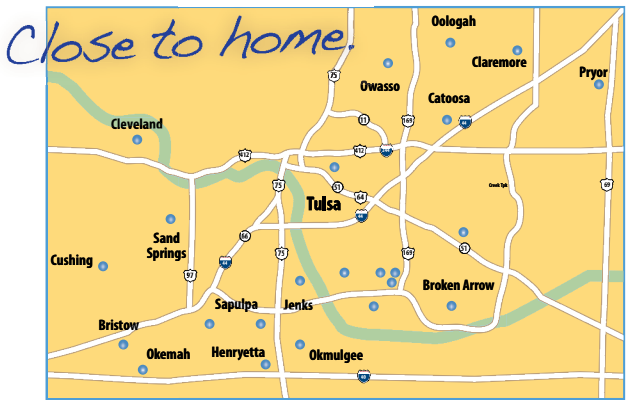
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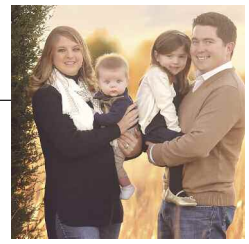


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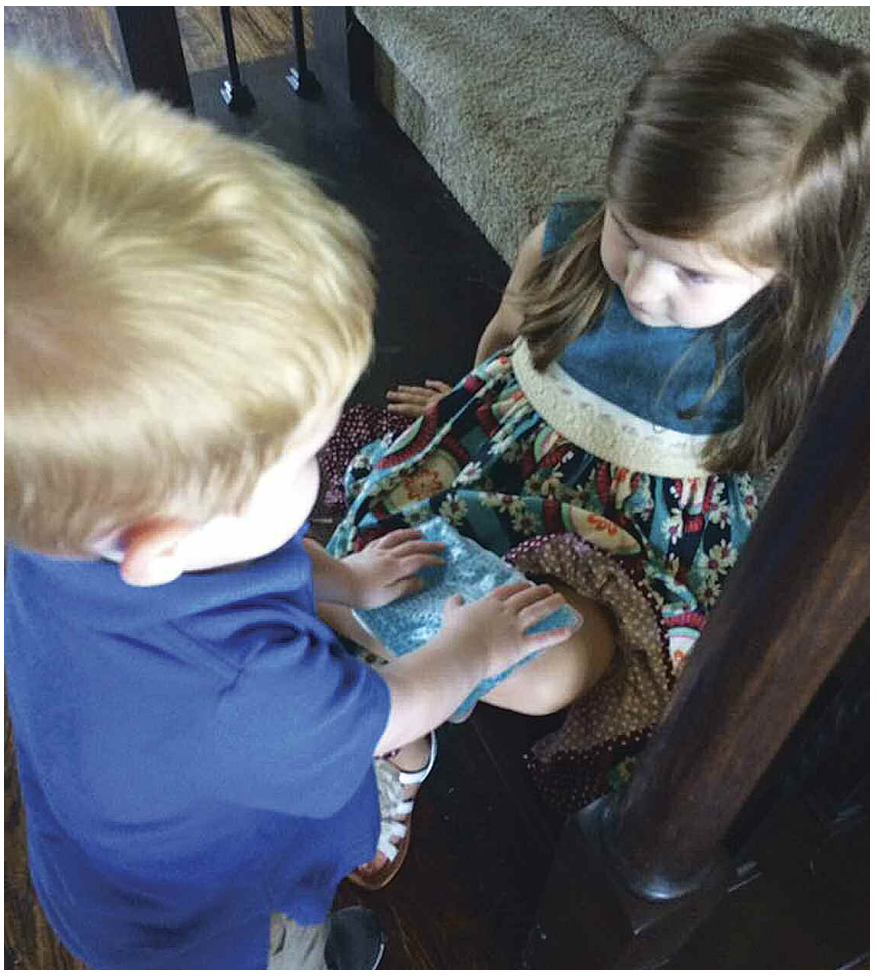


BY KILEY ROBERSON

raising kids who care

It was a typical Saturday at our house. My 5-year-old daughter was running around the living room, chased by her 2-year-old brother who was pretending to be a dinosaur. The entire downstairs was filled with squeals, roars and laughter as I tried to finish up the dishes. Then it happened, a crash, a thud and a cry. I quickly turned the corner to see the damage, but already knew what had happened. Of course I had only yelled out my warning to stop running before someone falls at least five times earlier. But there was my daughter crumpled on the floor where she had slipped, skinning her knee. Her face was wet with tears when I picked her up and carried her to the stairs so I could take a better look. Just as I sat her down I noticed her brother was still running full force toward us. I started to tell him to stop, that sister was hurt, but then noticed something in his hand. Before I could blink he was at his sister's side holding an ice pack he had grabbed from the freezer on her knee. I was pleasantly shocked, so I did what any parent would do, snapped a quick picture with my phone so I would remember this sweet sibling moment.

My son's concern for his sister is touching for sure, but the more I thought about it, the more I realized that his act of love was



actually empathy. Empathy – the ability to understand and be sensitive to other people's feelings – helps us more deeply connect to family, friends and even strangers.

"Empathy is probably the greatest single gift of our species," says Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D., and the coauthor of *Born for Love: Why Empathy Is Essential – and Endangered*. "We wouldn't have been able to survive without creating relationships and groups that could function together."

Researchers agree that learning to put yourself in someone else's shoes is also a crucial building block for other caring emotions. It's how we develop gratitude, hope and compassion, which is the ability to act on our feelings of empathy.

One study conducted by the University of California, Berkeley, found that kids as young as 18 months could master a key component of empathy: the ability to tune in to people's emotions. Many of these responses happen naturally in children, but studies suggest that there are ways parents can further promote empathy-boosting experiences for young children.

Show empathy to others – Your children notice if you're rude to the waiter when he brings the wrong order. So try to be understanding of other people's mistakes. You can talk this through with your child by asking questions like, "I wonder how the waiter was feeling when he gave me the wrong meal" and "How do you think it would feel to be that busy at your job?"

Increase their "feelings vocabulary" – Spend a few minutes each day pointing out different expressions and giving them a name – happy, sad, mad, angry. Then talk about these feelings when you notice them in others. For instance, point out that the lady at the bank smiled a lot today, so she must have been

continued next page

very happy.

Volunteer – You may worry that introducing kids to life's harsher realities will be too upsetting. But many doctors say the reverse is actually true. When you expose children to the sufferings of others, they end up feeling grateful for what they have and proud of being able to help someone else.

Be consistent – If you tell your daughter that her words have an impact on others' feelings but then you turn around and lay into your spouse for some minor misstep, you're sending her confusing messages. We all lose it sometimes; just make sure you apologize to your spouse in front of your daughter.

Teaching children empathy is critical to building healthy, happy lives and meaningful relationships. In a world where we tell our kids that they can be anything, let's teach them first to be kind.

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BY ALYSSA CHIRCO

13 turkey day traditions

Thanksgiving Day isn't always a favorite among kids. From the pressure to be on their best behavior at the dinner table to the boredom that can set in while the grown-ups are busy cooking, it's easy to see why children sometimes need a little help enjoying this particular holiday.

By creating a few new family traditions, you can keep kids busy and entertained on Thanksgiving Day – and even teach them a thing or two about gratitude in the process. Whether you're celebrating with just your family or expecting a houseful of relatives, try a few of these activities that kids of all ages can enjoy.

1. Create a Handprint Turkey Table Runner. When kids cover their hands in fabric paint and press their handprints onto a plain white table runner, a festive Thanksgiving centerpiece can result. Let them draw or paint legs and beaks on the handprints to turn them into "turkeys." Add new handprint turkeys to the same runner every year on Thanksgiving Day with the child's name and date, and you'll have a keepsake.

2. Start a Gratitude Journal. Pass around a pen and a notebook and ask family members and guests to write down five things they are thankful for. Give younger children crayons so they can draw pictures of things that make them happy. Not only will this activity keep kids busy, it also creates another wonderful family keepsake, especially if you add to the notebook year after year.

3. Bake up a batch of "Thanksgiving Thankful Rolls." Start by having children write down things they are thankful for on small strips of paper. Next, prepare a baking sheet as directed for your favorite crescent rolls. Have kids add one strip of paper to the middle of each piece of dough, and then roll up and bake according to the recipe (making sure no paper is sticking out or it will burn). These make a clever addition to any Thanksgiving table.

4. Play a game of touch football. Watching football may be a Thanksgiving Day tradition, but active kids are likely to prefer playing the actual game. Teach them the rules, divide them into teams and then send them outside to play. For even more family fun, encourage the adults to join too.

5. Go Pumpkin Bowling. Set up plastic bowling pins on your lawn or floor and let kids use small pumpkins (about four to six inches in diameter) as bowling balls. Hand out prizes for strikes and spares.

6. Make Pumpkin Pie Playdough. Homemade Pumpkin Pie Playdough is easy to make, smells divine and can keep kids busy for hours. Make a batch ahead of time, and then on Thanksgiving Day supply kids with rolling pins and cookie cutters so they can create their very own masterpieces.

7. Set out coloring pages, word searches and mazes. Buy Thanksgiving-themed activity books at a craft or school supply store or look online to find pages you can print at home. Set these out at a kids' table with an assortment of pencils, markers and crayons.

8. Take a family nature hike. Before dinner, take the kids outside to enjoy the crisp November air. Collect acorns, leaves and sticks for future craft projects and work up an appetite for the Thanksgiving meal to come.

9. Set up a scavenger hunt. Divide kids into teams and have them search for a list of Thanksgiving-themed items like candy corn, apples, cranberries, feathers, oven mitts, a turkey baster and more. The team that finds all the items first wins.

10. Write notes to relatives who live far away. Have grandparents or other family members who live out of state and can't visit for Thanksgiving? Encourage kids to write notes letting them know how much they are missed. Or use an application like Skype so everyone can video chat face-to-face.

11. Assign responsibilities. Kids love to feel like they are contributing to the family in a meaningful way. Even young children can take coats from guests as they arrive. Ask older children to refill drinks as needed or help in the kitchen by washing dishes and loading the dishwasher.

12. Pay a tween or teen to chaperone. If you're having a large holiday gathering where lots of children will be present, consider paying one or two of the older kids to entertain the younger ones. Have them play board games or read books about Thanksgiving. Tweens and teens appreciate the extra cash, and adults appreciate the extra help watching their kids.

13. Write letters to Santa. Planning to shop on Black Friday? If Santa visits your house, make it a tradition for kids to write letters to him on Thanksgiving so you know what to buy. After all, Christmas is just around the corner!

Pumpkin Pie Playdough Recipe

Ingredients:

- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 cup salt
- 1 cup water
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice (or a combination of cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger and cloves)
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil

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■ orange gel food coloring paste (or red and yellow food coloring drops)

Instructions:

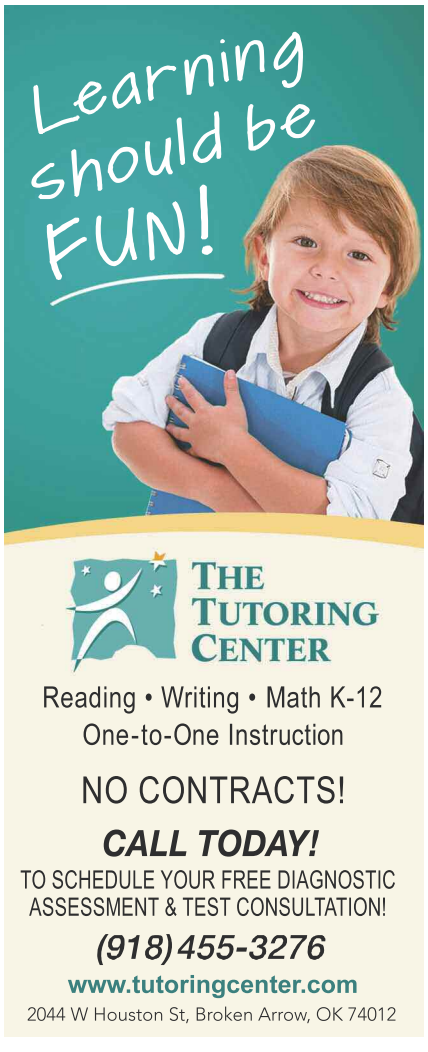
1. Combine flour, salt, cream of tartar and spices in a medium nonstick saucepan.

2. Add oil, water and food coloring. Whisk until smooth.

3. Cook the mixture over medium heat, stirring constantly, for about 3-4 minutes. You will know your playdough is finished when it begins to pull away from the sides and form a ball in the center of the pan.

4. Remove from heat and allow playdough to cool slightly. Once cool, knead on a flat surface for about a minute. For an even stronger scent, you can knead more cinnamon or pumpkin pie spice into the dough at this time.

5. Store in an airtight bag or sealed container for up to a week.







BY JULIE WENGER WATSON

four-year college isn't the only course

As fall semester draws to a close, high school seniors may feel a sense of dread. For some kids, the path after graduation is a clear, if not anxiety-free, one: run the gauntlet of the university application process and hope for your first choice. For others, pondering life post-high school graduation may seem more like peering down a long, dark tunnel, with no flashlight to help navigate. The truth is, life after graduation isn't one size fits all, and viable alternatives to the four-year college experience exist.

Twenty-one-year-old Christian Holtzscher graduated from Tulsa's Booker T. Washington High School in 2013. Choosing to pursue an associate degree in graphic design, he's currently enrolled in Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology in Okmulgee.

"I wanted to choose a school with realistic and economically priced programs, which didn't end up being a four-year university," Holtzscher explained.

Holtzscher found out about the program through some successful graphic designers that he had met.

"It's a two-year program taught by actual professionals in the field. They aren't just teaching basic design; in addition, they're teaching the technical applications," he said. "The program seemed like a perfect fit – exceptional teachers and a shorter degree turnaround time. I'm learning so much in a shorter period of time and am closer to doing something I can actually be passionate about in the workplace."

Musician Noah B. graduated from Washington High School in 2014. Figuring out how to balance work with his passion for music and his desire for a higher education has been an ongoing challenge. For Noah, the solution has been the Tulsa Achieves program through Tulsa Community College (TCC). The program allows eligible Tulsa County high school graduating seniors to attend TCC for free, starting in the fall following graduation.

"The choice was incredibly difficult for me," Noah said. "I felt a lot of pressure to go to college, especially since a bachelor degree is basically the equivalent of what a high school diploma used to be back in the day. In the end, a four-year program was very intimidating to me, and I wasn't ready for it when I was 18, and to be completely honest, as a 20-year old, the path of continuing my education is still something I'm struggling with…The free schooling from TCC was an amazing opportunity to try and decide what I wanted to do with my life, and while I'm very far away from knowing to this day, I still appreciate the opportunity that they presented."

Although uncertain of what the future holds, Noah is happy with his choice so far.

"Playing music, though it's frustrating, is also very fulfilling for me. When I see progress in myself and in my group, it's one of the most rewarding things," he noted. "I'm living with my girlfriend and making rent at a leisurely rate and have support from my incredible parents."

Eileen Kenney, assistant vice-president of enrollment management at TCC, believes that TCC is a great option for high school graduates.

"One of the points that we really try to stress when we're visiting with prospective students is that our faculty's primary purpose is classroom teaching, so that is their focus," she explained. "As a result, within the classroom, students are going to experience a really high level of engagement."

According to Kenney, smaller classes – 20 to 25 students maximum -- an honors program, affordable tuition and research opportunities for undergraduates are some of the many advantages TCC offers its students.

For students who may have no idea what they'd like to study, TCC can help.

"We have wonderful career advising professionals who can sit down with a student, and the student can take an interest survey," Kenney said. "We have this great program called 'Career Coach,' where students can answer some questions and it can get them started on the right path, even if we get them on a broad path."

Students at TCC are encouraged to complete an associate degree before leaving for the job market or transferring to a four-year institution.

"It gives them an advantage," Kenney noted. "Any time you can obtain a credential, it's an advantage over somebody who doesn't have that credential. Our degrees at TCC that are designed for entering the job market ensure the students have the skills and tools necessary to be successful in that field."

For students who continue their education, Kenney said, "they can transfer to a four-year institution and feel well prepared."

Both Noah and Holtzscher would argue that heading straight into a four-year university isn't the only path after graduation, especially if a student is unsure of what he or she wants to pursue.

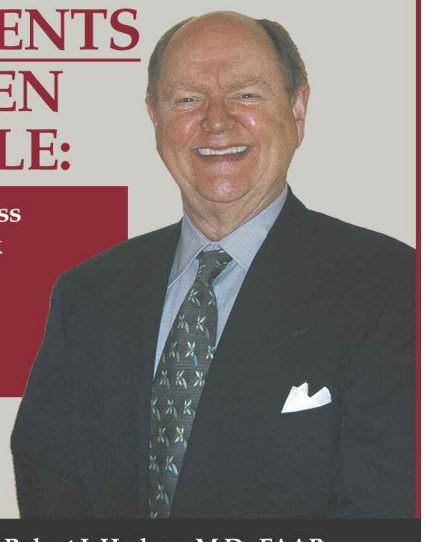
"After graduation, take a year off," Holtzscher advised. "Work full-time or travel. Really think about what you want to go to school for and what kind of program is right for you. Without the pressure of having to rush a major life decision right out of high school, you will most likely make a more informed, and, ultimately, better choice."

Noah would agree. "I don't think waiting to go to school is bad, and even though seeing all of your peers can be difficult, in the end you must make the deci-

continued next page

sion that is right for you," he said. "Everyone is different, and sometimes getting a little break is nice. My father took a gap year to try to be a cyclist, and though it didn't work out, I think in the end, he's happier knowing the outcome rather than spending his life wondering 'what if?'"

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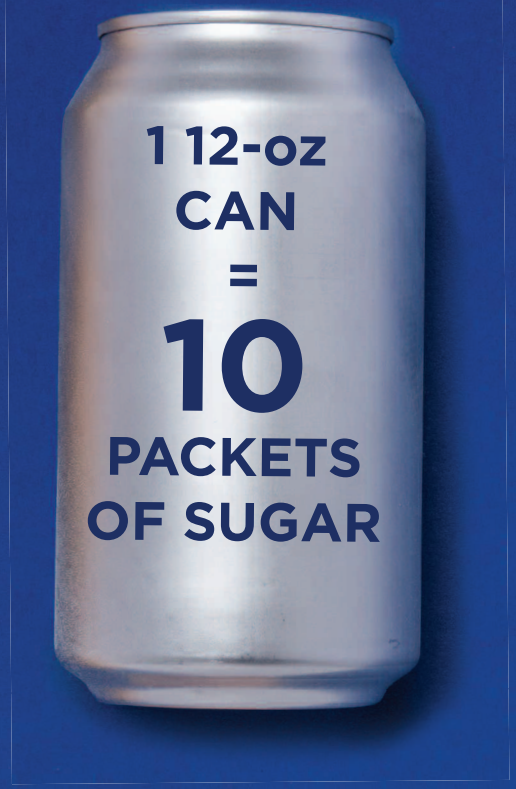
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BY DIANE MORROW KONDOS

simple traditions to bond families

Although my husband had been previously married, he had no children and had been living alone for over 15 years when we married. In the first few months of our marriage he was astounded, perhaps even a little intimidated, by how many traditions and rituals I had developed with my 11- and 12-year old daughters. Believing traditions create security and form a family bond and identity, I had purposely created many traditions.

Mary Rineer, Ph.D., a psychologist and executive director of CAPES in Tulsa, also believes traditions are an essential part of families. "When I talk with my clients and their families, we focus on the development of traditions. I believe that traditions are the fabric which weaves shared memories together. Traditions are the active history of our family, she said. "Our traditions provide us with a view of the past and an expectation for the future."

Dr. Barbara Friese, a professor at the University of Illinois, studies family rituals and has found that kids who grow up in families that consistently practice rituals and traditions feel more connected and valued. It has been shown they even adjust more easily to college life and are less likely to smoke or abuse alcohol. When a family expands to include new members, stepparents and/or stepsiblings, it's important to retain old traditions, but also be open to some changes and additions to be inclusive to new family members.

Rather than abandon our traditions when I remarried, we altered them to include my new husband. One of our traditions had been the Friday night movie and junk food night. After a long week of school and work, our Friday night ritual was something we all looked forward to. When my new husband joined the family, we continued the tradition but gradually evolved it into Friday Family night where we took turns picking the activity. We expanded to game night, arts and crafts, cooking activities and, of course, continued occasional movie nights. The point wasn't what we did; it's that everyone got a week to be the director. We anticipated the time all week and enjoyed spending the evening together.

We also started new traditions, including a "familyversary' on our wedding anniversary each year. We made the same dinner every year, looked at wedding photos, exchanged heart-shaped anniversary presents, and the girls received their annual raise in allowance. Besides the obvious benefit of having fun, this yearly ritual served to remind us that we were a tight family, a unit bonded together in caring and commitment.

If you haven't started any traditions, it's not too late. They don't need to be complicated or expensive. The best ones are usually fairly simple. Some ideas to get started:

• Have a theme dinner once a week. For example, on Wednesday nights make it Mexican food night and learn one new Spanish word as a family each week.

• Celebrate half birthdays by baking half a cake (freeze the other half for later) and giving the half-birthday person a card cut in half.

• Invent a special family drink or dessert. Ours was called the "Kondoggie Special" and was made to celebrate the first day of summer break each year. It was actually a simple mixture of sprite, ice and limes but the elaborate ritual created around the making of it made it feel special and indulgent.

• Have a family meeting once a week where you recognize individual accomplishments of the week, discuss any problems and make future plans.

• Volunteer together. Depending on the age of your kids you could work at a soup kitchen, deliver Meals on Wheels or foster animals for the shelter.

• Play Roses and Thorns at dinner. Each person gets a chance to relate the best and worst part of their day.

• On birthdays, each person says their favorite memory of the birthday person from the past year or their favorite thing about the birthday person.

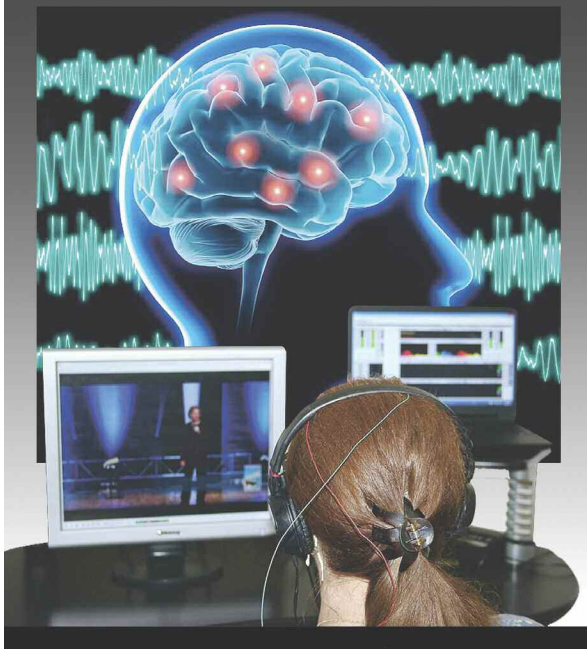
These ideas may get you started as you begin to develop your own family traditions. Kids often have ideas about forming traditions and are excited to be part of the planning. As long as they are enjoyable, inclusive and consistent, it will draw you closer and strengthen your family identity.

Susan Lieberman, life coach and author of New Traditions, Redefining *Celebrations for Todays Family* says, "Family traditions counter alienation and confusion. They help us define who we are; they provide something steady, reliable and safe in a confusing world."

Some of our traditions have changed as our children have grown but many have remained unchanged, an integral part of our family identity. My husband not only became accustomed to our traditions, he learned to love them!

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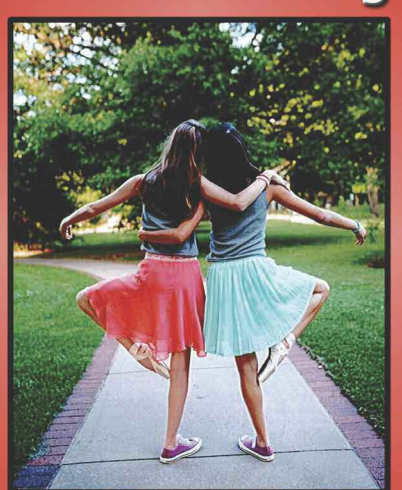
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FOREVER FAMILY:

A Providential Journey to Adoption

BY ERIN PAGE



Photo Credit: Emily Hart • www.ninandbphotography.com

Amy and Mark Pemberton have always had a heart for fostering. But for many years in their marriage and parenting journey, the timing just wasn't right.

"We had always wanted to foster, but we never had the room," said Amy, who has two biological daughters. "We barely had room for the two girls we had."

In 2006, the couple bought a house on 17 acres of land and their eldest daughter was off to college. It was time. By October of that year, they had undergone the required application, background check, home study and training and had signed a contract with the Oklahoma Department of Human Services to be foster parents. Within 24 hours, Amy got a phone call about a potential placement. In fact, there were three placements.

"We just want one; we're so new to this," Amy said of her reaction to the call. "I asked which child needed the placement the worst, and they told me the baby because babies don't do well in shelters."

Within a few hours, the baby boy was brought to the Pemberton's home. It was his eighth placement in his short 20 months of life.

"He was in terrible shape," Amy said of the tiny boy whose only possession was the 3-month-size onesie he had on. "His tummy was distended. He didn't talk, walk or eat solid food."

Still, Amy felt an unexpected instant connection with her first foster child.

"The moment I laid eyes on him I knew he was supposed to be mine," she said.

Hard beginnings

Now a loving 11-year-old boy whose proud mom calls a whiz at math, Duncan's life with the Pembertons began tumultuously. Because he wasn't used to being held and had spent most of his young life in a playpen, he had an especially hard time attaching to his foster parents.

"He would cry and have fits of rage for hours," Amy said. "Your instinct is to grab him up and love him, but that wasn't his thing."

Far different from the parenting methods they'd used with their biological girls, Amy and Mark resorted to placing Duncan in a soft bean bag chair when his rage grew out of control, both keeping him from hurting himself and offering him the only comfort he knew how to accept. After five months of this repeated behavior, something clicked.

"He was having a meltdown, I put him in the chair," Amy said. "But then he walked to me and held his hands out to be picked up. Since that moment, he's never had another fit of rage. He had figured out he was okay here."

Shortly after Duncan's major breakthrough with his foster parents, Amy got a call that the Oklahoma Department of Human Services (OKDHS) was going to move him to another home. Duncan's case plan had changed from reunification with his biological family to becoming legally free and available for adoption. Because the Pembertons were strictly certified as foster parents, OKDHS wanted to move Duncan to a potential forever home. The Pembertons had begun their fostering journey with no intention of adopting, but Duncan changed their hearts.

"We knew he wouldn't survive another move," Amy said.

Duncan's fate was sealed as Amy and Mark began the process of becoming his adoptive parents.

Achieving permanency

Last year saw more than 2,100 adoptions finalized through OKDHS in Oklahoma. As of April 1, there were nearly 2,000 children in trial adoption, in various stages of the adoption process or available for adoption. More than 400 of those children do not

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yet have an adoptive home identified. Carlene Harpe, region 3 adoption field manager for OKDHS, is responsible for supervising staff as they prepare children to move into permanent placements through adoption.

"The most challenging part of my job is the recruitment of adoptive and foster families that can meet the needs of the children in DHS care," said Harpe.

Like the Pembertons, Harpe said it's very common for foster parents to decide they want to also be adoptive parents once a child becomes legally free. Ninety percent of the children who are placed for adoption are placed with foster families, which can be traditional, kinship or relative foster care.

"The agency converts the home to be an adoptive resource and the adoption specialist works with the family to finalize the adoption," Harpe said. "In Oklahoma, we have only one study for both foster care and adoption, so families only go through the process one time."

An addendum must be made to the original home study, and the foster care and adoption departments work together to make sure all paperwork is completed and current. While it sounds simple enough, Amy quickly determined that she had to be the primary advocate to keep the case moving. She never assumed the various departments were updating or speaking with each other, and instead took matters into her own hands to ensure everyone was apprised of the latest details and had what they needed to proceed.

"It's such an overworked system, and communication can break down relatively easily," said Amy of DHS. "You follow up everything with emails."

Amy never missed a court hearing, and when confusion in the courtroom overran one such appearance, she requested a guardian ad litem to guarantee an informed legal mind was working directly for them.

"It was an extra set of eyes on the case," said Amy.

Unexpected blessings

Duncan's adoption became more complicated for reasons outside of the Pemberton's or DHS's control. To the surprise of the Pembertons and the judge, at a court appearance during their son's case, they discovered Duncan's biological mother was pregnant.

"We said we might as well add two children to our family," Amy said.

Duncan's adoption was extended as the couple waited for their new son to be born. The baby's birth wasn't quite what the Pembertons expected either.

"The birth parents ran with him for several weeks," Amy said. "He was found in a homeless shelter in Detroit. He had a rough start, too."

The same day Amy dropped her younger biological daughter at the airport for college visits, she waited expectantly for the plane that brought her son to her. Matthew was four weeks old.

A subsequent court visit on behalf of both boys found their biological mother pregnant again. A baby girl would be born just one year and 20 days after Matthew.

"I said, 'of course we'll take the baby,'" Amy said. "And then I cried for two weeks. I couldn't fathom having two babies so close together."

Despite their shock and uncertainty, the Pembertons set up their nursery for two babies and bought a double stroller. Daughter Aidan's birth was attended by a sheriff so the birth parents wouldn't try to escape a second time. Aidan was born on the youngest Pemberton daughter's birthday and joined her new family at one day old.

"It's funny how naturally it comes back to you," Amy said of parenting a second time around. "When I was younger the things I thought were so important or such a big deal, now I know those things aren't a big deal at all."

Parenting trauma

Two years after the Pembertons began the process of adopting Duncan, they officially adopted all three siblings in February 2009. After several years of paperwork, court proceedings, intense emotions and worry, Amy described the actual adoption as anticlimactic.

"It's done in a matter of minutes," Amy said. "But with the signed adoption decree, I felt instant relief. It was finally, really done."

Amy described her family's overall experience with OKDHS as lucky, in particular that all three children had the same social worker throughout their journey.

"On more than one occasion she considered changing positions but she wanted to wait until they were finalized," Amy said of the worker. "She was so invested in what was best for them."

Now 11, 9 and 8 years old, Duncan, Matthew and Aidan are happy kids who attend a Catholic school where many of their friends are also adopted, which has been an incredibly supportive environment for their family. A school psychologist by trade, Amy was keenly aware of the support her kids would need as they got older.

Duncan suffered much trauma early in his life, and Amy recalled he almost missed the language learning window. He's undergone occupational, physical and speech therapy and Amy credits his speech therapist with helping Duncan find his voice. While his early trauma means he often learns differently from other kids, Duncan is very successful in school.

"He is the hardest working and most loving boy," Amy said.

All her children deal with the trauma they experienced differently, and Amy describes it as a constant in their lives. As they reach various developmental stages, she anticipates readdressing their fears and questions.

"The scary things that happened to [Duncan] aren't really solid memories," Amy said of her child who spent the most time in state custody. "He remembers being hungry."

Matthew asks the most questions about their birth mother, sometimes declaring that he misses her.

"He's asked me 'couldn't you have helped her, too?'" said Amy. "We explain that we did try to help. One day they will get to know the whole story, when they're old enough."

Aidan is the most matter-of-fact about being adopted. She and Amy often talk about how she grew in a different mom's tummy.

Above all, the Pembertons foster an openness with their adopted children about where they came from and how they came to be a part of their family. Their focus on honesty and not overreacting to their kids' questions or how they process trauma has kept them all grounded.

Observing their past

From the beginning of their fostering journey, Amy has kept a spiral notebook detailing all contact her kids have had with their biological mother so one day they can see the effort that was made on both sides. Throughout the foster and adoption processes, Amy developed a bond with the biological mom as she learned her story and provided her kids the safety and stability she couldn't.

"She grew up in foster care," Amy said. "She wanted to do better, she just didn't know how."

Like many parents whose children end up in foster care, this biological mother had no family, no other relationships to rely upon and no examples of good parenting to emulate. Coupled with drug usage, a lack of resources and no social support, Amy says she never stood a fighting chance.

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"There's always been a part of me that wants to 'mama' her, too," she said.

After the kids were adopted, Amy was intentional about keeping both biological parents apprised of their lives. They scheduled visitations and she emailed photos. About six months later, the biological father said the communication was too painful for him and he didn't want to continue.

While the first few visits with the biological mother went well, eventually her drug usage appeared again. The Pembertons drew a line in the sand: If she's not healthy, she can't have contact with the kids. Amy has always been straightforward with her kids about their biological mom's past, framing it in a way their young minds can understand.

"They know she had a hard time making healthy choices for her and for them," Amy said.

Amy knows one day her kids will likely want to see their biological mom and possibly develop new relationships. She worries that it will hurt them to see her and that they might feel guilty they got a chance she didn't. But she would support them.

"The bottom line is we wouldn't have them without her," said Amy. "You can't love them without loving her at some level."

Choosing joy

Amy and Mark's lives look nothing like they might have planned. But they wouldn't have it any other way. Their grandchildren and adopted children are all close in age. Amy calls them the best of friends.

"My granddaughter loves to call my son 'Uncle Matthew,'" laughs Amy. "He's only five months older than she is."

In a family so full of joy, it can be easy for outsiders to overlook the work that is still necessary to help the Pemberton kids deal with their past trauma. As Amy continues to advocate for her kids at school and in the community and as she mentors other foster and adoptive parents, she has developed a mantra that she's found makes a tremendous difference: Don't treat them like they're broken, or you'll break them.

While the work is ongoing and challenges arise, the Pembertons have never had any doubt they made the right decision in adopting the three kids who have blessed their family beyond measure.

"When the moment was there, I knew I was called to do it," said Amy.

Potential adoptive parents must complete an application, have a home assessment, undergo criminal and child welfare background checks and complete 27 hours of training, all very similar to the process potential foster parents go through.

Approved families are eligible to apply for adoption assistance through DHS, which includes financial support and medical coverage for children who qualify. OKDHS also assists with some of the legal fees involved in the adoption process. Once an adoption is finalized, the organization's Post Adoption Services Unit is available to assist families with ongoing needs.

Harpe stresses that DHS provides child-focused adoption services, which means they are seeking families that can meet the specific needs of the children in state custody. When permanency can be achieved through adoption, Harpe says it's a wonderful experience to witness.

"It is a priceless moment to see children have a sense of belonging and love that they so much deserve," said Harpe.

For more information about becoming an adoptive or foster parent, call the OKDHS Foster/Adoption Support Center at 1-800-376-9729.

This feature originally appeared in Metro-Family Magazine, Oklahoma City. Find more information about this topic at www.metrofamilymagazine.com



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BY BRIA BOLTON MOORE

an unlikely pair

MOTHER AND SON SEPARATED IN AGE BY A DECADE, BROUGHT TOGETHER BY ADOPTION

When she was 4 years old, Lesley Hemphill told her parents she was going to "adopt big people one day."

In 2015, unmarried, 26-year-old Lesley became "Mom" to 16-year-old Dakota Cochran.

The journey of becoming a family began when Lesley took a job at Life.Church's South Tulsa campus and was charged with discovering local mission opportunities. Two weeks into the job, a man tapped her on the shoulder and said, "You're new on the missions team? I've got something you've got to see." Later that week, he introduced Lesley to the Tulsa Boys Home, a residential care facility in Sand Springs for boys who are either placed by the child welfare division of the Department of Human Services (DHS) or placed by parents or legal guardians in the Substance Abuse Treatment Program.

Lesley immediately felt a connection, and a few months later, she became a mentor. In September 2013, she was paired with Dakota, a 15-year-old who had endured 12 years of trauma and abuse before being placed in group homes by DHS.

"I felt like I butchered the first impression," Lesley said of their initial interaction where she asked him his favorite subject in school (P.E., of course).

Dakota didn't know it at the time, but this conversation was an answer to prayer. Jeff Johnson, the youth minister and volunteer coordinator at Tulsa Boys Home, recently asked Dakota if he believed in Jesus.



LESLIE HEMPHILL (R) WITH HER ADOPTED SON DAKOTA CELEBRATE BECOMING A FAMILY.

"I said, no, I have no reason to," Dakota recalls. But, with Jeff's encouragement, Dakota said a prayer: "'God, you've got exactly seven days to send someone who cares. And if not, then you're not real.' In exactly seven days, he sent her."

Dakota and Lesley began spending an hour together each week, often walking around the track at the Tulsa Boys Home. An hour led to a few hours a week, which led to daily visits. Although she didn't begin the mentoring thinking about adoption, by late December, Lesley said she "started to think of Dakota as a son." However, if adoption was the right path, she wanted his counselor, therapist and lodge manager to approach her about it.

"In March, I got a call from his therapist," Lesley said. "She said his caseworker had visited, and they believed I would be the best placement for him in the state of Oklahoma and would I consider adopting him. I froze. This was exactly what I'd been praying for. I was kind of spooked."

The adoption was actually Dakota's idea. When a DHS representative talked with him about the possibility of sending him elsewhere, he told them his mom wouldn't like that. Since all parental rights were terminated, the representative was confused.

"Lesley, my mentor, is my mom," Dakota said. "I want her to adopt me."

After four days of weighing the pros and cons, consulting with her family and close friends, and receiving about 15 cards from Dakota with messages like, "I really want you to be my mom, but, no pressure," Lesley filled out adoption paperwork.

The process was anything but smooth. Because of their age difference, DHS initially denied the adoption. However, Lesley said they reached a turning point when Dakota had a forensic evaluation. The evaluation confirmed that Dakota's first maternal attachment, which normally happens in infancy, was to Lesley

continued next page

when he was 15 years old.

"At the end of her evaluation, [the counselor] recommended three things: if DHS and the court would approve the adoption, she recommended counseling, which we still do; as well as gradual transition into the home, and we did that," Lesley explained. "And her third was that if they didn't approve the adoption, they would need to take responsibility for the greatest trauma of Dakota's life. It was really at that point that the judge and DHS said, 'Absolutely, we're all on board.'"

On August 12, 2015, the adoption was finalized. Dakota became a Hemphill.

"Grace has been a massive lesson," Lesley said. "Grace from him—I'm learning how to be a mom in my twenties to a teenager. And I'm showing him grace as he learns how to be a son."

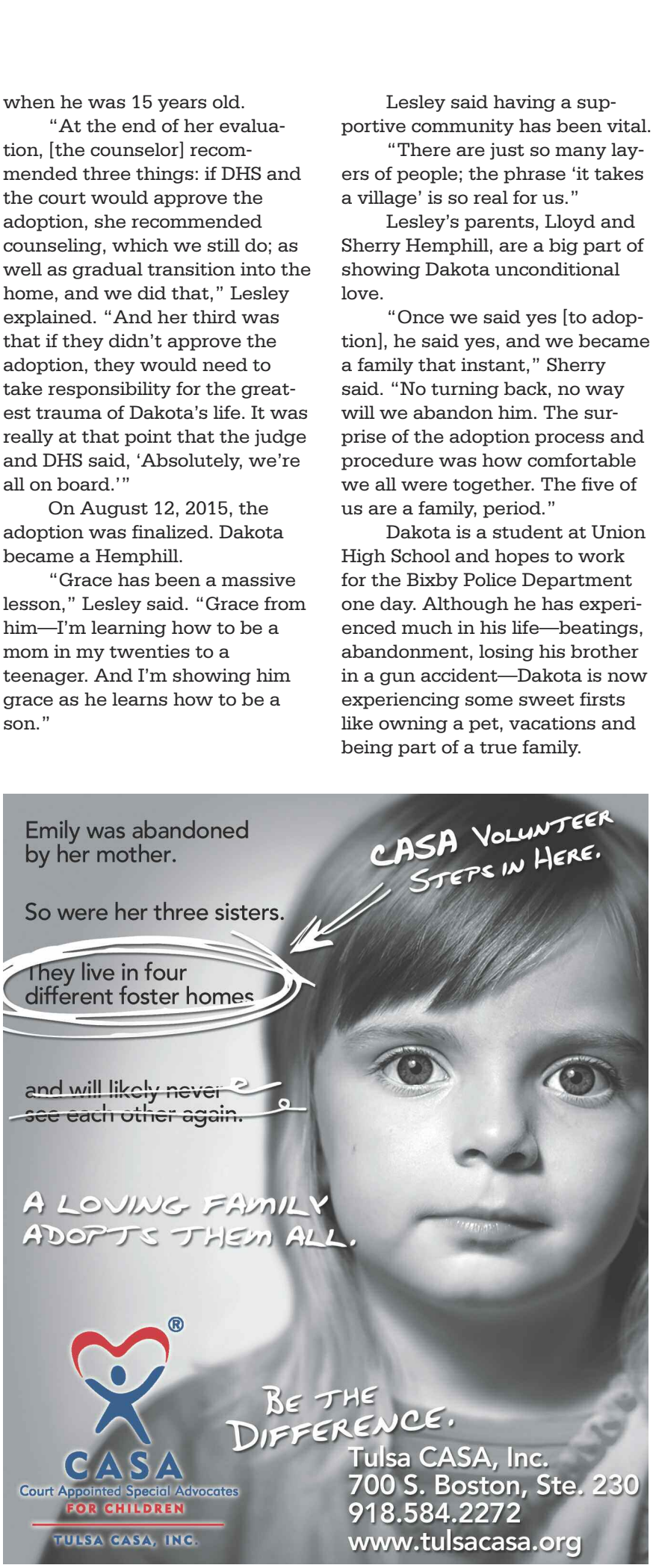
Lesley said having a supportive community has been vital.

"There are just so many layers of people; the phrase 'it takes a village' is so real for us."

Lesley's parents, Lloyd and Sherry Hemphill, are a big part of showing Dakota unconditional love.

"Once we said yes [to adoption], he said yes, and we became a family that instant," Sherry said. "No turning back, no way will we abandon him. The surprise of the adoption process and procedure was how comfortable we all were together. The five of us are a family, period."

Dakota is a student at Union High School and hopes to work for the Bixby Police Department one day. Although he has experienced much in his life—beatings, abandonment, losing his brother in a gun accident—Dakota is now experiencing some sweet firsts like owning a pet, vacations and being part of a true family.









philbrook.org/festival

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NOVEMBER 2016

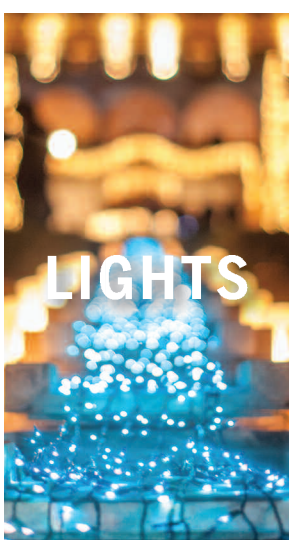
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DECEMBER 2016

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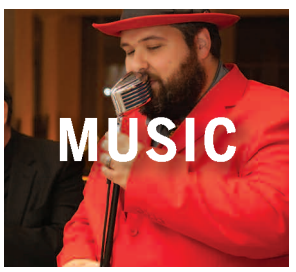












FESTIVAL

Events

- **Philbrook Drawing Rally** — *Buy local art drawn live!*
  Saturday, Nov. 19, 5–8 p.m.
- **Make & Mingle**
  Thursday, Dec. 1, 6–8 p.m.
- **Family Studio Saturday**
  Saturday, Dec. 3, 12:30–3:30 p.m.
- **Philbrook Member Shopping Night**
  Thursday, Dec. 8, 5:30–8 p.m.
- **Make & Mingle**
  Thursday, Dec. 8, 6–8 p.m.
- **Second Saturday**
  Saturday, Dec. 10, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.
- **Third Thursday: Print Action**
  Thursday, Dec. 15, 5–8 p.m.
- **Jared Yazzie Trunk Show**
  Thursday, Dec. 15, 5–8 p.m.
- **Family Studio Saturday**
  Saturday, Dec. 17, 12:30–3:30 p.m.
- **Winter Solstice Tour**
  Wednesday, Dec. 21, Noon–1p.m.

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BY NANCY A. MOORE

Carol Meyer – captivates young audiences

About six years ago, Carol Meyer was asked to read at Pottery Barn Kids during the weekly storytime. Having three kids and three grandkids herself, reading children's books aloud was something she had done countless times. Before leading her first session, she asked if she could incorporate some music at the beginning and it was a huge hit. It was then that Meyer, known as "Miss Carol" to her audiences, knew she had found the recipe for captivating children's attention by engaging them in her songs and stories.



TK: What is your background?
Meyer: My husband and I moved to Tulsa in the 1980s. At that time, my husband and I performed music in a band for our church. Music is where our hearts lie.

TK: How did you become interested in leading story time?
Meyer: While working at Pottery Barn Kids, I was asked to read during a scheduled storytime, and I asked if they would mind if I brought my guitar along so I could play some songs, too. Once I did the storytime and included music with my guitar, that put it over the top for me. It went so well and I loved it!

TK: How do you organize your sessions?
Meyer: Storytimes are 30 minutes long. I typically sing for the first 20 minutes and read for the last 10 minutes. After the music is over and I start to read the books, it's a whole other dynamic that is just as exciting as the music is. I am able to engage my audience by encouraging them to sing along, and I demonstrate the hand-gestures and body movements for the kids to do during the songs.

TK: What is the age range of the children you entertain?
Meyer: Newborn to 6- or 7-years old, with the average age being 3. When school is in session, I have more of a younger crowd. I enjoy communicating with the little ones; I really didn't have any idea that I would be doing this now. It's been really fun!

TK: How do you decide what to sing and read at each session?
Meyer: I look at my audience and that helps me decide. I found that it is best to start out with songs that all the kids will know so they can sing along.

TK: Can you share a special experience you had during a session?
Meyer: One of the moms told me that while they were eating lunch, her child remembered one of the songs I sing at storytime and told his mom he would eat his veggies because Miss Carol says I have to "Eat, eat, eat those veggies, you got to eat them all

continued next page

the time."

TK: What are some of your favorite books to read?
Meyer: Knuffle Bunny, Madeline and Olivia books are always good. The boys like dinosaur and shark books, so I switch those up.

TK: What are some of your favorite songs to sing?
Meyer: I stick to what kids might know. Although I like to throw a curveball every once in a while, like the old funny song, "Boa Constrictor" by Shel SiIverstein. I also try to throw in songs that parents and grandparents will know like "doe, a deer."

TK: What do you enjoy about entertaining kids?
Meyer: It's all about having fun with it and being myself. The fun part for me is really engaging with the kids. I have so much fun with the kids! Sometimes moms take videos of me and play it back with their kids before they come back to the next storytime.

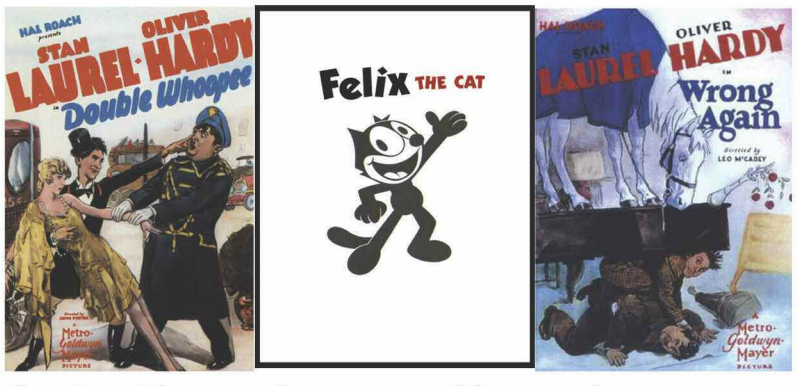
TK: Where can kids see you perform?
Meyer: Pottery Barn Kids at Utica Square on Tuesdays at 11 a.m. and Tulsa Toy Depot on Thursdays at 11 a.m.

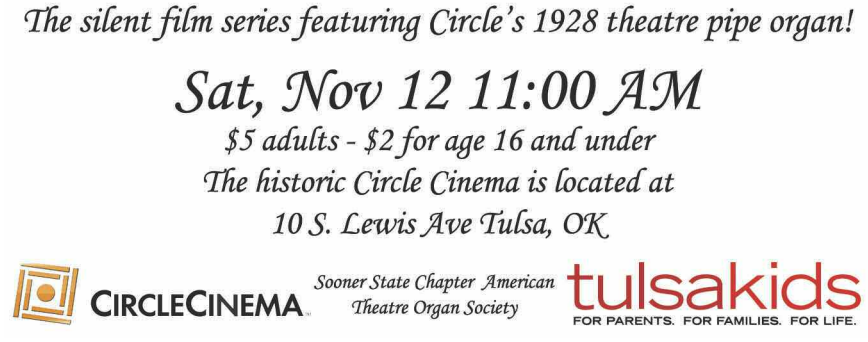
TK: Can people hire you for their own events?
Meyer: Yes! Due to the popularity of the interactive storytime, I also attend children's birthday parties with my husband, Bruce, who plays the bass guitar. (Facebook.com/MissCarolsMusic; 918.269.3582) Entertaining at birthday parties has been an unexpected blessing. While at birthday parties, our main entertainment is music, but I'm happy to do whatever parents and kids would like.













BY DIANE TRITT EATON

go west to Los Cabos: Mexico's Pacific-Side playground

When Americans take vacations in Mexico, Easterners tend to go to the Yucatan Peninsula whereas Westerners trek to the Baja Peninsula. A key reason for the distinction is proximity, affording travelers the chance to maximize time relaxing in a beach chair vs. wasting time cramming into an airplane seat.

As a frequent traveler from the Eastern U.S., I've visited Mexico's Atlantic side several times —-enjoying Cancun, the Riviera Maya, and the ancient ruins in Tulum. Recently, I was invited to vacation in Mexico's Pacific coast, unchartered territory for me. Worrying that it couldn't be all that different from my prior exposure to Mexico, I hesitantly agreed (with a slightly twisted arm) to venture to Mexico's Los Cabos (or Cabo, for short).

A Coastal Paradise!

Much to my surprise, the Cabo experience was exhilarating and dramatically different. While the Yucatan Peninsula area is flat with inland jungles, the Los Cabos region is a substantially different topographical treat, consisting of desert landscapes, scenic mountains, dramatic rock formations and, of course, the melding of the azure Sea of Cortez with the mighty Pacific Ocean.

Vacationers enjoy a large playground, with opportunities to relax pool- and beach-side, venture out to enjoy the aquatic activities or go inland to explore the desert. Visitmexico.com, the country's tourism website, defines Cabo's layout quite well.



EL ARCO DE CABO SAN LUCAS.

Here, one can enjoy "…two dramatically distinct personas. Tranquil San Jose del Cabo retains the look and vibe of an authentic Mexican town. Cobblestone streets, intimate restaurants and boutiques radiate from the central main square and mission church. Rambunctious Cabo San Lucas, on the other end of the highway (called the Corridor), is party central with funky bars and the slick Luxury Avenue Mall centered around the marina."

Beaches and More Beaches

A significant draw to Cabo is its 20+ mile stretch of beaches where the sand meets the surf. Sun-seekers and beachcombers simply laze about and stroll along the seashore, creamy white sand at their feet. Beaches are public property, even those in front of hotels and resorts, so you can beach hop. Medano Beach is by far the safest for swimming while other beaches are only accessible by boat. Regardless, the views are always spectacular.

Many folks make the trip to see the famous rock formation, El Arco de Cabo San Lucas, at Land's End on the southernmost tip of the peninsula. It is the only thing standing between the Sea of Cortez and the Pacific Ocean. The water is crystal clear here and known as an ideal spot for snorkeling.

One word of extreme caution is that waves and water currents

continued next page

can be very strong, so swimming is prohibited at most Pacific ocean-side beaches.

Water Wonders

Jacques Cousteau referred to the Sea of Cortez as "the aquarium of the world." So, one can only imagine the tropical fish and marine life encountered while snorkeling or scuba diving here.

Cabo also offers some of the world's best whale watching. The joining of the Sea of Cortez with the Pacific Ocean creates an "oceanic highway super junction," resulting in a dense concentration of whales. Eight of the 11 species swim here in abundance. Humpbacks are very expressive with tail slapping, fin slapping and breaching. The chance of witnessing whales' behaviors is super high. For example, whales were spotted on 100 percent of the area's tours last season, which runs between December 15 and April 15.

During this timeframe, hundreds of whale sharks—-the largest fish on the planet, weighing around 20,000 pounds—-also call Cabo home. Swimming alongside these gentle giants is both blissful and safe. Furthermore, aquatic adventurers can typically expect to encounter pods of dolphins and even sea lions.

Desert Treks

Tours through the desert are available for those who want to learn about the Baja Outback. ATV tours are popular, and some tour operators offer the chance to ride a camel along a private stretch of beach followed by a Mexican ranch-style lunch. Families may also choose to ride in an open-air Mercedes-Benz Unimog 4x4 truck through the desert to soak in the sights of cacti and desert flora cropping up along sandy pathways. A variety of indigenous wildlife such as cara caras, ring-tailed cats and desert falcons are often spotted.

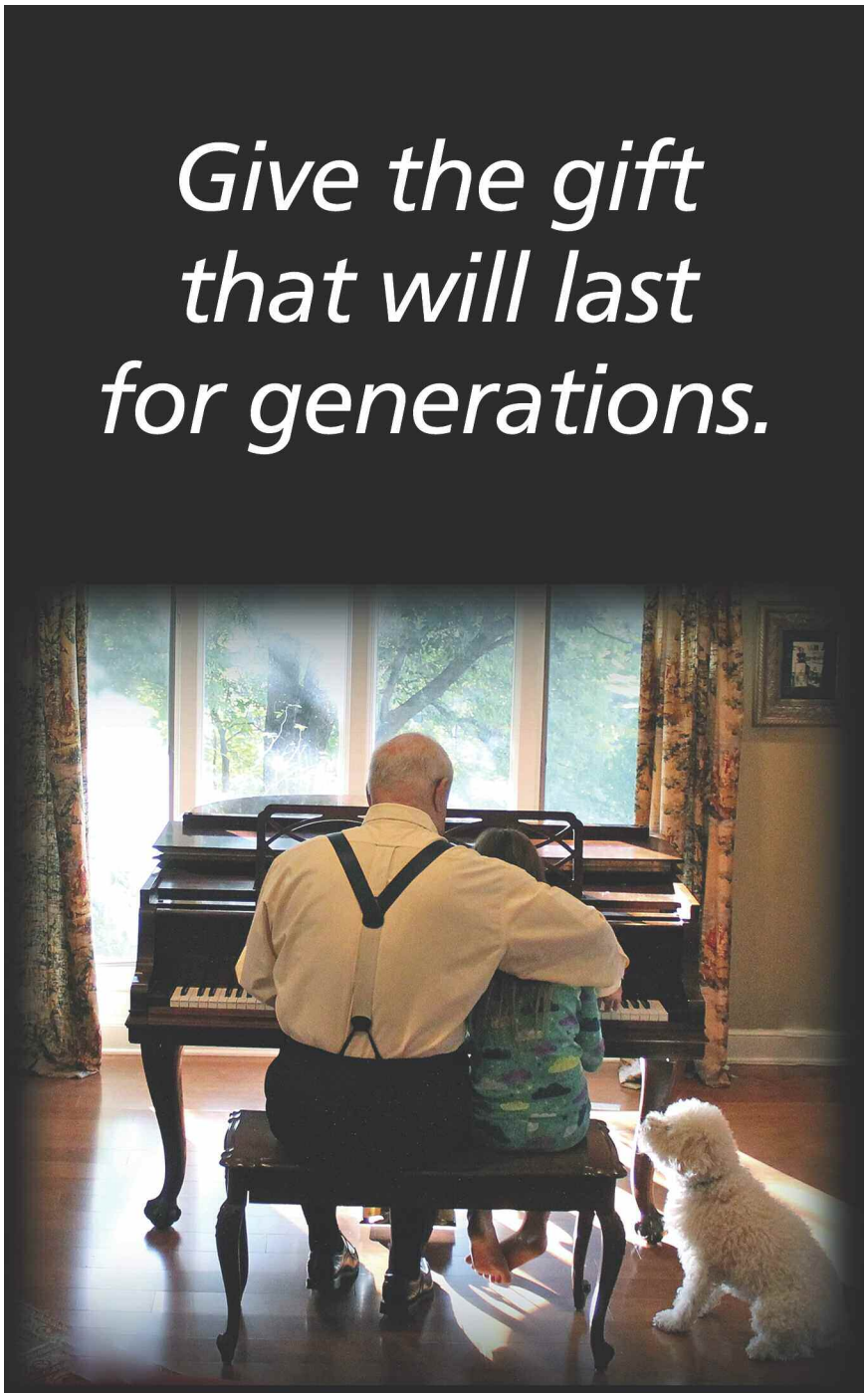
Family-friendly Lodging

Los Cabos has numerous beachside resorts and all-inclusives that cater to families—-equipped with kids' clubs and magnificent pools. There are a growing number of condominiums and villas for rent, too. Many of these options are almost brand new. The region had to rebuild after 2014's Hurricane Odile. As a result, many properties have made multi-million dollar improvements to the rooms, the pools and the grounds.

Choosing where to stay is a personal decision. For instance, you'll need to determine if you want to stay bayside or oceanside or at a spot with lots of organized activities or in a more private setting. Given the wide array of options, ask your trusted travel agent for help or do some upfront research yourself. To get started, check out www.visitmexico.com, www.cabosbest.com/best-beaches-in-cabo, www.whalewatchcabo.com, and www.gocabo.travel.

High season is from mid-December through April when daytime temperatures are typically in the 80s. Shoulder season is May through June, a time when prices are more attractive and crowds are fewer. Rainy season is during the mid-summer through fall months when hurricanes are possible, too.





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BY DANIELLE HILL

retro family fun at **Circle Cinema's Silent Films**

A lot has changed since the 1920s, and while life may look quite different today, there's one thing that hasn't changed—people still like to have fun. Back in the '20s it was not uncommon to see families gathering around the radio or a board game, or, if budget permitted, seeing a film at the theater. Today, however, family fun has become a bit of a foreign concept, with so many different schedules to juggle and the lure of the computer or cellphone dominating any free time. But this needn't be the case for Tulsa families. Stash the technology and experience some classic, retro fun at the movies.

Tulsa's historic Circle Cinema is the perfect place for family fun with a unique twist. While the theater features an array of popular showings appealing to older audiences, Circle Cinema has a wonderful monthly Second Saturday Silent Film Series perfect for families with children, giving everyone a chance to experience films just as moviegoers of the '20s would have.

"[The Silent Film series] was a great opportunity to feature the fully restored original 1928 Circle pipe organ," said David Kimball, Circle Cinema publicist, "combining that with a classic silent film from the 1920s. The unique and fun series is really one of Tulsa's hidden gems and sets us apart in that no other theatre in Tulsa is doing anything quite like it."



ORGANIST BILL ROWLAND ACCOMPANIES SILENT FILMS AT CIRCLE CINEMA.





Since the series began in 2015, Kimball says a diverse crowd has attended, including everyone from families with children to grandparents and general curiosity seekers looking to try something new.

While adults may be looking for nostalgia, or have a technical interest in music or film, children can simply enjoy a unique sensory experience.

Both Bill Rowland, Circle Cinema's organist, and Kimball, are confident that little ones are in for a treat. In fact, Rowland says that silent films "were made for children in a large sense." Kimball adds, "there's lots to see and enjoy all at once—the unique sounds of the organ, the visuals of a classic short film and the welcoming ambiance of the Circle Cinema as well. As they say, a feast for the eyes and ears!"

For those who may have reservations about loading up the kids and heading to see a silent film, Rowland offers some tips. First, anyone who has taken a child to a lengthy movie knows the signs of boredom indicative of a limited attention span. With silent films, shorter attention spans aren't as much of a concern because the films are "shorts," meaning they are far less lengthy than the majority of today's children's movies. Plus, before the show, Rowland warms up the audience a bit with an introduction to the story of the Circle Cinema's organ and films that will be

continued next page

shown—an experience that's both educational and fun! Most children are intrigued with interesting visuals, such as Felix the Cat, and will get the added excitement of hearing live music being played by a real person. Parents can talk to their children about how to watch for ways the organist matches the music he chooses to play with the action happening on the screen.

Because the organ is being played in the theater, some parents may be curious about the volume and how this will affect young children. Rowland says that not only is the organ less loud than other organs of higher ranks, but "it is MUCH softer in fact than lots of the current movie scores." So, if your kids can tolerate the volume at typical movie theaters, they will be more than okay with the sound of a live organ being played.

The organ is arguably the most fascinating part of the whole show, as it is actually the original Robert-Morton pipe organ that the Circle Cinema was equipped with when it first opened in 1928. However, despite playing a vital role in many a silent film, the organ was only in the Circle for a short time before talking pictures, a.k.a. talkies, became the norm and it was no longer needed as an accompaniment; thus, its departure in 1931. The organ eventually was located and returned to its original home at the Circle Cinema. To hear more about the organ's history and return, attend a show where the organist will tell you about it before the show begins.

"Whether you're a cinema enthusiast, a curious moviegoer seeking a new adventure, a parent who would like to expose their children to something unique and fun, or someone who may be nostalgic for the good old days," Kimball says, "there is lots here to enjoy!"

November Silent Film Second Saturday
Saturday, Nov. 12, 11 a.m.
Circle Cinema, 10 S. Lewis
The featured films are two Laurel and Hardy short films, "Double Whoopee" and "Wrong Again," along with a Felix the Cat cartoon.
Saturday's organist, Phil Judkins, also will play classic melodies before showtime.
Tickets cost $5 for adults and $2 for children. For more information, call 918-585-3504.



'Tis the season to celebrate responsible spending



Holiday items are lining every aisle, and each little trinket or decoration seems to be screaming, "Take me! You need me! You can't live without me!" Sound familiar?

Let's celebrate responsible spending this holiday season by avoiding those unnecessary purchases – even when they feel very necessary in the moment.

Here are some ways to save money that don't take away from the celebratory season:

Decide how much you want to spend, and stick to it! Take a few days (or weeks) to create a feasible budget for the entire holiday season. Then, take that amount out in cash – once the cash is gone, you are done!

Make a list (and check it twice). Sticking to a list will help curb those impulse purchases that mysteriously end up in your cart. Also, make sure to include the store you need to visit for each item on the list – that way you will know your game plan in advance, and have fewer opportunities to get distracted.

Use gift wrap that doesn't break the bank. Before you buy the adorable high-dollar roll of wrapping paper, consider the ultra-affordable options at your local dollar store. You might be surprised by the great selection - we know your wallet will be!

Think of gifts that might not cost a lot of money, but will mean a lot to others. Baking cookies for your family? Make an extra batch for that neighbor or teacher you have in mind (and let the kids help too!). Know someone who is overwhelmed and has a lot on their plate? Gift them your "time" to help shuttle their kids, do yardwork or simply walk their dog. Things that may seem like simple acts of kindness to you may just make someone else's holiday season.

Watch for deals! Do your kids just have to have that popular item that is a tad over your budget? Most stores run deals and sales around peak holiday times – you could end up getting that item for way less!

Celebrating responsible spending will relieve the financial stress of the season. And truly, that's the best gift you can give yourself!

As always, extra help is just a click away at ttcu.com.

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NOVEMBER



1 | TUESDAY

DIA DE LOS MUERTOS: DAY OF THE DEAD
Hispanic food, music and dancing will be featured at the annual Day of the Dead Arts Festival in downtown Tulsa. The festival, which is open to the public, will run from 5 to 10 p.m. Admission is $5 per person; children 12 and younger are free. Musicians and dancers will perform outdoors and at an indoor cafe, and life-size, papier-mâché skeletons will be paraded into the festival. Fire dancers will also perform. Highlights will include altars created by local artists, and visitors can decorate traditional sugar skulls and incinerate letters written to the deceased, all part of the ultimate contrast between the sadness of death and the joy of living. For more information call 918.585. 1234 or visit www.livingarts.org. Living Arts Tulsa , 307 E. Brady St.

DIA DE LOS MUERTOS PEAR DECORATING
{FREE} Join Reasor's Registered Dietitians for pear decorating for Dia de los Muertos. Learn about pear nutrition, decorate your pear with celebration stickers and take home your pear to eat. There will also be free coloring books and pencils while supplies last. Reasor's, 11005 E. 41st St.; 5:30-7:30 P.M.

SPACEPARK 360 AT JENKS PLANETARIUM
Sometimes it's just fun to dream! Like what would it be like to ride carnival rides or even roller coasters in space. That dream is fulfilled with this virtual full-dome roller coaster simulations! Warning: May cause motion sickness. The target audience age for Spacepark 360 is 3 years to adult. This show is held at the Jenks Planetarium, Jenks High School, Dr. Kirby A. Lehman Center for the Study of Math and Science Center, 3rd Floor. Elevator available. General Seating. 1 show.; 7-8 p.m.

2 | WEDNESDAY

HOMESCHOOL ART CLASS AT PHILBROOK
Each homeschool class offers gallery tours led by qualified art educators, an in-studio art-making project, as well as resources to guide parents through that week's class into a month-long learning opportunity. Class begins promptly at 1 p.m. and ends at 3 p.m.

TEEN TIME {FREE}
Take over the computer lab for two hours and game to your heart's content. For ages 10-18. Class is limited to 12 on a first-come, first-served basis. Martin Regional Library, 2601 S Garnett Rd.; 6 p.m.

3 | THURSDAY

KICK-OFF FOR SET THE TABLE TULSA
{FREE} Kick-off your Set the Table Tulsa challenge with a get together at Guthrie Green.; 5:30-7:30 p.m. Find out more about Set the Tulsa, Tulsa over at Hip Mom's column.

DOG NIGHT IN THE GARDEN
Pups, bring your people for a walk in the Garden. The garden will have wading pools and treats just for the furry friends. Tulsa Botanic Garden, 3900 Tulsa Botanic Dr.; 5-8 p.m. www.tulsabotanic.org.

GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN
Grandparents can be important caregivers in their grandchildren's lives. This three-week program covers both the joys and struggles in caring for children today. Family and Children Services, 650 S. Peoria; 6-8 p.m.

MINECRAFT GAMING {FREE}
Put your imagination to the test building your own world in the popular game Minecraft. For ages 10-18. Hardesty Regional Library; 6-8 p.m.

4 | FRIDAY

ADVENTURES IN SCIENCE {FREE}
Explore different science topics through hands-on projects that are fun for the whole family. Broken Arrow Library, 300 W Broadway Ave.; 2 p.m.

FIRST FRIDAY ART CRAWL
This year-round monthly event features all of the galleries, studios and museums as well as the part-time galleries in various shops opening their doors to show art. The Art Crawl is held on the first Friday of the month in the Brady District; 6–9 pm.

5 | SATURDAY

PARENT/CHILD ACRYLIC WORKSHOP
Join Margie Murphy-McNutt as she guides you and your child through the amazing world of acrylics. Parent and child will work together to create a beautiful piece of art. For kids 5 and older.
Sign up by Thursday, November 3. Cost: $20/pair. Whiteside Recreation Center, 4009 S. Pittsburgh Ave.; 10 a.m.

MINI MASTERS: FIVE SENSES OF ART
Kids will explore the galleries and gardens of Gilcrease Museum as they use their five senses - sight, sound, hearing, taste and touch.
For ages 3-6, who must be accompanied by an adult. Space is limited and advanced registration is required: 918.506.2774. Gilcrease Museum 1400 North Gilcrease Museum Rd.; 10:30 a.m.

THE BACKYARD MARKET
A juried selection of vendors brings together quality, handcrafted fine art, apparel, jewelry, accessories, housewares, paper goods, bath + body products, and more for a day of shopping. Restore House 924 S Main St.; 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

6 | SUNDAY

See sidebar for on-going events/ activities.

7 | MONDAY

APP ZOO: CODING FOR KIDS {FREE}
Are you interested in teaching your child coding skills, but don't know where to start? Bring your tween and join in to explore coding apps for early learners in the new Digital Literacy Lab. Registration is required. Class size is limited to 10. Call 918.549.7323 to register. For ages 9-11. Central Library, 400 Civic Center; 4 p.m.

8 | TUESDAY

MINI MASTERS: FIVE SENSES OF ART
See previous description, noon.

9 | WEDNESDAY

MINI MASTERS: FIVE SENSES OF ART
See previous description, 10 a.m.

HANDS ON! {FREE}
Busy hands, busy brain! Preschoolers learn through hands-on activities. Join in to explore, experiment and create. Be ready to get messy! For ages 3-5. Central Library, 400 Civic Center; 10:30 a.m.

GAMES IN THE GARDEN {FREE}
If the weather is nice, join in for some outside fun and games! For all ages. Central Library, 400 Civic Center; 3:30 p.m.

10 | THURSDAY

ZACH: TEEN TIME @ ZARROW
This exciting teen art program is designed especially for the homeschooling community. Students will enjoy an arts enrichment experience with a consistent concept of the month presented, such as Landscapes, Portraits, 2D/3D, Realism/ Abstraction based on the Elements of Art and the Principles of Design. For ages 13 - 16. Zarrow Center for Art & Education, 124 East M.B. Brady St.; 10 a.m.

MUSEUM BABIES AT GILCREASE
Museum Babies is designed to nurture the needs of both parent and infant/toddler. Parents will enjoy a casual experience in the galleries, learning about the art of Gilcrease Museum, then it's "baby time" with activities to stimulate the five senses and refreshments. Space is limited and advanced registration is required: 918.596.2774 Gilcrease Museum; 10:30 a.m.

TARC KIDS "CONNECTIONS" GROUP
This a social skills group for children with Asperger's and high functioning autism, ages K-5th grade. TARC Office, 2516 E 71st St, Suite A; 4:30 p.m. www.autismtulsa.org

11 | FRIDAY

MUSEUM BABIES AT GILCREASE
See previous description, 10:30 a.m.



WILL ROGERS DAYS
The Will Rogers Museum in Claremore and the Birthplace Ranch in Oologah will celebrate the birthday of Will Rogers with the annual Will Rogers Days, Thursday, November 3 - Sunday, November 6. For a full scheduld of events, go to www.willrogers.com.

12 | SATURDAY

MAKE A NATURE JOURNAL
Create a simple nature journal and borrow the art supplies for sketching or writing in the Garden. Admission prices are free for Garden members; $8 for ages 13+; $4 for ages 3–12. Children 2 and younger are free. Tulsa Botanic Garden, 3900 Tulsa Botanic Dr.; 10 a.m.

SECOND SATURDAY AT PHILBROOK {FREE}
Bring out the inner artist in each member of the family and experience Philbrook in a whole new way! Visit on the second Saturday of each month for free family-friendly art activities, tours and scavenger hunts for kids of all ages. Philbrook Museum of Art, 2727 S. Rockford Rd.; 10 a.m. www.philbrook.org

SIBSHOP NOVEMBER WORKSHOP {FREE}
Sibshops are opportunities for brothers and sisters of children with disabilities and special health care needs to obtain peer support and education within a recreational context. These workshops are open to siblings 5 to 13 years old. . Happy Hands Education Center, 8801 S Garnett Rd.; 1-4 p.m. www.autismtulsa.org

NATIVE AMERICAN DREAM CATCHER CRAFT
{FREE} In honor of Native American Heritage Month, Suburban Acres Library invites tweens and teens to stop by and create a one-of-a-kind dream catcher using simple materials. Suburban Acres Library, 4606 N Garrison Ave.; 3 p.m.

13 | SUNDAY

See sidebar for on-going events/ activities.

14 | MONDAY

See sidebar for on-going events/ activities.

15 | TUESDAY

TURKEY TUESDAY {FREE}
Join in for a special turkey-themed storytime, plus games, songs and a craft! For ages 4-8. Class size is limited. A Schusterman-Benson Library, 3333 E 32nd Pl.; 4 p.m.

TERRIFIC TUESDAY: "EEK! SQUEAK!" {FREE}
There's a mouse in the house ... and he's hungry! Join him for a plateful of enjoyment at this Terrific Tuesday event for ages 5-10. Judy Z. Kishner Library; 10150 N. Cincinnati; 6 p.m.

COMMUNITY STORYTIMES

Bixby Library (20 E. Breckenridge, Bixby)
- Preschool Storytime: Mondays, Nov. 7, 14, 21, 28 ● 11-11:30 a.m.
- My First Storytime: Mondays, Nov. 7, 14, 21, 28 ● 10:10-10:30 a.m.
- PAWS for Reading: Thursday, Nov. 10 ● 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Broken Arrow Library (300 W. Broadway, Broken Arrow)
- My First Storytime: Tuesdays, Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 ● 10:30-11 a.m.
- Preschool Storytime: Mondays, Nov. 7, 14, 21, 28 ● 10:30-11 a.m.
- PAWS for Reading: Wednesday, Nov. 9 ● 4-5 p.m.

Broken Arrow Library/South (3600 S. Chestnut, Broken Arrow)
- Preschool Storytime: Tuesdays, Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 ● 10:30-11 a.m.
- My First Storytime: Wednesdays, Nov. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 ● 10:30-11 a.m.
- PAWS for Reading: Wednesday, Nov. 2 ● 4:30-5:30 p.m.

Brookside Library (1207 E. 45th Pl., Tulsa)
- Preschool Storytime: Wednesdays, Nov. 2, 9, 16, 30 ● 10:15-10:45 a.m.
- My First Storytime: Wednesdays, Nov. 2, 9, 16, 30 ● 11-11:20 a.m.
- PAWS for Reading: Friday, Nov. 18 ● 3:30-4:30 p.m.

Central Library (400 Civic Center, Tulsa)
- Family Fun Storytime: Tuesdays, Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 ● 10:30-11 a.m.
- Babies, Bubbles & Books: Wednesdays, Nov. 2, 16, 30 ● 10:30-11 a.m.
- PAWS for Reading: Saturday, Nov. 12 ● 1-2 p.m.
- Toddlers, Trikes & Tales: Wednesdays, Nov. 9, 23 ● 10:30-11 a.m.

Hardesty Regional Library (8316 E 93rd St., Tulsa)
- My First Storytime: Mondays, Nov. 7, 14, 21, 28 ● 10-10:20 a.m. and Tuesdays, Nov. 8, 15, 22, 29 ● 10-10:20 a.m.
- Toddler Time: Tuesdays, Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 ● 11-11:20 a.m. and Wednesdays, Nov. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 ● 10-10:20 a.m.
- Mr. Paul's Family Storytime: Thursdays, Nov. 3, 10, 17 ● 6:30-7 p.m.
- Mr. Paul's Preschool Storytime: Wednesdays, Nov. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 ● 11-11:30 a.m.

Helmerich Library (5131 E. 91st St., Tulsa)
- Stay-And-Play Storytime: Tuesdays, Nov. 1, 8, 15, 29 ● 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Jenks Library (523 W. B St., Jenks)
- My First Storytime: Wednesdays, Nov. 2, 9, 16, 30 ● 10-10:15 a.m.
- Preschool Storytime: Wednesdays, Nov. 2, 9, 16, 30 ● 10:30-11 a.m.
- PAWS for Reading: Tuesday, Nov. 1 ● 4-5 p.m.

Kendall-Whittier Library(21 S. Lewis, Tulsa)
- Bilingual Storytime: Wednesdays, Nov. 2, 30 ● 10-10:45 a.m.

Martin Regional Library (2601 S. Garnett Rd., Tulsa)
- Bilingual Storytime: Tuesdays, Nov. 1, 8, 15, 29 ● 11-11:30 a.m.

Owasso Library (103 W. Broadway, Owasso)
- My First Storytime: Tuesdays, Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 ● 10-10:25 a.m. and Wednesdays, Nov. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 ● 10-10:25 a.m.
- Preschool Storytime: Tuesdays, Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 ● 10:30-11 a.m. and Wednesdays, Nov. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 ● 10:30-11 a.m.
- Homeschool Storytime: Tuesdays, Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 ● 2-3 p.m.
- PAWS for Reading: Wednesday, Nov. 9 ● 4-5 p.m.

Pottery Barn Book Club Storytime (Utica Square)
- Tuesdays at 11 a.m.

Schusterman - Benson Library (3333 E. 32nd Place, Tulsa)
- Preschool Storytime: Tuesdays, Nov. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 ● 10:30-11 a.m.
- My First Storytime: Wednesdays, Nov. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 ● 10-10:20 a.m. & Wednesdays, Nov. 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 ● 10:30-10:50 a.m.
- PAWS for Reading: Monday, Nov. 14 ● 3:30-4:30 p.m.

Tulsa Toy Depot (101st & Sheridan, Tulsa)
- Thursdays at 11 a.m.

MY HOUSE HAS STARS AT THE JENKS PLANETARIUM
Based on the book by the same name, this story introduces both houses and stars from places and cultures all over the planet. The target audience age for My House Has Stars is ages 6 to Adult. This show is held at the Jenks Planetarium, Jenks High School, Dr. Kirby A. Lehman Center for the Study of Math and Science Center, 3rd Floor. Elevator available. General Seating. 1 show; 7 p.m.

16 | WEDNESDAY

TEEN TIME {FREE}
Take over the computer lab for two hours and game to your hearts content. For ages 10-18. Class is limited to 12 on a first-come, first-served basis. Martin Regional Library, 2601 S Garnett Rd.; 6-8 p.m.

17 | THURSDAY

MUSEUM BABIES
See previous description, 10:30 a.m. .

LEGO CLUB {FREE}
Create and build with LEGOs. All Legos are provided by the library and must stay at the library. For all ages. Rudisill Regional Library, 1520 N Hartford Ave.; 3:30 p.m.

LEGO LAB {FREE}
Learn new building ideas, partner with other children during team-building challenges and explore free building. For ages 6-12. Martin Regional Library, 2601 S Garnett Rd.; 4 p.m.

MINECRAFT NIGHT {FREE}
Put your imagination to the test building your own world in the popular game Minecraft! For ages 10-18. Seating is limited. Zarrow Regional Library. 2224 W. 51st St.; 6 p.m.

18 | FRIDAY

AN AFFAIR OF THE HEART OF TULSA
This three-day shopping event features unique, one-of-a-kind and often handmade items from jewelry and handbags to furniture, clothing and gourmet foods. It is a rare opportunity to shop for housewares, clothing, jewelry and more from nearly 500 independent retailers in one building. The cost is $8/per person for all three days. River Spirit at Expo Square, 4145 E 21st St . Find more at www.heartoftulsa.com.

CENTRAL KIDS YOGA {FREE}
This program will introduce your children to yoga, help them to learn healthy lifestyle habits and set the foundation for a fit future. For ages 4-8. Registration is required: 918.549.7323. Central Library, 400 Civic Center; 10:30 a.m.

MUSEUM BABIES
See previous description, 10:30 a.m. .

AQUA-TOTS AT THE OKLAHOMA AQUARIUM
Bring your little ones out for a special Seaside Story Time and join educators for an interactive experience. Aqua-Tots is for ages 1-5. There is a maximum of 35 children, first come, first served. Oklahoma Aquarium, 300 Aquarium Dr.; 11 a.m. www.okaquarium.org

OKLAHOMA WILD AT GILCREASE MUSEUM
The Tulsa Zoo will be on site to educate visitors about the incredible animals that live in our own state. Presented in conjunction with the Kids Site's theme, Animal Influence-Oklahoma Animals, come experience live animals up close and discover what might be living in your backyard. Space is limited. Gilcrease Museum, 1400 North Gilcrease Museum Rd.; 11 a.m.

19 | SATURDAY

CHOCOLATE FUN AT GILCREASE
Explore the world of chocolate, learning where chocolate comes from and how to make it. Families will explore the special exhibition,Chocolate, learning about cacao beans, the different cultures that used chocolate and how it became the treat that we enjoy today. Space is limited. Reservations are required: 918.596.2774. This program is for families with children ages 4-15, accompanied by caregiver. Museum admission is waived for participants. Gilcrease Museum, 1400 North Gilcrease Museum Rd.; 12:30 p.m.

NATIVE CULTURE MAKE AND TAKE {FREE}
Come and enjoy an afternoon of Native Culture Make and Take! Projects include: Cherokee Baskets presented by Choogie Kingfisher, Pony Bead Key Chains presented by Stella Foster and Cherokee Pottery presented by Crystal Hanna. Participants will get to take home the projects that they make. For third grade and up. Zarrow Regional Library, 2224 W. 51st St.; 1 p.m.

IMAGINATION DAYS AT AHHA {FREE}
AHHA invites families to learn about the art of our time and experience it first-hand. Inspired by current AHHA exhibitions, this program fosters the development of lifelong learning skills. Hardesty Arts Center (AHHA), 101 East Archer St. 1-5 p.m.

20 | SUNDAY

FUNDAY SUNDAY AT GILCREASE {FREE}
It's an afternoon of museum fun for the whole family. Visitors can enjoy various art-making stations in the museum, each offering different materials and themes as well as teaching artists to help guide and inspire. For families with children ages 3-15, who must be accompanied by an adult. Gilcrease Museum, 1400 North Gilcrease Museum Rd.; noon-4 p.m. www.gilcrease.utulsa.edu.

21 | MONDAY

See sidebar for on-going events/ activities.

22 | TUESDAY

FALL CRAFT NIGHT {FREE}
Celebrate autumn with fall-themed crafts that the whole family can enjoy making together. Apple cider and materials will be provided in this fun drop-in program. For ages 3-12. Zarrow Regional Library, 2224 W. 51st St.; 6 p.m.

PASSPORT TO THE UNIVERSE
Join narrator Tom Hanks on a trip through the universe like never before. Learn our true cosmic address, discover just how small we really are and learn that we truly have come from the stars. The target audience age for Passport to the Universe is 10 years to adult. Jenks Planetarium, 7 p.m. www.jenkscommunityed.com

23 | WEDNESDAY

TARC TEENS CONNECTION GROUP
This a social skills group for middle and high school students with Asperger's and high functioning autism. For more information call 918.582-8272. TARC Office, 2516 E 71st St, Suite A; 4:30 p.m.

24 | THURSDAY



25 | FRIDAY

See sidebar for on-going events/ activities.

26 | SATURDAY

HOLIDAY CRAFTING STOP {FREE}
Make a holiday card, ornament, snow globe or other holiday craft. Supplies are provided. Seating and supplies are limited. For ages 3-15. Maxwell Park Library, 1313 N. Canton; 3 p.m.

27 | SUNDAY

See sidebar for on-going events/ activities.

28 | MONDAY

See sidebar for on-going events/ activities.

29 | TUESDAY

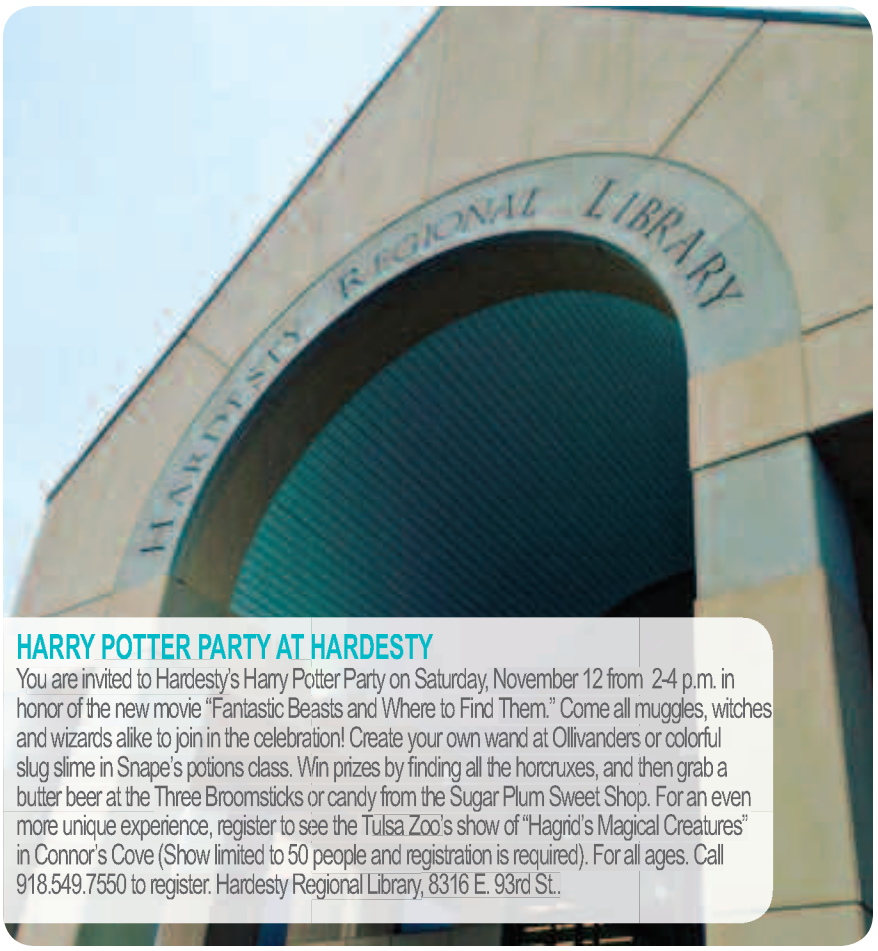
WHEEL FRIENDS STORYTIME WITH MS. WHEELCHAIR {FREE}
Join in for a special storytime that will focus on friends who move differently. The reigning Ms. Wheelchair Oklahoma will read stories and show off how she uses her wheelchair to get around. Songs, movements and other fun activities included. For ages 5 and younger. Central Library, 400 Civic Center; 10:30 a.m.

TALK & TOUR TUESDAY AT YOUTH SERVICES
{FREE} Join Youth Services of Tulsa for a talk about who they are and what they do. Then, you will get a guided tour through the facilities. RSVP at www.yst.org. Youth Services of Tulsa, 311 S. Madison, noon.

INTRODUCTION TO CODING FOR TEENS
{FREE} Join in for an introduction to the basics of computer coding in the new Digital Literacy Lab. Registration is required: Call 918.549.7323 to register. For ages 12-18. Central Library, 400 Civic Center; 4 p.m.

30 | WEDNESDAY

SHAKE IT WITH SANTA
A very special Zumba class to benefit sponsored families at Christmas. Free admission if you bring an unwrapped toy, gift card or item from the Whiteside list, otherwise it's $5. Whiteside Recreation Center, 4009 S. Pittsburgh Ave.; 6 p.m.



HARRY POTTER PARTY AT HARDESTY
You are invited to Hardesty's Harry Potter Party on Saturday, November 12 from 2-4 p.m. in honor of the new movie "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them." Come all muggles, witches and wizards alike to join in the celebration! Create your own wand at Ollivanders or colorful slug slime in Snape's potions class. Win prizes by finding all the horcruxes, and then grab a butter beer at the Three Broomsticks or candy from the Sugar Plum Sweet Shop. For an even more unique experience, register to see the Tulsa Zoo's show of "Hagrid's Magical Creatures" in Connor's Cove (Show limited to 50 people and registration is required). For all ages. Call 918.549.7550 to register. Hardesty Regional Library, 8316 E. 93rd St..

ON-GOING

FAMILY STUDIO SATURDAYS AT PHILBROOK
Each month, Family Studio Saturdays explores one big idea through art, making art in the studios and exploring in the galleries. Projects and activities change monthly. Drop in from 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. - each Saturday (excluding the 2nd Saturday) of the month. Philbrook Museum of Art, 2727 S. Rockford Rd. philbrook.org

PRESCHOOL PLAYDATE AT BOUNCE U
Bounce U has a special bounce time just for ages 5 and younger on the dates/times below. The cost is $7.99 per child and don't forget your socks.
Tuesdays: 10 -11:30 a.m.
Thursdays: 3 - 4:30 p.m.
Fridays: 10 - 11:30 a.m.
Call ahead to reserve your spot: 918.249.0090
8922 South Memorial Dr., Suite A, Tulsa

YOUTH SERVICES OF TULSA'S COFFEE HOUSE {FREE} Coffee House is a place to hang out, visit with friends and enjoy being a teen. The Coffee House has Wi-Fi, so, teens can bring personal connection devices (laptops, internet phones, etc.) with you to the Coffee House while you enjoy your free coffee and cappuccino donated by QuikTrip.Youth Services Tulsa, 310 S. Madison.

INSECT ADVENTURE
The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension has the only live bug petting zoo in the state. This presentation comes with more than 25 species of living arthropods as well as a knowledgeable, passionate, and entertaining professional entomologist to walk you through your arthropod discovery and exploration. Oklahoma Cooperative Extension, 127 Noble Research Center, Stillwater. First and third Saturday of the month; 10 a.m.-2 p.m. www.insectadventure.okstate.edu

TODDLER TIME AT SKY ZONE
If they can walk, they can jump! Toddler Time at Sky Zone is a special time just for the little one, where they can explore exciting new ways to be active. For questions and pricing information, go to skyzone.com/tulsa. Address: 8306 E. 61st St., Tulsa. $10/per child (Sky Zone socks are $2/pair, but are reusable). Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 9:30-11:30 a.m. Ages 5 and younger.

*We make every effort to ensure the accuracy of this information. However, you should always call ahead to confirm dates, times, location, and other information for all events. If you're interested in submitting an event for the calendar, go to www.tulsakids.com.



CABARET
When: Friday, Oct. 28-Saturday, Oct. 29 and Nov. 3-5 at 8 p.m.; Oct. 30 and Nov. 6 at 2 p.m.
Where: Tulsa PAC, 110 E. 2nd St.; www.tulsapac.com
The multiple Tony-winning classic about the whirlwind romance between a 19-year-old British dancer and a young American writer in 1930's Berlin. Music by John Kander, lyrics by Fred Ebb, and book by Joe Masteroff. Parental guidance suggested.

2ND SATURDAY SILENT FILM SERIES
When: Saturday, November 12; 11 a.m.
Where: Circle Cinema, 10 S. Lewis
The Second Saturday Silents at Circle Cinema presents Laurel and Hardy in "Double Whoopie" and "Wrong Again" plus Felix the Cat Cartoon. This famous comedy team of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy in two silent short films, accompanied by Bill Rowland on the Circle's original 1928 theatre pipe organ. As an added attraction, they will show the 1924 Felix the Cat cartoon "Felix Goes West." Admission is $5 for adults and $2 for 16 and younger.

TSO POPS: RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK
When: November 5 at 7:30 p.m.
Where: Tulsa PAC, 110 E. 2nd St.; www.tulsapac.com
Watch the action adventure movie "Raiders of the Lost Ark" while John Williams' epic score is performed live by a full symphony orchestra! (See photo above).

BATTLE OF THE BANDS FOR TPS FINE ARTS
When: Saturday, November 19; 4:30 p.m.
Where: Cain's Ballroom, 423 N Main St.; www.cainsballroom.com
A Battle of the Bands fundraiser in association with Fender Music Foundation for the Tulsa Public Schools Fine Arts Department. This event is all ages.

RAMONA QUIMBY
When: November 18 & 25, 7:30 p.m.; November 19, 20, 26 & 27 at 2 p.m.
Where: Spotlight Children's Theatre, 1381 Riverside Dr.; www.spotlighttheater.org
Ramona Geraldine Quimby is a fictional character in a series of novels named after her by Beverly Cleary. She starts out in the Henry Huggins series as the pestering little sister of Henry's friend Beatrice, called "Beezus" by Ramona and her family.

MOVIE IN THE GARDEN: "STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS"
When: Saturday, November 19; 1-3 p.m.
Where: Central Library, 400 Civic Center
Put your Jedi costume on and watch the latest film in the "Star Wars" saga. Enjoy popcorn, work on fun crafts and be prepared to meet our special guests from a Galaxy Far, Far Away! For ages 10 and older.

BIG HERO 6
When: Friday, November 25; 3:30-5:30 p.m.
Where: Brookside Library, 1207 E 45th Pl
DJoin in for a free showing of "Big Hero 6." For ages 8-13.

ANNIE
When: Tuesday, November 29; 7:30 p.m.
Where: Broken Arrow Performing Arts Center, 701 S. Main St.; www.brokenarrowpac.com
Directed by original lyricist and director Martin Charnin for the 19th time, this production of ANNIE is a brand new physical incarnation of the iconic Tony Award®-winning original. The beloved score for ANNIE includes "Maybe," "It's the Hard Knock Life," "You're Never Fully Dressed Without a Smile," "Easy Street," "I Don't Need Anything But You" and the eternal anthem of optimism, "Tomorrow." See photo below.



HOLIDAY EVENTS & PERFORMANCES

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF TULSA HOLIDAY MARKET

When: Friday, November 4 - Sunday, November 6
Where: Exchange Center at Expo Square, 4145 E. 21st St.; www.jltulsa.org
Holiday Market is a three-day, one-stop holiday shopping extravaganza featuring unique merchandise from more than 100 carefully selected vendors from Oklahoma and across the country. Shop for clothing, gourmet foods, gifts, children's items, jewelry and more during the market. Proceeds from Holiday Market go to fund our community projects that work to end the cycle of poverty and illiteracy in women and children of Tulsa. Free admission for teachers and military on Sunday, November 6. $6 in advance; $8 at the door.

THE EASTERN FLYER POLAR EXPRESS

Dates: November: 18-20, 23, 25-27, 29-30 and December: 1-23; Times*: 11 a.m., 1 p.m., 3 p.m., 5:30 p.m., 7:30 p.m. *not all dates have all departure times
Where: 400 E. 10 th Ave. in Stillwater, Oklahoma; www.easternflypolarexpress.com
Set to the sounds of the motion picture soundtrack, passengers will relive the magic of the story as they are whisked away on THE POLAREXPRESS™. Once onboard, hot chocolate and treats are served as passengers read along with the classic children's book, The Polar Express, by Chris Van Allsburg. Santa and his helpers greet passengers at the North Pole and then board the train, where each child is given the first gift of Christmas – a silver sleigh bell.

AN AFFAIR OF THE HEART OF TULSA

When: Friday, November 18 & Saturday, November 19, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Sunday, November 20, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.
Where: River Spirit at Expo Square, 4145 E. 21st St.; www.heartoftulsa.com.
This three-day shopping event features unique, one-of-a-kind and often handmade items from jewelry and handbags to furniture, clothing and gourmet foods. It is a rare opportunity to shop for housewares, clothing, jewelry and more from nearly 500 independent retailers in one building. The cost is $8/per person for all three days.

PHILBROOK FESTIVAL

When: Saturday, November 19 - Saturday, December 31
Where: Philbrook Museum of Art, 2727 S. Rockford Rd.; www.philbrook.org/festival.
Tour the beautifully decorated gardens and museum, which comes alive with artworks, trees and gingerbread houses created by local artists and school children for sale in time for holiday gift giving. All proceeds support year-round educational programs and Museum operations. For more information, visit

TURKEY DAY 5K & FUN RUN

When: Thursday, November 24; 7 a.m.
Where: Guthrie Green, 111 E. Brady; www.guthriegreen.com
This is a fun, family-friendly 5K and fun run to benefit the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma.

LIGHTS ON!

When: Thursday, November 24; 6:30 p.m.
Where: Utica Square, Tulsa
Put away the turkey, bundle up the kids, and head over to Utica Square. For over 40 years, Lights On has evoked the holiday spirit in all who attend. Sip on some hot chocolate as you sing your favorite holiday carols. And for the little ones, Santa Claus will be there to conduct the final countdown when over 700,000 lights, adorning 175 trees, light up the evening sky.

2016 TURKEY TROT

When: Friday, November 25; 8:30 a.m.
Where: BOK Center, Tulsa; www.fleetfeettulsa.com.
Gather up the family to trot off some turkey (and pumpkin pie) at this annual 5K.

A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS

When: Saturday, November 12 at 7:30 p.m.; Friday, November 18 at 7:30 p.m.; Saturday, November 19 at 2 and 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, November 20 at 2 and 7:30 p.m.; www.encore-tulsa.com
Where: Encore! Tulsa, 1511 S. Delaware Ave.
Christmas lights may be twinkling red and green, but Charlie Brown has the Yuletide blues. To get in the holiday spirit, he takes Lucy's advice and directs the Christmas play. And what's a Christmas play without a Christmas tree? But everyone makes fun of the short, spindly nevergreen Charlie Brown brings back - until the real meaning of Christmas works its magic once again.

ELF: THE MUSICAL

When: Nov. 15-17 at 7:30 p.m., Nov. 18 at 8 p.m., Nov. 19 at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m., Nov. 20 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.
Where: Tulsa Performing Arts Center, 110 E. 2nd St., Tulsa
"Elf the Musical" is the hilarious tale of Buddy, an orphan child who mistakenly crawls into Santa's bag and is transported to the North Pole. Eventually, Buddy's enormous size and poor toy-making skills cause him to realize that he's not an elf after all. With Santa's permission, Buddy embarks on a journey to New York City to find his birth father, discover his true identity, and help New York remember the true meaning of Christmas.

CIRQUE DREAMS HOLIDAZE

When: Nov. 29-30 at 7:30 p.m.
Where: Tulsa Performing Arts Center, 110 E. 2nd St., Tulsa; www.tulsapac.com.
CIRQUE DREAMS lights up the 2016 holiday season with its critically acclaimed holiday stage extravaganza, CIRQUE DREAMS HOLIDAZE — a new cirque show, Broadway musical and family Christmas spectacular all in one. Celebrity Attractions recommends this production for ages 4 and up. All persons entering the theater, regardless of age, must have a ticket.

THERE'S MORE! WWW.TULSAKIDS.COM/HOLIDAY





Dinner's at 6

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BY NATALIE MIKLES

new Thanksgiving food traditions to try

An unnamed family member once suggested we modify our Thanksgiving tradition.

"Let's do barbecue instead," it was suggested. The idea for brisket, pulled pork, beans and potato salad was quickly squashed in favor of, well, squash, and turkey, dressing, green beans and pumpkin pie.

Tradition can be comforting or restricting, depending on your perspective. And having children only further complicates those feelings of tradition… Start a new one? Keep the meal the same since your great-grandma has been making it? There's beauty in both.

My son wouldn't know what to do if his nana's rolls weren't on his Thanksgiving plate. (It's just about the only thing he will eat besides the turkey.) But I'm glad we've given other traditions – like Jello salads – an expiration date.

Tired of her cranberry sauce, my mom once made cranberry chutney for a change of taste. Expecting her typical sweet and tart sauce, we instead tasted onions, ginger and raisins. "Don't eat the chunder," my cousin said. That was the first and last year for cranberry chutney. New traditions are worth testing, but not all will stick.

I'm not ready to completely let go of Thanksgiving food traditions. My grandma's sweet potato casserole from a 1970s



church cookbook may be out of style, but it still tastes perfect to me. Families today have higher food expectations than ever before. We speak a common food language acquired from Top Chef, Chopped and America's Test Kitchen that asks us to step up our cooking game. But I hope we don't choose style over some of the substance that families consider tradition.

Here are some updated versions of some of our favorite traditional Thanksgiving recipes. Give one or two of these a try, and maybe start a new tradition.

Not into making pie crust? These bars are as good as pie, and they're easier to serve.

Pecan Pie Bars

Crust:

- 1 cup unsalted butter, softened
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt

Filling:

- 1 1/2 cups dark corn syrup
- 1/2 cup brown sugar, packed
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 4 large eggs
- 2 cups coarsely chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a 9-by-13-inch pan with parchment or spray well with nonstick cooking spray.

For crust: In a large bowl, beat butter and sugar at medium speed until creamy. Beat in egg and vanilla. Beat in flour and salt until well combined. Press mixture into bottom of pan. Prick with a fork. Freeze for 10 minutes before baking. Then, bake for 25 minutes at 350 degrees.

For filling: In a large bowl, whisk together corn syrup, brown sugar, flour, vanilla, salt and eggs. Stir in pecans. Pour onto hot crust. Bake until center is set, about 30 minutes. Check in last 10 minutes of cooking to see if it's browning too quickly, and if so, cover loosely with foil.

Cool completely before cutting into bars.

I'll be making this salad for our Thanksgiving dinner this year. It's a nice way to serve butternut squash, particularly if you prefer savory over sweet. The recipe is adapted from Taste of Home magazine.

Roasted Butternut Squash and Rice Salad

- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 butternut squash, peeled and cut into 3/4-inch cubes
- 2 cups uncooked jasmine rice
- 2 large red bell peppers, diced
- 1 cup pine nuts, toasted
- 6 green onions, thinly sliced
- 3 tablespoons snipped fresh dill
- 3 tablespoons coarsely chopped fresh parsley

Dressing:

- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. In a large bowl, combine brown

continued next page

sugar, balsamic vinegar, olive oil and salt. Add squash, and toss to coat. Place squash on a large baking pan. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until tender, stirring occasionally to brown on all sides. Cool completely.

Meanwhile, cook rice according to package directions. Remove from heat, and cool completely.

In a large bowl, combine bell peppers, pine nuts, green onions, dill, parsley, squash and rice. In a small bowl, whisk dressing ingredients. Pour over salad, and toss to coat. Serve at room temperature.

My kids aren't fans of standard cranberry sauce, but they do like this version. I saw this apple-cinnamon laced cranberry sauce recipe on the Food Network several years ago, and make it throughout the fall – not just on Thanksgiving.

Apple-Cinnamon Cranberry Sauce

- 2 cups cranberry juice
- 1 (6-ounce) bag sweetened dried cranberries
- 1 cinnamon stick, broken in half
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 Granny Smith apples, peeled, cored and diced
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, add the cranberry juice, cranberries, cinnamon and sugar. Bring to a boil, and let cook for 5 minutes. Add the apples and cook, stirring occasionally, until the cranberries have softened and apples are tender, about 5 minutes.

Remove 8 ounces of the liquid to a small bowl, and whisk in the cornstarch. Slowly add the cornstarch-juice mixture to the cranberry mixture, stirring constantly. Cook for an additional 5 minutes.

Remove from heat and pour into a serving bowl. Refrigerate until thickened, about 30 minutes. Remove the cinnamon sticks and serve.



"Either all that Thanksgiving food made dad tired, or he has an old operating system. Because he keeps crashing."

SET THE TABLE TULSA

"Frequent Family Meals are Associated with Stronger Family Bonds and Healthier Food Choices. Join other Tulsans this Month and Make Time to *Set the Table*."

Eat with your Family at least four times per week during the month of November. What will Family Meals do for you?

Kick-off event at Guthrie Green Thursday, November 3rd, 5:30pm-7:30pm.
Boxed Dinners available for pre-order from Whole Foods on srtthetabletulsa.org and will be delivered to Guthrie Green, $5.50/per person .
Food trucks on site or BYOP (bring your own picnic).

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Hip Mom Sets the Table

BY JILL VANTREASE

Ah, the family dinner. It can either be the most hallowed institution of family life, or the bane of a busy parent's existence — or probably a bit of both! While we hardly live like Americans in the 1950s — where Dad came home after a day at the office, put his feet up with a whiskey on the rocks, and then joined the family for a casserole and canned green beans — we know instinctively that it's important to gather together as a family at some point, somehow, during the day. How else to feel like a family and not a bunch of disjointed roommates passing through Grand Central?

And you've probably read the evidence about family bonding. According to Ayschia Kuykendall of Global Gardens, a local nonprofit that promotes hands-on science and peace education through gardening, dining together strengthens family bonds, improves health and well-being, promotes positive development and builds community. I have even read that it lessens the odds that children will dabble in drugs. No pressure!

So, with those critical points in mind, the staff of Global Gardens launched the "Set the Table Tulsa" challenge three years ago, and are doing the Set the Table Tulsa again this year during the month of November. Partnering with Tulsa City-County Library, Whole Foods Tulsa and TulsaKids magazine, it's a campaign that challenges Tulsans to gather as a family for dinner - or some meal - four out of seven days per week.

As a real-life mom of several children, I was enlisted to take on the challenge with my large-ish unruly brood — probably hoping for a train wreck and/or a bit of comedic fodder, I was happy to subject my family as sacrificial guinea pigs!



THE VANTREASE FAMILY TRIES SET THE TABLE TULSA.

But, truthfully, dinner together has always been a priority for me. It's how I was raised, so I've tried to replicate the tradition in my own family. Despite my dad's odd hours (he is a ferry boat captain and works weird shifts), we almost always ate dinner together and shared something about our days. Of course, it was hardly an idyllic experience every night. I remember I would dread dinner all day long when I knew we were having salmon. My dad would get angry if we whined over the food, and my beloved mother still can't cook a vegetable to save her life (luckily she lives in Seattle and won't read this!). But we all got together almost every day. And none of us three girls do drugs, so yay! (Although as my friend Janet points out, she has thought about drugs when she looks at the dinner mess to clean up.)

So, how do I usually do it? My routine is to plan the week — or four to five meals — that are easy-ish and that involve SOMETHING (tater tots!) that everyone will eat. I squeeze in grocery shopping on the weekends with as few children as possible — or use Walmart's fabulous online grocery pickup in a pinch.

Here's how we fared with the Set the Table Tulsa challenge:

Day 1: It's Labor Day, and we are all here! PVT grills some fabulous Costco salmon, and we skip one kid's soccer practice because it's simply un-American to practice on Labor Day. We all sit down, say grace (we are great at saying grace several bites in), and baby Francie screams so much in her highchair that I let her sit with us. This means that she walks all over the benches and steals food and forks. Everyone slurps down their salmon (PVT's salmon is light-years better than my mother's), and hastily asks whether they can be excused (my required phrase for civilly departing the table). Well, our conversational skills could be improved, but hey!

Day 2: It's a crazy Tuesday. One kid has soccer at 6 p.m., another at 6:30 p.m., and another at 7 p.m.! (How does this get done? The Holy Spirit and a carpooling fairy.) PVT shows up right around 5:40 p.m., so we eat together for about eight minutes, but we are all there before I leave with kid #1. I have no idea what we ate. We are lucky that PVT can usually dictate his own hours.

Day 3: We are celebrating our anniversary belatedly, and I don't know what to cook, so we head to El Guapo, our favorite Mexican haunt. We meet right at 5 p.m., the baby throws cutlery all over the restaurant, our food is slow so I leave with one kid having half-eaten his dinner for 6 o'clock soccer practice. I also bring the baby so she stops throwing queso and screaming at everyone.

Day 4: PVT is in New York City for one day, so he is not here. I had planned chili verde in the crockpot. It is ridiculously easy: a pork loin, green chilis, green enchilada sauce and green salsa all thrown together. The only hurdle with those crockpot dinners is that you have to remember to cook them that morning — which I do! Winning! We have an early

continued next page

dinner sans PVT, and then I leave for a kid's back-to-school night at 6 p.m.

Day 5: Friday! My dear friend Leslie (because who else invites a family of nine over?) texts us for a last-minute football watching get-together. Woo hoo! I don't have to cook! I supply a veggie platter, hard-boiled eggs, wine and beer. Our lovely host makes bratwurst and hot dogs. We're not really eating together as a family, but we're all there milling about, so that counts, right?

Day 6: It's a birthday party for our Sylvie. I book the Tulsa Balloon Guy so I don't have to entertain children or work. We order Mazzio's pizzas and wings and have cookie cake. We're all here, but it's not exactly civilized.

Day 7: Sunday we are all home! An uninspired menu of pork, tater tots (as long as there are tater tots on the planet, my children will never starve) and Texas toast.

So week one - how did we do? By my tally we get five out of seven - yay! But I'm struck by how good we have it. Since I stay home, I can get meals ready in the afternoon so we can eat them whenever. And PVT's hours can be pretty fluid. How do dual-income families or parents with inflexible hours do it? I remember when I was working and dragging myself through the door at 6 p.m. with two howling toddlers. The last thing on earth I wanted to do was cook. I usually just threw something pre-made together. What do my working homies do?

My friend Fiona relies on easy stuff: crockpot meals, pizza, taco Tuesdays. Michelle, a working mom whose kids are also very busy with football and golf, focuses more on breakfasts. She'll make a breakfast casserole or waffles to make sure the kids have a good before-school meal. Dinners are more of a free-for-all: she'll have makings for salads and sandwiches, and everyone eats when they can. My friend Marlow says her family does breakfasts too. Husband Scott manages McNellie's, so nights are tough. But Scott does eggs, bacon, breakfast burritos and breakfast from scratch. So your meal together doesn't have to be dinner.

And we're off again:

Day 8: We skip soccer—yay! PVT gets home late; we have sheet-pan fajitas - a recipe from the Whole Foods website. Some kids just eat a tortilla, but who cares? Colette makes our guacamole.

Day 9: Once again PVT gets home before three soccer practices. We squeeze in a quick dinner of weird turkey meat loaves, green beans and Rice-a-Roni.

Day 10: Dinner before 6 p.m. soccer practice: tilapia with capers, tater tots, salad. Everyone will survive on tater tots!

Day 11: A babysitter - woo hoo! The kids and sitter get pork out of the crockpot; they'll survive. PVT and I go to a fundraiser for STEM programs at the Jenks airport: it's called Flight Night. We get to watch a spectacular air show while quaffing adult beverages, and then enjoy dinner and an auction. Such a treat to sit and not field arguments!

Day 12: It's a crazy Friday: PVT and Keane are helping out with registration at Bishop Kelley's cross country meet at ORU. Colette has a 6 p.m. soccer game. Somehow we all meet up afterwards at home and have pizza delivery.

Day 13: Oh how I love football season and generous friends. Bryce and Noreen have us over to watch PVT's Ducks play Nebraska. We nosh and snack and drink and the kids run amok! PVT and I have to leave for brief periods to fetch Will from his soccer game, Colette from her soccer game -- but such fun!

Day 14: Keane has a late soccer game, but we gather for ham, broccoli and MORE tater tots.

Tally: Five out of seven or so? Right?

Here are some other ideas for busy families. My friends Kim and Lauren swear by a lot of Sunday meal preparation: getting things chopped up and prepping a few freezer meals. Very efficient, although my friend Lindsay says she tried this and it made her hate and dread Sundays. Laura says she got her kids involved on the weekend: "We washed and cut up veggies, cleaned and trimmed chicken breasts and had meals ready to go so we could have a home-cooked meal together... after I worked a 9-10 hour day." Wow!

Other ideas? Blue Apron and Home Chef type delivery services (these seem to work better with smaller families who don't mind a bit of prep time in my unscientific opinion); meal delivery systems like Fitness Meal Systems (check them out on Facebook; they deliver healthy prepared meals to your door!).

My friend Whitney, a busy pregnant working mom, swears by Dinner's at 6: "I get 15 freezer meals for $165. They are a local company in Broken Arrow. I get home by 5:30 and dinner is on the table by 6 and I get to play with my kiddos for 30 minutes while it cooks because I have no prep time! I love it!" So there are options for parents who work outside the home!

Day 15: Fortunately, I have the foresight to make a crockpot pork mess: Keane has soccer tryouts, the girls have ballet and hip hop, and Sylvie has a 6 p..m soccer game. AAAHH! We all eat together after that.

Day 16: Well, we eat together - fish tacos, but the fish in underdone, PVT gripes that I don't cut the cilantro in the guacamole finely enough, and the girls fight over squishing the avocados for guacamole. Gah.

Day 17: PVT and I are supposed to go to a charity event but we cannot fathom leaving the house. Instead, we all eat together: pasta with sausage and Brussels sprouts.

Day 18: It's Keane's birthday! We all go to Yokozuna because sushi is Keane's love language.

Days 19-20: In a strange turn of events, I go to LAS VEGAS for two days with dear high school girlfriends. I almost don't get on the plane; I am CRYING at the airport because I have never left the baby before and isn't it simply my sheer willpower and presence that keeps my kids alive every day? Apparently not, because no one cares that I'm gone. Only PVT misses me, and he is understandably exhausted when I get home. (Where to eat in Vegas is a whole 'nother article!)

Day 21: I'm home, everyone is alive, and we all gather for stuffed peppers from Costco.

Tally: 5/7!

Day 22: We have random leftovers and asparagus, one kid skips soccer but everyone except Colette is there; she's at ballet.

Day 23: The quick pre-soccer practice meal: roasted chicken with tomatoes and cannellini beans and roasted broccoli.

Day 24: I make Taco Soup before just one 7 p.m. soccer practice; easy, but no one loves it. Ah well, at least they're eating the cheese on top.

Day 25: I make a perennial favorite, Korean Beef Bowl, which is essentially ground beef with Korean spices. I round it out with a Costco smorgasboard: salad, frankfurts in a roll, rice. PVT comes home late from golfing with a friend but we are all here!

Day 26: PVT and I have a blessed date night. We're only gone 90 minutes, but it's just what we need! The babysitter feeds them yet another melange of Costco pre-made meals.

Day 27: After a long, hot day on the soccer fields - and a cross country meet in Arkansas - we all sit down for dinner. I have no idea what we ate, or whether it was edible.

Day 28: We wrap up our challenge with an easy yet sophisticated dish: chicken with carrots and kalamata olives, more broccoli (we eat a lot of broccoli! guess that's good!) and cheesy rice.

Tally: 5/7 yet again - woo hoo! Success.

Well, it's not easy, this challenge. But these families of ours are worth it. And as my friend Fiona wisely notes, "I think it is the community of dinner more than the meal itself. The idea of sitting around talking and sharing our time with each other."

Around our family table, the little girls chatter a lot more than the big girls. Silvie might tell me how her friend Riley chased her at recess and how she told him to stop. Colette shared that "Tess got sent to the principal's office because she scratched another girl" and Margaux talked about the firemen who visited preschool.

But sometimes the conversation gets more serious, like Will brought up how all the kids are talking about clowns, and how that made him anxious. So we talked about that.

Other times, the table talk turned to more fun (and productive) subjects. A casual comment from Keane about next summer inspired us to start planning a driving vacation from San Franciso up the Oregon coast.

The sharing is what's most important - even if you're eating drive-thru, sit down together somewhere and enjoy your time together.

BY CLAIRE COMBS

moving beyond color blind: discussing race with your child

When my son was barely older than a toddler, we were talking about his day at preschool and he mentioned a girl in his class. I had not yet learned the names of all his friends, but I thought I knew who he meant, so I started down the list: Is she the girl with curly hair? And blue shoes? And the pink backpack?

"Yes," he said. "And the brown skin."

Wait, I remember thinking. I*s that OK? Is this a big deal?*

To him, of course, this was most definitely not a big deal. In that beautiful way that children have, he stated a fact without assigning any type of value to it. He was using skin color as a simple, physical descriptor.

Like many white parents, I grew up with some version of the egg metaphor for understanding race: The color of the eggshell doesn't matter, and we are all the same inside. To boil it down, describing anyone by his or her race (or shell) conflicted with my idea of race as a divisive social construct that needed to be overcome.

I shared this experience with Chad Johnson, Ph.D, an associate professor at the University of Oklahoma-Schusterman Center who is also a father of two. His



DR. RHAMEKA SHELLEY WITH HER SON PHOENIX.
PHOTO CREDIT: PORTRAIT INNOVATIONS

advice was that when it comes to valuing each other, color blindness is a good approach, but when it comes to raising a socially aware human, we can't continue to shy away from the important discussions surrounding race. It can be uncomfortable, but there are ways to approach the conversation using terms that even young children will easily understand.

"Parents of young children can emphasize how we are the same, while explaining that there are also differences," says Johnson. "And some of those differences - while they should be



CHAD JOHNSON, PhD.,
UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA.

celebrated - are often used to hurt people. Kids can empathize with feelings of exclusion. Parents can begin by talking about how excluding others is not kind, and we don't want anyone to feel that way."

For many parents, race is hard to talk about, but there do seem to be significant differences in approach depending on the family's ethnicity.

"My mom raised us with the understanding that you will be treated differently," says Marq Lewis, of We the People Oklahoma.

Lewis is a father and community organizer who focuses on accountability within government institutions. He says there wasn't one specific moment when his parents sat him down to discuss race and racism; it was something that was embedded in his consciousness for as long as he can remember.

His experience is echoed by many members of the black community. Lavell Harris, a Tulsa grandfather and president of the Save Our Youth Foundation, says many cultures are represented in his family, and his children also grew up with a clear understanding of what race meant. "It's not something you can run from," Harris says.

Dr. Rhameka Shelley is a mother and mental health professional who has been working with children and families for seven years. She agrees that for many minorities, race and racial justice are discussed early in life.

"Topics such as these are central to our survival...it is a part of our everyday experiences," she explains. "We cannot simply choose whether to address race [with our children] or not."

The idea that white parents view discussions about race as optional while parents of color do not touches on a concept commonly known as white privilege.

"We all have to be able to call something wrong," Lewis says. "I do believe that the majority of people don't agree with racism, but [white people] can

continued next page

turn it off. African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics, we cannot turn it off. We live with it every day."

According to Johnson, many white people don't understand that people of color may grow up with a "higher degree of stress and anxiety rooted in racial disparity and discrimination" and perceptions of a world that is unsafe.

While it can be an uncomfortable topic for some parents, Johnson and Shelley both advocate being proactive in talking with their children about race in an age-appropriate way. To ignore the fact that people of color are exposed to explicit discrimination and implicit bias perpetuates inaccurate ideas that racism is no longer a part of our society.

"Despite what some may believe, talking about race with our children will not make them notice race as if they didn't notice it before," Shelley says. "It appears that most parents do not want to talk about race or racial justice with their children because they want to avoid exposing them to 'too much, too soon,' or because they do not want to misstep and say the wrong thing or inadvertently sound like a racist."

While certainly inhibiting to parents, these feelings of caution may be viewed as a positive indication of understanding how serious and important the topic of race actually is.

In September 2016, Terence Crutcher was fatally shot by a police officer in North Tulsa. His death and the circumstances surrounding it led to several local protests, including the 100 Bad Dudes Rally, organized by Harris. The name of the rally was taken from an audio recording of an officer in a helicopter commenting at the time that Crutcher "looks like a bad dude."

"We wanted to show the community what a 'bad dude' really looks like. I am a father, a mentor, a coach, an uncle, and yes, to some people I am a 'big bad dude'," says Harris.

When a tragedy like the death of Terence Crutcher occurs locally, it is especially difficult for those living in the surrounding community. It becomes impossible to believe "these things don't happen here", and it forces tough conversations, even for parents who are comfortable talking to their kids about race.

"It generates uncomfortable emotions, such as anger, fear, and disbelief, and it can be difficult to manage those emotions," Shelley says. "Not only will your child potentially hear about it on the news, but also in their neighborhoods, schools or churches. When [the tragedy] is local, it does not allow us to turn a blind eye. Children, regardless of their age, are more aware of current events than we may realize."

For younger children, too much information without context could lead to confusion because they are still learning how to think through complex issues. Older children and teens are more likely to comprehend the details and will often seek out additional information to increase their understanding of a specific subject, says Shelley.

Parents are uniquely positioned to influence their children's outlook on race and racial justice by speaking openly about current events.

"The research shows us very clearly that kids learn racism and discrimination whether we talk about it or not. They are bombarded with implicit messages about race, and by not speaking up we are perpetuating the problem," says Johnson.

What can parents do?

Build your community: The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights advises parents to work to "populate their lives and the lives of their children with people of diverse backgrounds." There is no conversation that will have the same power as modeling inclusivity to your child.

Become a change-maker: Lewis encourages all Tulsans to become more active in local government, whether through a group like We the People Oklahoma or independently. "Vote, find out who your representatives are, and attend public meetings to become more educated about how decisions are made," says Lewis. He emphasizes that understanding how and when rules and policies are crafted is the first step in influencing systemic change.

Speak openly and honestly: Don't hide facts from your children, and when they ask a tough question about race or current events, take a deep breath and have the conversation using age-appropriate language. Creating a safe space to have open, respectful conversations about the impacts of race is important.

Ultimately, all parents should get comfortable with the discomfort of discussing race, says Johnson. "It's OK to not have all the answers. It's OK to say, it is hard, it is painful, and I'm not sure why this is happening. But don't think that if you don't talk about race with your child our culture will teach them better. It won't."

Resources

Books for teens / adults

"Everyday Acts Against Racism" by Maureen Reddy

"The First R: How Children Learn Race and Racism" by Debra Van Ausdale and Joe Feagin

"Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" by Beverly Daniel Tatum

"Between the World and Me" by Ta-Nehisi Coates

"White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son" by Tim Wise

"Citizen" by Claudia Rankine

"Open Veins of Latin America" by Eduardo Galeano

"An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States" by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

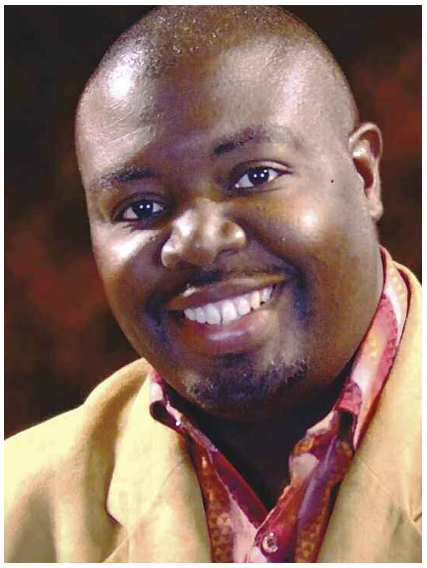
"Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black or White" by Frank Wu

"The New Jim Crow" by Michelle Alexander

"How Does It Feel to be A Problem? Being Young and Arab in America" by Moustafa Bayoumi

Books for younger children

"Daddy, There's a Noise Outside" by Kenneth Braswell



MARQ LEWIS, WE THE PEOPLE OKLAHOMA.



(L TO R) CHARELLE JONES, SANDRA PARKER AND LAVELL HARRIS, PRESIDENT OF SAVE OUR YOUTH FOUNDATION.

"The Colors of Us" by Karen Katz

"The Other Side" by Jacqueline Woodson

"A is for Activist" by Innosanto Nagara

"It's Okay to Be Different" by Todd Parr

"Chocolate Me" by Taye Diggs

"Grandpa, is Everything Black Bad?" by Sandy Lynne Holman

"Skin Again" by Bell Hooks

Local social justice groups / community organizations

We the People Oklahoma

The United League for Social Action (TULSA)

YWCA Tulsa

BY BETTY CASEY

Santa talks about **Elf The Musical**

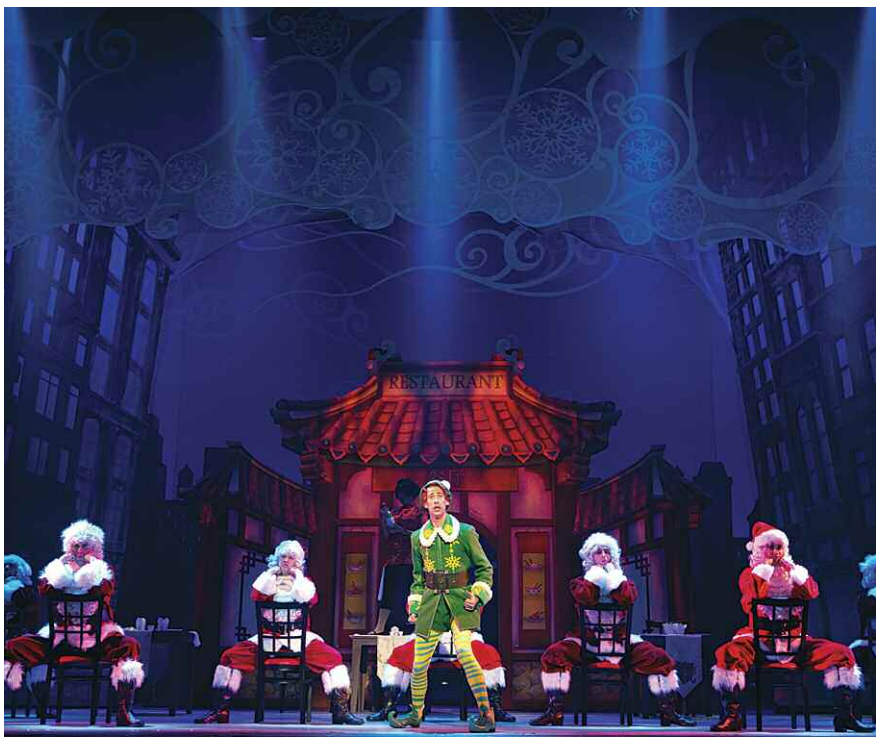
Veteran actor Ken Clement is in his fourth year of touring with *Elf The Musical*, which will be at the Tulsa PAC this month. In a recent phone interview, Clement talked about playing Santa, keeping it fresh, and how he "has grown into the suit" over the years.

Celebrity Attractions brings *Elf The Musical*, in all its sugar-coated, chocolate syrupy holiday fun, to the Tulsa Performing Arts Center Nov. 15 through 20, 2016. The stage version of the popular film tells the tale of Buddy, the orphan child, who crawls into Santa's bag of gifts and ends up at the North Pole. Upon learning that he is not an elf, Buddy embarks on a journey to New York City to find his birth father.

"Most of the really good bits from the movie make it in [to the stage show]," Clements says. But, Papa Elf and Santa have been combined in the musical as one character – Santa.

Clement laughingly describes his Santa as "more of a beer and pizza Santa Claus, a guy that owns 364 Hawaiian shirts" who wears his red suit one day a year. "I joke about the fact that it's an easy track and an easy job. Me in a comfy chair and they wheel me out."

Hearing the joy in his voice and the frequent chuckling, it's easy to imagine Clement as "the jolly old elf." Or, perhaps four years of playing Santa has imbued Clement with a Santa-like perspective on life.



MATT KOPEC (BUDDY) AND SANTAS IN "ELF THE MUSICAL" AT THE TULSA PAC IN NOVEMBER.
PHOTO CREDIT: JOAN MARCUS

Whatever the reason, Clement says that he loves the role and the score. "It has a wonderful big band soundtrack," he says. "And Santa gets to sing."

Clement says one of his favorite numbers is at the top of Act II, which is set in a Chinese restaurant. "All the mall Santas have gathered, and there are all different shapes and sizes."

Another number that Clement says to watch for is in Act I where Buddy sings "Just Like Him" about wanting to be like his dad. "It's a big, splashy number," Clement says, praising the talent of Elf's ensemble cast.

While Clement has worked extensively in film and television, he says, "I enjoy theater a whole lot more. It doesn't pay like film and TV, but you have the immediate satisfaction of knowing how you're doing by the audience's reaction. And I've been all over the world [with tours]."

Clement added that he hopes to have time to see some places in Tulsa while he's here, and has already looked up information on Philbrook.

Another aspect of stage performance that Clement enjoys is the opportunity to ad lib.

"I got permission to throw things in to pander to the audience," he says. "I've been known to leave the script a little."

Asked if he had ever thrown off the cast or if anything really unusual had happened on stage during a production, Clement said that one night the young boy who played Michael got sick halfway through the show, so the understudy, who looked dramatically different from the first Michael, had to take over after intermission.

"The understudy was six inches taller and rail thin," Clement says. "He makes his entrance and gets a laugh, so I shook his hand and say, 'hey, did you get a haircut?'"

The Christmas spirit that powers Santa's sleigh at the end of Elf is evident in Clement's enthusiastic endorsement of the production.

"I keep coming back," he says. "I just love this show! It's my Christmas gift to myself."

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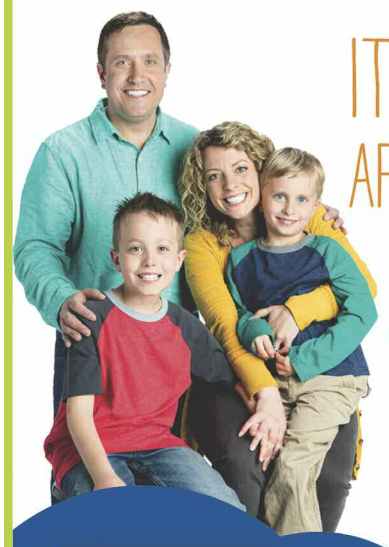
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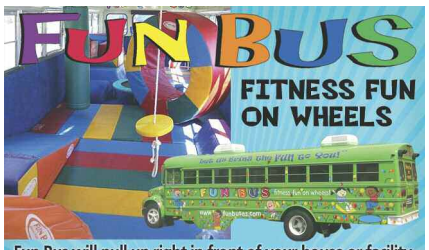
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BY SHEEBA ATIQI

PHOTO CREDIT: OH SNAP! PHOTOGRAPHY



Chris Loerke

Be the change you want to see in the world. That is exactly what Chris Loerke, a recent graduate of Union High School, set out to do when he founded Union's Mesh program. Loerke was recognized as the 2016 Outstanding Youth in Philanthropy by the Association of Fundraising Professionals for his work and efforts advocating for students with disabilities.

TK: What is Mesh?
Chris: Mesh is a program founded by teens that works to bridge the social gap between students with and without disabilities through education and social interaction. Mesh provides opportunities for these two groups to hang out and form friendships that would typically not be made. At Union, Mesh met every Tuesday during lunch and our students participated in games and activities and made friends that will last a lifetime.

TK: How did you come up with the idea for Mesh? What inspired you?
Chris: I had the opportunity to work with 25 outstanding Tulsa teens in the Youth Philanthropy Initiative when creating Mesh. Personally, I fell in love with people who have disabilities in the sixth grade. A boy in my class had disabilities and students tended to pick on him because he was different. I knew it was wrong to pick on someone just because they are different so I started standing up for him. He is now one my best friends today! It then became my mission for barriers to be broken and for all students to understand the differences and strengths of people with disabilities.

TK: What have you learned while being part of the Mesh program?
Chris: The biggest lesson I have learned is that people without disabilities don't want to be separated from people with disabilities; they just don't have opportunities.

TK: Who do you look up to? Who are your role models?
Chris: All my life, my parents and sisters have taught me to love others unconditionally. My Leadership advisor in high school, Philippa Kelly, and high school math teacher, Rebecka Peterson, taught me to always think about people's circumstances and to find good in every situation and person. Lastly, Lynn Schusterman, Adam Seaman, and Terrie Shipley of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and the Youth Philanthropy Initiative taught me that if I am passionate about something, I should give all I have to make a difference.

TK: What advice do you have for other young philanthropists?
Chris: Never lose your passion for what you are doing. There will be times that you are rejected and you feel like you are making no progress. However, you need to remember that with persistence and passion, you can change the world.

TK: What is something that you would like to see changed in society? And how would you like to see this changed?
Chris: I am so excited with all of the progress Mesh is making, but I know it has so much more potential. I look forward to the day that every person with disabilities is socially integrated into society. I hope someday people will look past differences and find beauty in each other's strengths.

TK: What other hobbies do you have?
Chris: In high school I served as Student Council President and helped plan fun events, dances and service projects. I am a marathon runner and am involved in the President's Leadership Class and Sooner Freshman Council at the University of Oklahoma. I am actively involved with my church, Asbury United Methodist.

TK: What are your plans and goals for the future?
Chris: I hope to go to medical school after I graduate from OU and would like to be either a pediatric oncologist (doctor for kids with cancer) or developmental pediatrician (doctor for kids with special needs).

FUN FACTS: I am a marathon runner, can solve a Rubik's Cube while hula hooping, and love OU football!

what's going on(line)?

Dear Reader,
And so it begins. The holiday season is upon us and the Tulsa community delivers when it comes to holiday family fun. Whether it's holiday lights, enjoying community theater at one of the many upcoming holiday performances or taking advantage of the free fun the Tulsa City-County Library has on the schedule, we've merrily rounded it all up at www.tulsakids.com.
While you're out enjoying the festivities, be sure to share the fun (and cute pics) by tagging TulsaKids on Facebook and Instagram like @philosophytulsa (see right photo). We love getting to know our readers!

- Abby, web editor





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