

# Gainesville Parenting

For the community, by the community.

GVP Cover  
Contest Winners!  
Isabel Tongson  
and  
her buddy Puck

## Hiring an Au Pair

*Coverage  
of the 2007  
Reindeer Run*

## 10 Ways to be More Earth Friendly



# We believe in kids.

We believe a child's job is to learn how to become a responsible, respectful, future citizen of our world. We believe in learning by doing. We believe in trying new things. We believe in temporary failure and glorious success. We believe in doing our best. Perfect is boring. Different is beautiful. Imagination is supreme. We believe in getting dirty. Messy play is more fun than clean play. We believe in respecting others, making friends, and laughing at ourselves. We believe in emotion. We believe tears leave our body to find happy thoughts. We believe in joy. We believe in learning from our mistakes...eventually. A bad decision is better than not making one. Learn from it. We believe in boo-boo's, uh-oh's, oops, and all better. We believe in skinned knees and dirty t's. We believe in exercise. Sweat is the body celebrating effort. Running is freedom. Stopping is...painful. We believe in grape juice smiles and spilled milk. We believe in cleaning up. We believe in nature. Our planet is a gift. It's our responsibility to take care of it. We believe in the individual. We each control our own actions, thoughts, and words. Nobody else. Exercise this freedom with respect. We believe in love. Everyday we should play. Everyday we should learn. Hugs are really, really great. So is ice cream. We believe in choice. We believe in discovery. We believe in living every day as if it were our first. Read. Laugh. Dance. We believe in the future. Leave no traces. Make good choices. Dream big dreams. Everything is possible. Everything is possible. Everything is possible. Be anything you want to be. We believe in kids.

FOR KIDS 0 TO 13 YEARS OLD AND FAMILIES WHO BELIEVE IN THEM

# O2B MANIFESTO

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Toll Free Fax: (866) 458-6558

4703 NW 53<sup>rd</sup> Avenue

Suite B-2

Gainesville, FL 32606

info@martonickpublications.com

www.martonickpublications.com

## President:

Maria Martonick

## Vice President:

Steve Martonick

## Contributing Writers:

Sheri Curtis

Tom Dikel

Jacki Donaldson

Megan Heron

Sarah Mendonça McCoy

Ashley Mihlebach

Karen Shimonsky

Gayle Shlafer

Jessica Warshaver

## Advertising Representatives:

Maria Martonick

Steve Martonick

## Managing Editor:

Christiana Lilly

## Graphic Designer:

Javier Espinosa

## Photographer:

Jessica Warshaver

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### Cover Credits

Isabel Tongson, 3,  
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photographed  
by Jessica Warshaver

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# January Events

There are plenty of activities around town for the whole family, or for a parents night out!

★ **January 15 - 3:30 to 5 p.m.**

***How to Build a Book***

Hawthorne Branch Library  
6640 SE 221 St.  
(352) 481-3388

Learn the ancient Japanese practice of bookbinding and how to make your own book.

★ **January 15 - 10 a.m.**

***Toddler/Preschooler Time***

Alachua County Headquarters Library  
401 E University Ave.  
(352) 334-3900

Enjoy stories, songs and fun for preschool children ages 2 and up.

★ **January 16 - 3:30 p.m.**

***Jack and the Beanstalk***

Hawthorne Branch Library  
6640 SE 221 Street  
(352) 481-3388

The Millhopper Players will present this fun puppet show for children of all ages.

★ **January 17- 6:30 p.m.**

Mystery Reading Group

High Springs Branch Library  
135 NW First Ave.  
(386) 454-2515

Come bring your favorite mystery stories to discuss with fellow readers.

★ **January 20 - 3 to 4 p.m.**

***Acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine***

Alachua County Headquarters Library  
401 E. University Ave.  
(352) 334-3900

Students and staff from the Academy for Five Element Acupuncture will teach this 3,000-year-old Chinese tradition.

★ **January 20 - 2:30 p.m.**

***Family Movie Matinee***

Alachua County Headquarters Library  
401 E. University Ave.  
(352) 334-3900

Join us for the entertaining story of "Happy Feet," a penguin with a talent for tap dancing.

★ **January 25 - 7:30 p.m.**

***UFPA presents "Annie"***

Curtis M. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts at UF  
(352) 392-ARTS (2787)

Enjoy this Broadway classic, presented by the UFPA. Reserved seating: \$35-50.

★ **January 26 - 6:30 to 9 p.m.**

***Stargazing at Payne's Prairie***

9300 CR 234, Micanopy, FL  
(352) 466-3397

Take in the stars and enjoy nature with the Alachua Co Astronomy Club. There will be a campfire, hayrides, hot chocolate, S'mores and live music.

★ **January 26 - 1 to 4 p.m.**

***World Tour Through the Harn: Art of Africa***

Harn Museum of Art  
SW 34th Street and Hull Road  
(352) 392-9826

Children and parents can travel the continent of Africa and learn about its ancient culture by creating masks, textiles and animal sculptures.

★ **January 26 to 27**

**AND February 1 to 3 - 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.**

***Hoggetowne Medieval Faire***

Alachua County Fairgrounds  
2900 NE 39th Ave.  
(352) 334-5064

The 22nd annual Hoggetowne Medieval Faire is back in town and ready to give you a jousting good time.

★ **January 26 - 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.**

***Back Handspring Boot Camp***

Sun Country West  
(352) 331-8773  
333 SW 140th Terrace

Clinics include back handsprings, advanced tumbling, trampoline and tumble-trak work. Sign up in advance for a discounted rate.

★ **January 29 - 11 a.m.**

***Babytime!***

Alachua County Headquarters Library  
401 E University Ave.  
(352) 334-3900

Infants to toddlers are invited to an afternoon of nursery rhymes, fingerplays, songs and interactive fun.



# Upcoming Issue

Be sure to look out for these articles in an upcoming issue of **Gainesville Parenting!** You won't want to miss it!

- Communicating with your baby through sign language
- Prenatal Genetics
- How to help your child deal with loss
- Gainesville's new children's hospital

If you would like to contribute anything to any of these articles, please contact Christiana Lilly at (352) 338-1920 or [christiana@martonickpublications.com](mailto:christiana@martonickpublications.com)



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# Psychologist Tom Dikel

*Thomas Dikel is a doctor of psychology with a Ph.D. from a joint developmental and clinical psychology program at the University of Minnesota. He works in a private practice in Gainesville with Counseling Associates and has advanced training in child neuropsychology. He's treated children for several agencies, including the Department of Children and Families, States Attorney's Office, Child Protection Team, Guardian ad Litem, State and Federal Public Defenders' offices. He's also a parent.*

## Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Last month I wrote a column in which I discussed a recent medical emergency. As I don't want this column to become self-oriented, I will simply say for anyone who may be interested that I underwent surgery on November 14; the surgery was reportedly successful and the tumor benign. With those glad tidings I will cease to discuss the subject.

As we enter 2008, thousands of men and women are returning from Afghanistan and Iraq with wounds both physical and psychological. It is increasingly important for us to understand trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD is by no means exclusive to combat and warfare: Most people in the United States with PTSD are women and children. PTSD research, and knowledge about the disorder has been government funded and focused on male combat veterans. PTSD can also be caused by sexual and physical assault, child maltreatment, witness to extreme violence, natural and man-made disasters, and terrorism.

PTSD is defined first by exposure to a traumatic event in which someone experienced, witnessed or was confronted with death or the threat of death, serious injury, or a threat to the "physical integrity" of one's self or others. The event was experienced with intense fear, helplessness or horror. Children may appear disorganized or agitated. There are three primary symptom groups: re-experiencing (recurrent intrusive memories, dreams/nightmares, flashbacks, psychological or physical distress when reminded of the trauma), avoidance (attempts to avoid reminders, amnesia, detachment, emotional numbness), and hyper arousal (sleep problems, rage, concentration problems, hypervigilance, exaggerated startle response). To meet the diagnosis, individuals must have

meet one or more reexperiencing criteria, three or more avoidance criteria, and two or more hyperarousal criteria. Problems must last more than one month and cause "clinically significant" distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

As with most mental health issues and disorders, PTSD is defined by diagnostic criteria in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Forth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR). It was first presented in DSM-II, in 1980.

The first DSM was published in 1952, while close to 260,000 American troops fought in Korea. It included a Gross Stress Reaction for cases involving severe physical demands or extreme emotional stress (including combat), applied to normal individuals attempting to cope with overwhelming fear. It was considered generally treatable.

The second edition of DSM was released in 1968, with nearly 850,000 draftees brought into the war in Vietnam and a January draft call that would raise that number to nearly one million. Gross Stress Reaction was removed and replaced with Adjustment Reactions of Adult Life. Examples of such reactions included unwanted pregnancy, accompanied by resentment and depressive tone and mani-

fested by hostile complaints and suicidal gestures; fear of combat manifested by trembling, running, and hiding, and; capital criminals facing a death sentence providing approximate incorrect answers. So between 1968 and 1980, American mental health professionals based their interactions with veterans on the official view that an entity such as PTSD did not exist. A senior psychiatrist in charge of a large Veterans Authority (VA) psychiatric service reported he believed that a substantial number of "so-called PTSD" cases in Vietnam veterans were more likely a syndrome of perceptual and imagery derangement due to excessive smoking of marijuana during the war.



Thankfully, attitudes have changed. However, the VA system is overrun. Moreover, the military and the VA have restrictions on who can be referred – family members of veterans who returned with extreme personality changes, terrible wounds, cognitive impairment or those suffering from the death of loved ones are often not covered.

Well over a million troops have been deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Persian Gulf since September 2001, with some 300,000 deployed more than once. Returning combat veterans who need or could benefit from counseling may avoid mental health treatment for fear of jeopardizing their career. In fact thousands of U.S. soldiers and Marines in Iraq, as many as ten per day, are being discharged by the military for mental health reasons. According to an article in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch this past October, the Pentagon maintains that the problems are not due to the war -- rather, it claims the discharged had “pre-existing conditions” that disqualify them for treatment by the government. The Pentagon saves money, however, many who are actually suffering from combat-related problems don't get the help they need. Over 20,000 troops with alleged pre-existing personality disorders have been “kicked out.” Meanwhile, untreated psychological problems contribute to the highest suicide rate among the military in 25 years, and one in four homeless are veterans.

Barbara Romberg, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist from Washington D.C., is making a difference. Over the last two to three years, she has built an organization called Give an Hour (GAH), a nonpolitical organization that offers mental health counseling to returning veterans and their families at no charge. Over 800 practitioners have been recruited from all over the United States to provide one hour per week of therapy or counseling at no cost to the veterans or their families. Romberg has made it clear that she expects to work in partnership with the VA and other military service providers. GAH will offer services including individual, marital, family, therapy, substance abuse counseling and treatment for PTSD. Services are offered to parents, siblings, and unmarried partners not entitled to receive mental health benefits through the military.



For more information, access the GAH Web site at: [www.givean-hour.org](http://www.givean-hour.org), or write to Romberg in care of Give an Hour, PO Box 5918, Bethesda, MD 20824-5918. I am also a member of the GAH Advisory Board and can be reached at Gainesville Parenting.

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# WEEKEND PARENTING

## THE BAT HOUSE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

By Gayle Schlafer

*I've heard about the Bat House at UF and always thought it sounded a little creepy. However, I wanted something different to do with my boys, and watching the bats take flight at twilight sounded perfect.*



**A**fter my last experience with nature and knowing nothing about it, I took the time to research bats before telling the boys where we were going and explaining what would happen. Sammy flatly refused to go. Ben was much more excited. Also, my mother was visiting, so the three of us went off to watch the bats take flight for the evening.

We arrived at the bat house 45 minutes before twilight. About 25 people were already sitting on the benches and fence in front and another 25 were on the banks of Lake Alice. By the time twilight fell, there were about 100 people watching.

We arrived early because I didn't know what time the bats would come out, I didn't know where to park and I didn't know how far the lot would be from the Bat House. Parking ended up being a two-minute walk away and while spaces weren't plentiful, there were some available. Ben sat on the fence for half an hour and my mom and I tried to keep him occupied while we waited. Thankfully, our friend Anna and her family arrived and the two kids entertained each other. Next time, however, I'll get there a little later.





Eventually, a bird flew very closely overhead.

“Bat!” someone yelled.

All of us started paying more attention, now knowing that wasn’t a bird.

“Bat!” someone else yelled as another one flew by.

About 30 bats came out one at a time went off into the night. We stared at the bat house waiting for the thousands of bats inside to follow.

“Here they come,” another person said.

And come they did! Bats poured out the house, flying in a swirl above us before taking off into the night. In a never-ending stream of wings, some flew high, some low. It seemed that some were close enough that if we reached up, we would touch them. I didn’t try it, though.

But the smell! I know bat guano is a highly-prized commodity, but standing near a bat house at twilight is not for the faint of nose. Eventually the smell became less noticeable, but I wondered if watching from Lake Alice would help the initial stink.

Ben laughed and pointed at the bats as they swarmed above us. The swarm lasted about fifteen minutes. I still thought it was a little creepy, but Ben enjoyed it all. Even when the majority of the bats left the house and a few stragglers came out, he didn’t want to leave. We were the last ones to go.

Ben said his favorite part was when the bats all flew out at once. Really, aside from the waiting, that was the only part. Still, the fun and interest tells me that this is an evening out we will do again.

### For more information:

Phone: (352) 846-0643

Web site: [www.wec.ufl.edu/extension/wildlife\\_info/wildlife\\_uf/bathouse.php](http://www.wec.ufl.edu/extension/wildlife_info/wildlife_uf/bathouse.php)

Cost: FREE

Rating: 😊😊😊😊 / 😊😊😊😊😊





# Ask a Nurse

## Lice

Sheri Curtis, MSN, ARNP

Professor Curtis is a Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner and Clinical Assistant Professor at the University of Florida College of Nursing. She practices at Archer Family Health Care, a nurse-managed health care practice that provides high-quality, holistic, health care for children, adults and families in Archer, Florida.

**M**“My child just came home with a note from school about an outbreak of lice! She attends a very nice neighborhood school. How could this occur? What can I do? How do I know if she has lice?”

The return to school is an exciting time for many children, full of many new experiences. Unfortunately, one of those experiences might be a lice infestation. Lice, the ultimate equal-opportunity bugs, do not care about the family income or social status of their hosts. Infestations are most common in preschool and young children, probably because this age group tends to be very social and likes close contact. Lice are primarily transmitted by head-to-head contact but can be spread by contact with hats, brushes, scarves and surfaces an infested child lays on such as a mat or couch.

Signs of an infestation are complaints of a “tickling feeling” in the hair, constant scratching of the head, sores caused by the scratching and of course, the bugs or the nits (eggs) themselves. Nits can be hard to distinguish from dandruff, but the difference is that nits do not easily pull away from the hair strand. Look for signs of live bugs or nits behind the ears or on the nape of the neck.

The life cycle of the head louse has three stages: egg, nymph and adult. Nits are laid by an adult louse and attached to the hair shaft close to the scalp. They are small, oval and usually yellow to white in color. If not treated, they will hatch in six to nine days. When the nymphs hatch, the nit becomes dull and remains attached to the hair shaft. Nymphs become mature adults in about one week. The adult louse is about the size of a sesame seed, has six legs and is tan to grayish white. Females can lay up to eight nits a day and can live for about one month so long as they feed on their host’s blood several times a day.

Over-the-counter and prescription medications can treat a child with a lice infestation. Before applying medication, remove all

clothing from the waist up and do not use any cream rinse or combination shampoo/conditioner. If your child has extra-long hair, it may require using two bottles of medicine. Read the directions as to how long the medication should be left on and whether or not to rinse it out. After treatment, comb dead or remaining live lice and nits out of the hair with a “nit comb.” Don’t rewash hair for one to two days and make sure your child puts on clean clothes. Continue to check and comb hair every two to three days until no more lice or nits are found. If you are using over-the-counter medication, you will need to retreat your child in seven to 10 days. If after eight to 12 hours no dead lice are found and live lice are still active, contact your health care provider as some lice are resistant to treatment and a different medication may be needed.

You will also need to machine wash all clothing and bed linens your child used in the last two days before treatment. Use the hot water cycle and dry on high heat for at least 20 minutes. Dry clean any clothing or bedding not washable and store all clothing, stuffed animals and comforters that cannot be washed or dry cleaned in a sealed plastic bag for two weeks. Helmets and headgear will also have to be placed in a sealed plastic bag for two weeks. Soak all combs and brushes for one hour in rubbing alcohol, Lysol, or wash with soap and hot water. Vacuum the floor and furniture where the infested person usually sits or lies. Do not use fumigant sprays – they can be very toxic if inhaled or absorbed through the skin. Check the heads of other household members every two to three days; you don’t need to treat them unless live bugs or nits are found.

Call your health care provider if your child continues to itch severely, develops a fever, has red, painful skin or a pus-like discharge, or if your child develops any wheezing or shortness of breath. Otherwise, vigilance and a positive attitude are the best strategies for getting through this challenging, but very common childhood experience.





# First Annual Reindeer Run

By Jessica Warshaver

## Get ready. Get set. GO!

At the signal, a costumed reindeer and a herd of toddlers flocked toward the ribbon-draped finish line. Hundreds cheered from the sidelines, and so began the TaylorFit for Kids' first annual Reindeer Run.

"I never imagined that a first year event could draw such a crowd, but it was truly amazing and obviously something that Gainesville embraced," says Julie Douglas, owner of TaylorFit for Kids.

On Dec. 8, over 300 kids piled into Diamond Sports Park. Each child was given a complimentary reindeer hat and t-shirt for participating. Kids aged 1 to 2 ran 50 yards in the Diaper Dash, ones 3 to 4 ran 100 yards in the Tot Trot, and the largest group, children in kindergarten through eighth grade, ran a whopping one mile through the park. Each child who finished the run received a ribbon to recognize his or her achievement. The park also sported games like a bounce house, and the Gainesville Fire Department displayed their truck and gave out free hats.

The run was developed by H-E-R-O (Help Eliminate & Reverse Obesity), which was created to motivate children to be physically active and healthy. In May, there will be a H-E-R-O run planned.

"I wanted to provide the motivation for kids to lead an active lifestyle through events like the Reindeer Run and it seems to be working," Douglas says. "Thanks to everyone who supported this event including our fitness sponsors, teachers, volunteers, parents and most importantly....the kids!"





# MOMMY DON'T GOOOO!

By Karen Shimonsky

*Many parents are unfortunately all too familiar with the gut wrenching scene of leaving their child -- be it with a childcare provider or on the first day of school -- while he or she screams in complete agony. Separation anxiety often causes both the parent and child stress and discomfort when the issue of parting is addressed. But there are ways to deal with separation throughout different stages in your child's life that can dispel this anxiety and help your child grow and learn.*

**M**ost parents will notice that in the beginning of their child's life, from the newborn stage to about 6 to 8 months, rarely does their child exhibit any apprehension around strangers and leaving them with caregivers or relatives is usually no problem. According to child psychologist Dr. Kimberly Shaw, there is an explanation to this. Separation anxiety, Shaw says, traditionally begins to appear between 8 and 18 months in most children. This is when, Shaw said, infants begin to develop stranger wariness and may become apprehensive when in the absence of parents.

"For most children this anxiety usually peaks at about 1 year and it is common for anxious behavior to persist until the child has

the language skills necessary to cope with separation from their mother or father," she says. "Once your child can understand that your leaving isn't permanent and is able to talk through their feelings, separation stresses can be lessened."

While language skills do help with easing anxiety, the symptoms of it will probably not go away entirely but just become less frequent as the child grows from infant to toddler, Shaw says.

A mother of two, Katie Glasscock said that with her first child Lexie, 4, she experienced a very similar progression of anxiety as her daughter neared the age of 1. Being their first child, Lexie was

constantly around other people and never had a problem with strangers holding her. Also, the Glasscocks were able to leave their daughter with a mother-in-law with ease. It wasn't until Lexie was 11 months old that she suddenly started suffering from separation anxiety.

While this came as a shock to both her and her husband, they soon learned that these feelings of anxiety in their daughter weren't permanent. She says that like Shaw described, once Lexie learned to talk more and developed an understanding of what they were saying to her, it became easier to leave her.

"We started her in preschool when she was 3 years old, and by this time she understood that when we dropped her off it wasn't a permanent departure and that mommy and daddy would be back in a little while," she says. "I don't think I would have been strong enough to send her to preschool if I knew that she was going to be hysterical each day."

## Dealing with the Anxiety

Shaw acknowledges that leaving an anxious child can be just as hard on the parent as it is on the child. However, no matter how upsetting the situation, it's important for parent to model the behavior they want from their child.

Many children use what is known as "social referencing" when trying to cope with separation from their parents, Shaw says. They will look to their mother or father to see if the situation is OK. If they see their parent crying or upset about leaving as well, this will only heighten the child's response. A good example of this is when a new caregiver is introduced into a child's life. The first few times a child is exposed to a new babysitter or teacher, they will often watch their parent's reactions and demeanor to judge what their response should be.

"Your child is really looking for reassurance that everything is going to be ok and that is going to come from the parent," she says. Shaw offers other tips for parents to make the transition easier on the child when they are left with someone else. She said an open dialogue is important between parent and child. Another idea is to leave the child with something to remind them of their parents while they are going to be away. Shaw used the example that a simple lipstick kiss on the child's hand before they go to school can be enough reassurance to calm a child's fears.

Jamie Baldwin, a mother of two children, says it has been the constant and open dialogue between her and her children that has gotten them through spouts of separation anxiety. With her oldest daughter Caryss, 7, she was sure to encourage her daughter to talk through her sadness rather than just crying when she was younger. "Caryss had a really hard time being apart from us when she was about 3, but we were so diligent about telling her how long we would be gone for and where we were going so she knew we were always coming back. We also encouraged her to talk about it when she was sad," Baldwin says.

After she left her daughter, Caryss would still cry but would also explain to her caregivers that "she knew mommy and daddy were

coming back, but she was just a little sad about it," she says. "It was great to hear from our sitters that she was so openly talking about it. It definitely got us through her anxiety faster," Baldwin said.

## Persistent Anxiety

While most children's anxiety will disappear with age, some children may experience prolonged or more severe anxiety associated with separation, and Shaw said that this is something parents should be sure to monitor. If you notice a difference in the level of impairment in your child, such as more intense anxiety, longer lasting spells and more frequent tantrums, then your child may be suffering from separation anxiety disorder, which is different than the normal levels that many children experience. If this is the case, consulting a professional may aid in bringing your child's anxiety levels down, Shaw says. It is important to note that your child's reaction to new environments may be a signal for you that they are not ready for this next step.

"Separation anxiety is a great example of developmental conflicts. This may be a signal from your child that the demands of the environment around them are too great for where they are at. If you work closely with your child to get through these changes, your child can learn necessary adaptation skills that will help them throughout their life," Shaw says.



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# Mother of the Month

## Kathy Rodriguez-Tsin

*Every month we feature a mother in Gainesville of outstanding character – a woman who contributes to the community and is dedicated to her children.*

By Megan Heron

**K**athy Rodriguez-Tsin may be a full-time student at St. Leo University, but that doesn't stop her from spending time with her family. She has one son, Justin, 6, and has been married for 11 years to her husband Felix. While working to complete her elementary education degree, Kathy balances school work during the day and classes at night, with family time everywhere in between. She shares her home with her mother, and feels blessed that she has three of her four siblings living in the same town. Her son Justin was born 13 weeks early, and spent three months in the hospital, but pulled through perfectly. With the love and dedication of her husband Felix, and the strength of her son, Kathy feels like the luckiest mother on earth.



### What do you enjoy most about your children?

"I enjoy his easygoing personality. We laugh a lot in our household, and he's a big snuggler. He'll call my cell phone and say, 'Mom can you come home so we can snuggle?'"

### What do you hope to impart on them?

"I hope to instill a sense of security that he knows that he'll always be loved, no matter what happens."

### What is your favorite thing about raising children in Gainesville?

"I love the sense of community. I used to live in South Florida, where you never knew your neighbors because everyone was caught up in the hustle-bustle. I moved to Gainesville six years ago and found

a lot of lovely friends and family that I never had before."

### What is your favorite memory of growing up?

"I grew up in South America in Ecuador, with my four siblings. We had a farm outside the city, and we had no electricity. I remember spending a lot of time there just playing, and finding things to do since we didn't have TV. At night we'd light candles to eat dinner, and every morning we'd wake up with the roosters. That's just something I've never experienced since then."

### What is the most important thing you've learned from your mother?

"My mother is so patient. I can count on one hand how many times she's raised her voice. There

was never a lot of yelling in my house, and I learned a lot about being patient with children."

### What is something about you that no one knows?

"Everybody knows I love animals, but if I had my career of choice, I would be a veterinarian."

### Do you have a hidden talent?

"I really like scrapbooking, but I wouldn't say I'm the best one out there."

### What do you enjoy doing around town?

"We all like going to the springs. We also like to travel to experience different atmospheres. One thing my husband and I love doing that we don't do enough is bowling."

## Do you know an Outstanding Mother?

Write in and let us know of an outstanding mother in Gainesville. She may be featured in our upcoming publication! Write to: [christiana@martonickpublications.com](mailto:christiana@martonickpublications.com)





# 911 Column: Window Covering Safety

By Budget Blinds

In the past 16 years, the US Consumer Product Safety Council has received reports of 174 strangulation deaths involving cords and chains on window coverings, according to a CPSC press release. Of these, 152 deaths involved the outer-pull cords, which raise and lower the blind and the last 22 deaths involved the inner-cords, which run through the window blind slats.

Outer-pull cord deaths typically involve children ranging in age from 8-months to 6-years. Inner-cord deaths typically involve children ranging in age from 9-months to 17-months who are placed in cribs or playpens located within reach of window coverings. In all cases, the children became inadvertently entangled and died from strangulation.

In response to these numbers, window-covering manufacturers have redesigned their products to reduce cord hazards, as well as attaching tie-down anchors and built-in cord stops. The redesigns have lessened the hazardous loops in the cords or chains. However, these solutions don't entirely eliminate the problem.

"Repairing or replacing your window coverings is the first line of defense," says CPSC Chairman Hal Stratton in the press release.

Although October has been proclaimed "Window Covering Safety Month," parents can keep their children safe all year round. Parents are urged to inspect the cords and chains of all of their window coverings, consider cordless coverings and replace old window coverings.



## About Budget Blinds of Gainesville

Budget Blinds of Gainesville began operation in October of 2004 and is owned and operated by Bruce and Jody Dolsberry of Gainesville. The company proudly serves homeowners and businesses in the Gainesville area, offering complementary in-home estimates and consultations, professional measuring and installation, and a rich selection of quality window treatments including shutters, blinds, cellular shades, faux woods and window film. Budget Blinds works with leading window covering manufacturers such as Norman Shutters, Kathy Ireland Home by Alta, Hunter Douglas and offers its own private label line of window treatments, Signature and Select Series.



In recognition of the potential hazards of window coverings, Budget Blinds, the largest and fastest-growing window covering franchise in the United States, offers the following tips to help homeowners make their window treatment areas safer for children, pets and themselves:

- Place cribs and other low-standing furniture (beds, bookshelves, toy boxes, chairs, etc.) as far away from windows as possible.
- Try to keep all cords out of reach from small children and pets.
- Equip existing window blind cords with safety tassels, or consider using cordless window coverings, which are widely available and cost-efficient.
- Install retractable cords that remain at a constant length when the shade is not being operated, making it less accessible to children and pets.
- Motorize your window coverings to eliminate choking and entanglement hazards from cords.
- Secure all pull cords out of reach by using either a cleat or permanent tie-down device.
- Install window guards, as screens are meant to keep insects out but may not be strong enough to stop a child or pet from falling out a window.

“Our goal is to provide safe and high quality service and products to our customers,” says Jody Dolsberry, co-owner of Budget Blinds of Gainesville. “Budget Blinds applauds the efforts of organizations such as the CSPC and all others that work to protect consumers from potentially dangerous products and situations.”

## About the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission

The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is charged with protecting the public from unreasonable risks of serious injury or death from more than 15,000 types of consumer under the agency’s jurisdiction. The CPSC is committed to protecting consumers and families from products that pose a fire, electrical, chemical, or mechanical hazard or can injure children. For more information, please visit [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).

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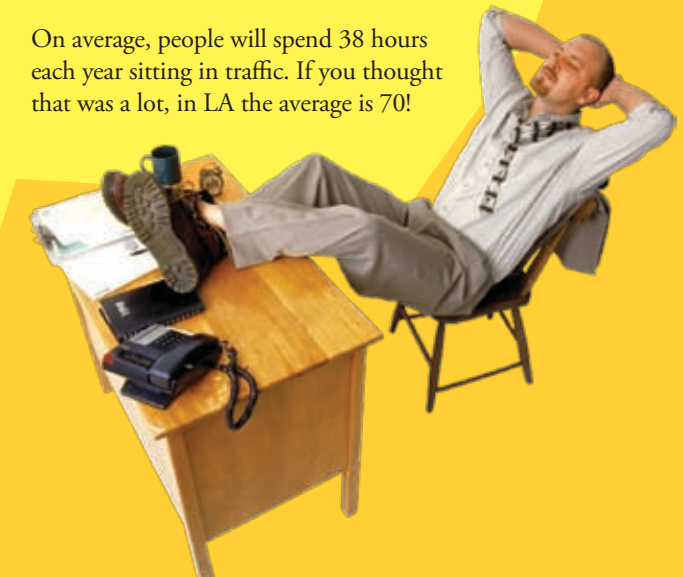
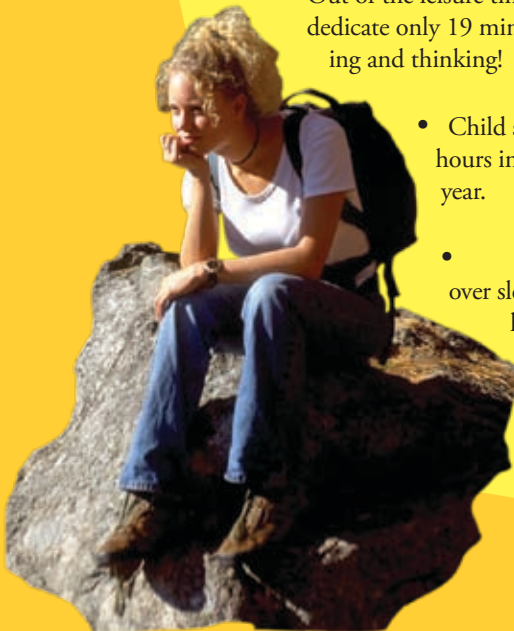
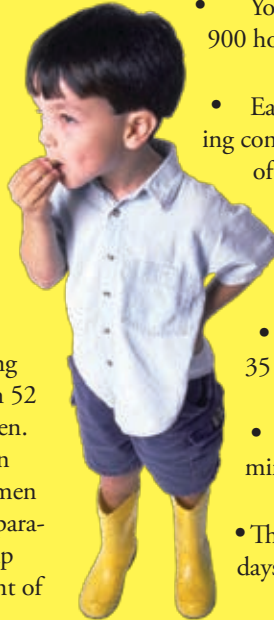
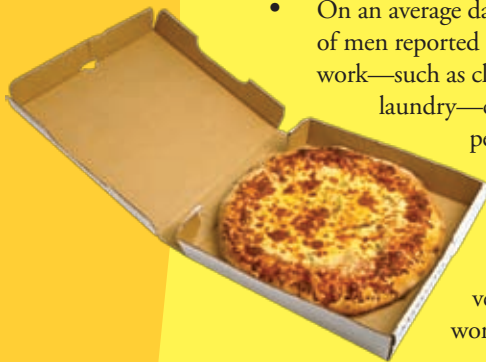
# DID YOU KNOW?

## Time Well Spent

By Christiana Lilly

As minutes, hours and days fly by, it's hard to fathom where the time goes. Here are a few fun facts about how your time disappears.

- On weekdays, among adults living in households with children under 6, women spent 1.2 hours providing physical childcare (such as bathing or feeding a child) to household children; men spent 0.4 hour (25 minutes).
- On an average day, 20 percent of men reported doing housework—such as cleaning or doing laundry—compared with 52 percent of women. Thirty-seven percent of men do food preparation or cleanup versus 65 percent of women.
- On an average day, individuals age 15 and over spent half of their leisure time watching TV.
- Out of the leisure time spent in a day, we dedicate only 19 minutes to actually relaxing and thinking!
- Child spend nearly 1,023 hours in front of a TV each year.
- Americans 15 and over sleep an average of 8.6 hours per day. However, individuals slept an hour more on the weekend.
- Your child will spend 900 hours in school.
- Eating and drinking consumes an average of 70 minutes of each day, and about 86 minutes on weekend days.
- The average worker spends 35 minutes per day commuting.
- On average, we spend 28 minutes per day getting dressed.
- The average American will spend 38.5 days brushing their teeth in a lifetime.
- Most people use the bathroom six times a day.
- It takes the average adult seven minutes to fall asleep.
- A blink is 0.3 seconds and the average person blinks 11,500 times a day, which equals 57.5 minutes a day.
- On average, people will spend 38 hours each year sitting in traffic. If you thought that was a lot, in LA the average is 70!



# CRAFTS FOR KIDS

## NEW YEAR'S MASK

Thank you to  
Quinn for  
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new mask!



### MATERIALS

- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Popsicle sticks or pens
- Glue
- Tape
- Decorative items (markers, crayons, glitter, stickers etc.)

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Cut out an oval that will fit over your child's face.
2. Cut two holes for his or her eyes.
3. Lay out the mask for the child to decorate. Go crazy!
4. Let the mask dry.
5. When dry, flip the mask over and tape either a popsicle stick or pen for your child to hold the mask to his or her face (you may have to have the pens or popsicle sticks go all the way to the top for extra support if the paper is weighed down).
6. Voila, a mask for the new year!





# Possum Creek Park

By Jessica Warshaver

Possum Creek Park is a peaceful getaway for parents and children within the hustle and bustle of an urban area. The 80-acre park includes both cleared and forested areas, and is home to a fun playground, picnic pavilion, nature trail, and soccer field.

Children can climb monkey bars, run through a fish skeleton, fly down twisted slides, and even climb a kid-sized rock wall. The large picnic area is nearby, so a day at this park can include lunch and play host to birthday parties and get-togethers.





The vast field sports four soccer nets, and there is no shortage of trees for shade from the harsh Florida sun. Just beyond the field lies a nature trail – a playground for butterflies, love bugs and other forest critters. Parents can traverse this plant-infested wonderland with their children and pets, but must be sure to bring good shoes and bug

repellant! Follow the trail to a small creek, or, for more adventurous souls, travel on.

Possum Creek Park's completion will include a skate park, dog park and restrooms. This new Gainesville recreational area is great for seekers of both active and passive fun activities. The park is located at 4000 Blk NW 53 Ave. at the intersection of 43rd Street and 53rd Avenue.

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# The **Uh-Ohs** of Finding an Au Pair

By Ashley Mihlebach

**Au pairs are becoming a more popular and affordable options for working parents. But is the benefit worth the effort?**

When Kerri McCabe found out she was pregnant with her third child, she was overjoyed—and over stressed. As a successful state attorney and part-time Acting Village Justice, she worked more than 40 hours a week and was already paying a large chunk of her salary to childcare. Her accountant recommended the solution that would save her salary and her sanity: an au pair.

Au pairs are becoming a popular option for parents trying to balance a career and a relationship with their children. Although the process of finding the right au pair can be long and drawn out, the benefits of finding reliable caretakers can make the somewhat risky experience a gamble many parents are willing to take. As the difficulties and expense of finding great childcare continues to increase, au pairs are becoming a more affordable option no longer reserved for wealthy families and the von Traps.

## Why Hire Au Pair?

The terms “nanny” and “au pair” are often used interchangeably, but there are many differences between them. Unlike a nanny who considers her responsibilities a job and leaves at the end of a work day, an au pair lives with a family and is treated like a member of the family.

When McCabe was interviewing nannies, she calculated that it option would cost her about \$26,000 per year. She looked into nanny agencies for an English speaking, non-smoker with childcare experience, a good driving record and a clean background. Many agencies claim to supply qualified nannies, but they would only run in-state background checks, not multi-state criminal background checks, she said.

“Parents think they’re getting full background checks, but you never know this day in age,” McCabe says. “When someone comes into your home they have access to everything –your mail, credit card information, everything.”

Her other option, daycare, would be almost as costly. With two children already in daycare, she was paying about \$18,000 per year, not including another \$260 per week for caring for the newborn. Also, her children would have to spend the majority of their day away from home.

“I have a house, I want [my children] to be able to come home from school and play here,” she says. “I don’t want them to have to stay at daycare every-day while I’m working.”

On the other hand, with an au pair, children can get individualized attention in the familiar surroundings of their own home. McCabe explained that living with the au pair is also an advantage because you get a better sense of her lifestyle. If you hire a nanny and they have to be at your house by 7:30 a.m., you never know where they were or what they were doing an hour before they arrived, she says.

“It’s really just what works best with your family,” says Kelly Fritchman, a working mother of two.

Fritchman, who lives in a resort town in Delaware, decided to look into an au pair when her options for a nanny were running out. Students working as nannies over the summer would return to college and she would be right back to where she started, Fritchman says.

Instead of resorting to daycare, Fritchman said she decided to use an au pair. The idea of getting an au pair is becoming more and more popular, she says. About a quarter of her friends who have children use an au pair from overseas.

## A Cultural Exchange

Many families not only look to au pairs for childcare but also an educational opportunity. In most cases, au pairs come to the U.S. from other countries and stay for a year, the maximum length of time a foreign citizen can obtain a working visa without going to school or applying to obtain citizenship. An au pair can bring culture into a home and possibly teach the children another language. As bilingual qualifications are popping up everywhere from teaching positions to nanny applications, the bilingual benefits au pairs can offer appeal to some parents.

“It’s so much easier now, while they’re

young,” Fritchman says. “The kids are developing left and right, this is the time to teach them different languages.”

Sandra, Fritchman’s German au pair, taught her daughter Melanie, 4, many songs in German and Russian that she still remembers a year later. On the other end, many au pairs want to better their English, and since children speak slower, spending time around them can really help with pronunciation, says Fritchman.

“It’s quite an exchange,” she says. “They teach the children and the children teach them.”

Although cultural difference can have a positive affect on children, some parents feel that there’s too much emphasis on teaching children to be bilingual or multilingual. Au pairs should have good command of English

so they can help with homework and can communicate with the children, says McCabe.

“People are unrealistic trying to teach their kids multiple languages,” she says. “Nobody lets kids be kids anymore.”

Kim McCall, a University of Florida professor and mother of 6-year-old Carson, says the chance of a communication difficulty is the reason why she decided to go through a nanny agency as opposed to hiring an au pair.

“Carson has difficulty communicating anyway,” McCall says. “Even an accent might throw him off and be too much of a challenge for him.”

*“Regardless of the living quarters you have for the au pair, it’s a big transition to have someone come into your home and live with you over night.”*

*- Kelly Fritchman, mother of two*



*Au pair Sandra spends a day outside with Melanie and CJ Fritchman*



Au pair Liz poses outside their home with the McCabe children

## The Unwritten Rules to Choosing a Good Au Pair

*Regardless of how much interviewing and screening you can fit into your busy schedule, you never know the true intention of your au pair until she arrives. These few tips will save you from starring in of those horror stories you never thought could happen to you.*

- \* Talk to families who have employed au pairs to make sure it's the right decision for your family. Find out about the limitations and hidden costs of using an au pair. For instance, getting car insurance, paying for classes and going out to dinner.
- \* Choose au pairs from countries with strict driving laws and reliable background records.
- \* Choose an au pair who was raised in an environment similar to where they will be spending most of their time. If they were raised in a large city, they may get bored in the suburbs, or not be used to traveling without public transportation.
- \* Ask potential au pairs to describe their

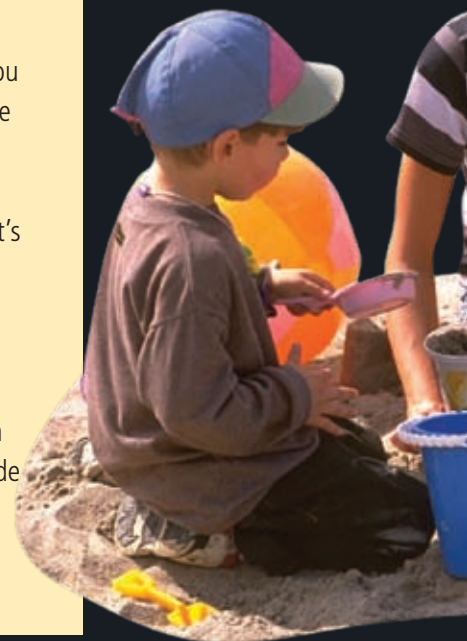
families. Much can be revealed through how they view their own upbringing and what they may expect as part of your family.

- \* Go through an au pair agency that handles "rematches" the way you would like them to be handled. This is the main area where agencies differ. If an au pair doesn't work out, you don't want to be stuck with her for an additional 30 days just because it's required through the program you chose.
- \* Try to "pre-match," meaning find your au pair before you go through an agency. Most agencies don't like when people do this, but it often results in more reliable matches.
- \* Talk to the au pair more than the one time agencies require a phone interview. You should feel like you know the au pair before she arrives.
- \* Check the au pair's recommendations
- \* Go with your gut instinct. Sometimes it's okay to judge people by their appearances and ask personal questions you wouldn't normally think polite.
- \* If you hire an au pair who is under 21, remind them that they can't drink legally in the United States. Their response will provide insight into their motivations.

## Finding the Perfect Au Pair

The process of finding an au pair is easily summarized in its first step: filling out a 14-page application. It's a difficult process and a big decision, Fritchman says. The document is incredibly detailed to best match the families with au pairs and vice versa. Based on her own experiences with four au pairs from different countries, Fritchman estimated the process took three to four months, from the interview to the au pair arriving at her doorstep.

Potential au pairs are typically young women from Europe, Asia, Latin America, Australia, and South Africa between the ages of 18 and 26. According to popular au pair Web sites, the au pairs go through a detailed background check that verifies their education, non-family-related references, criminal background check and psychometric evaluation. They are





required to speak English and make a 12-month commitment to living with an American family. Families looking for an au pair see photos and applications, and can communicate with candidates by e-mail and over the phone. However, the most effective test run is when parents actually meet the au pair. Of the four au pairs, Fritchman says only one worked out well.

“It’s very frustrating,” she says. “Sometimes they have other goals in mind: marriage, citizenship, school, city life. You never know [an au pair’s] true intention.”

On her application, an au pair said she loved to swim, but didn’t even know how when she arrived. Living on the beach, it ended up being a problem for the Fritchmans.

According to McCabe’s previous au pairs, taking a job as an au pair is the cheapest legal way to live in America for a year. McCabe says she goes on her gut feeling about which au pair will get along best with her family.

“Some are earnest. They really want to live in America and truly want to be around children – but then some don’t,” McCabe says. “Lots of girls just want to go to California or Florida. You see a photo that looks like they’re trying to model and think ‘okay, they can’t be serious.’”

*“Some are earnest. They really want to live in America and truly want to be around children – but then some don’t. Lots of girls just want to go to California or Florida. You see a photo that looks like they’re trying to model and think ‘okay, they can’t be serious.’”*  
- Kerri McCabe, mother of three

McCabe says caretakers like her first au pair, Liz, who was from Norway, are the reason so many families are determined to endure the lengthy process. She says she knew instantly Liz was right for her family.

“I would just pray every night for her to come to our family, and when she did she instinctually had more experience with babies than I ever had.”

Liz said she chose the –family because McCabe was the only one who spoke with her on the phone and didn’t pressure her or make her decide right away. She asked McCabe for a picture of her family to show her parents, which gave insight into her own personal background.

## Great Expectations

As many first-time families realize, the obstacles don’t magically disappear as soon as the au pair arrives. It can be difficult trying to balance the time parents have with their children and

the time their children spend with the au pair. Communication differences and unparallel expectations can invoke strife between the au pairs and the families with whom they’re placed.

“Regardless of the living quarters you have for the au pair, it’s a big transition to have someone come into your home and live with you overnight,” Fritchman says.

Online agencies encourage making lifestyle expectations to the au pair clear from the very beginning of the process. Families need to realize that au pairs aren’t just nannies—they are supposed to be treated as part of the family.

“Some au pairs are just treated lower than low,” McCabe says. “I heard of one family going out to dinner on their au pair’s birthday and not even inviting her.”

Au pairs are paid on average \$158 to \$268 per week, but families should be aware that there are lots of added expenses. Going out to dinner, providing the au pair with a cell phone and paying for car insurance are only a few of the extra costs that arise. Other limitations families should be aware of are the hours and regulations of when the au pair can work. An au pair can only work 45 hours per week, 10 hours per day. They are never allowed to spend a night with the children alone, which can be an inconvenience for parents who travel. Many families with au pairs end up having to get a sitter or nanny on top of an au pair.

“Families looking into hiring an au pair need to remember that au pairs are not professional nannies,” McCabe said. “They’re an extra set of hands, but sometimes that’s all you need.”



# Turning Over a New Leaf: Resolutions for Greener Living

## 10 Easy Ways to Make the Planet Cleaner

By Sarah Mendonça McCoy

Habits are hard to change, and the busier we are, the harder it can be. For parents struggling to manage a household, it's a challenge just to keep up with our kids' changing needs, let alone trying to revamp our lifestyle. But since we keep hearing more and more about global warming, environmental pollution, and toxins in our food and our children's toys, maybe this is a good time to change a few habits. Those of us who are parents can't help but wonder about the world that our children will inherit from us, and the long-term effects of all this pollution and climate change. But where do we start?

Several years ago, my husband and I decided to start using canvas shopping bags instead of accepting new plastic bags every time we went to the store. This habit took us months to change. First, we had to acquire the canvas bags. Then, we had to remember to bring them in the car when we went shopping. Once we'd done that, we kept forgetting the bags in the car. Then we would forget to give them to the cashier. We were proud of ourselves when we finally brought our first grocery load home in canvas bags, but then... we had to remember to put the bags back in the car for the next grocery trip. But now, after lots of failed attempts, this habit has become almost automatic for us. We even take them to Target and the mall, even though we often get funny looks.

There's more ways you can make a positive impact on the environment. Here are 10 habits that are relatively easy to follow and will make a big difference in leading a greener lifestyle:

**1. REUSABLE GROCERY BAGS:** Over a billion single-use plastic bags are given by stores each day, according to [www.reuseablebags.com](http://www.reuseablebags.com). The manufacturing of plastic bags requires petroleum and often natural gas, which are non-renewable resources that increase our dependency on foreign suppliers. Still worse, the manufacturing process creates global warming emissions, and also allows toxic chemicals to get into our water supply. So, whether your bags are made of bamboo or canvas or cotton or recycled plastic, when you reuse them, you're making a really big difference!

**2. REUSABLE DRINK CONTAINERS:** Guess what else is clogging up our environment? Plastic water bottles! They have the same problems that plastic bags do, except that they require even more resources to manufacture, and take longer to break down. Buy yourself a reusable drink container, preferably made of stainless steel to avoid the toxic chemicals in plastic drink bottles, and refill it with filtered tap water. Or bring coffee to work in a stainless steel thermos, instead of using a new Styrofoam cup each day.

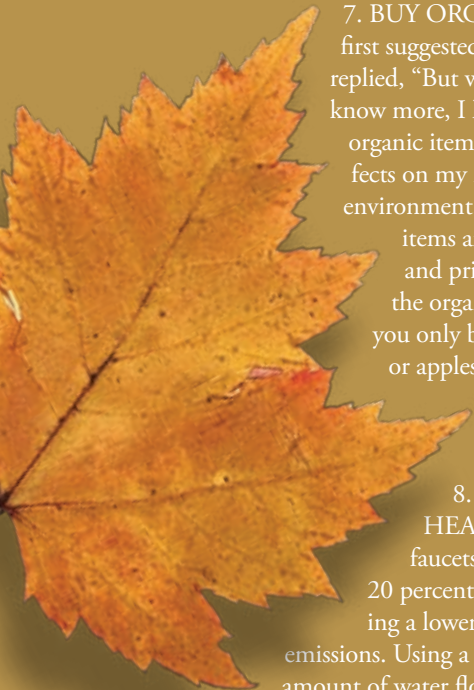
Some great stainless steel containers are made by Kleen Kanteen in a variety of sizes and with several different kinds of spouts.

**3. TURN YOUR ENGINE OFF:** This might not be practical in the middle of the sweltering summer heat, but during the rest of the year, try not to let your engine idle while you sit in your parked car. Whether you are at the drive-through ATM or waiting for someone to run a quick errand, turning your engine off for even a minute or less will cut down on your carbon emissions.

**4. HAZARDOUS WASTE:** Remember that anything that goes in the garbage or down the drain ends up in our water supply, which is where we get our drinking water, and which gets into the food that we eat. Any toxic household wastes, such as paint, paint thinner, household cleaners, and car fluids, should go to the local hazardous waste facility.

**5. LET YOUR DISHES AIR-DRY:** Using the heat cycle on your dishwasher requires a lot of electricity, and so does your clothes dryer, and your hair dryer, and anything else that produces heat. Heat also tends to cause plastics to break down, releasing toxic chemicals. So save some energy by letting those dishes dry through good old-fashioned water evaporation.

**6. USE NON-TOXIC CLEANERS:** It's hard to believe, but you can very effectively clean and disinfect your house without using anything that is toxic to living things! Natural ingredients such as vinegar, lemon juice, and baking soda work perfectly well and also cost a lot less. For example, to clean your drains, just combine baking soda and vinegar, and flush with boiling water. Lemon juice can remove mildew, and corn starch will deodorize your carpet. If you don't want to make your own cleaners, consider buying a brand like Seventh Generation or Method, and avoid chlorine bleach as much as possible.



7. **BUY ORGANIC:** When my husband first suggested this to me, I immediately replied, "But we can't afford it!" Now that I know more, I have a hard time buying non-organic items, because I'm aware of the effects on my health, my kids' health and the environment. Fortunately, organic grocery items are becoming more affordable, and prices will continue to drop as the organic market expands. Even if you only buy one organic item, like milk or apples or cereal, you'll be reducing the amount of pesticide in our environment.

8. **GET A NEW SHOWER HEAD:** Water-saving devices for faucets and showers can save up to 20 percent of hot water usage – meaning a lower electric bill and fewer carbon emissions. Using a faucet aerator will reduce the amount of water flow without reducing the water pressure, so you might not even notice the difference!

9. **BUY LOCAL:** Buying locally produced meat, produce, and dairy products helps the environment in many ways, and also helps the local economy. When food has less distance to travel, there is less fuel required, less carbon emissions, less packaging,

and best of all, the food retains more of its nutritional value. Consider shopping at local farmer's markets (downtown on Wednesdays from 4 to 7 p.m., or in Haile Village on Saturdays from 8 a.m. to noon) and look for foods labeled "locally grown" at the grocery store. If you don't see locally grown foods at your store, then ask for them!

10. **CUT BACK ON JUNK MAIL.** Cancel your catalogs. It just takes a few minutes of calling the companies and asking them to remove you from their mailing list. There are also some services that will ensure that you won't get any more credit card offers or other junk mail items, such as [www.greendimes.com](http://www.greendimes.com) and [www.optoutprescreen.com](http://www.optoutprescreen.com)

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# The Final Thought

## Where Fresh Starts Await

By: Jacki Donaldson

There's something about a new year that brings hope for new beginnings. While it's not actual resolutions we make in our household, we do give some thought to how we'll approach the 365 days that lie before us. We like to think of our plans as fresh starts.

We all have ideas for fresh starts, all four of us. I want to eat out less, cut back on purchasing items we don't need, and reevaluate where our hard-earned money lands. In a nutshell, I want to do better at saving our dollars. I also want our kids to learn how to responsibly manage their own funds when the time comes.

I also wish to whittle away at the tasks I take on that are not central to my life goals. I function so much better in this world when my plate is not overcrowded. Still, I tend to take on more than I can handle – an extra project here, an extra commitment there. I don't like feeling scattered. I want a healthy balance.

John, my trimmed-down hubby who has overhauled his diet and lost 40 pounds, says he'd like to exercise again. He did great for a while, biking bunches of miles in the evenings, but his bad back slowed him down. He knows there's more he can do, though, to stay physically fit and he's ready to do something about it. He'd also like to get more sleep – with work and

family responsibilities, he never seems to get enough.

Joey, our 6-year-old, tells me he's planning for 2008 to ask less for candy and toys. Why?

"So mommy doesn't get mad," he reports. I like how he thinks.

Joey also wants to be nicer to his daddy and mommy. He wants to stop hitting his brother, stop talking back and stop getting out of bed at night. When asked if there's anything about school he wants to work on, he replies, "No. School is good."

Four-year-old Danny says the same – "School is good." Although he does say he wants to stop climbing fences at his school.

"Do you climb fences at school?" I asked him.

"No," he says. "Well, when I was 3 I did."

Danny might be on to something – pick an action you've already mastered and the follow-through becomes much easier. He is also a man of few plans at his young age.

"What else do you want to change?" I inquired.

"I don't want to do this," he tells me. And so our discussion about fresh starts comes to a close.

I don't know how many of our new plans will come to fruition. I'd like to think we'd make good on a few but for now, I'm just happy we're communicating about what we might do better in our lives. Communication is key, I think. It's what I hope we'll always do in our family – talk.

Wait – Danny has one more thing to say: "I want to try not to say bad things."

Good idea, Danny. Very good idea.



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