

Arlington Family Connection

supporting children age six and under and those who care for them



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www.arlingtonfamilyconnection.org



Making Meaningful Toy Selections for the Holidays

by Sally Lesser, Henry Bear's Park

As the holidays approach, pressure builds on parents to create a memorable celebration for their children. The normal media noise around toys reaches a crescendo: toy advertising on TV increases, toy books inserted into newspapers abound, and the fever for the latest "hot toy" dominates the air waves. As parents of young children, you are still making the decisions about what your children will play with, and so you can guide them towards valuable play experiences. How do you cut through the noise and find toys and books that your children will love, and that also will provide some developmental and educational value?

In response to concerns about the way that play is changing in our culture, toy industry leaders, together with educators, have developed the notion of "good toys," those toys that encourage a child's natural curiosity and sense of exploration. Stimulating imagination and creativity are high on the list of features for these good toys. For example, a set of wooden unit blocks represents the essence of a good toy. Blocks are open-ended and unstructured, which allows different children to play with them in ways appropriate for their ages, interests, and skill levels. A two-year-old might discover a lot about the physical properties of the blocks just by holding, stacking, and moving them into familiar shapes, while a four-year-old

might use them to build skyscrapers, roads, or houses. In both cases, the blocks are valuable since the child has brought them into his or her own world and is completely in charge of the play experience.

Very young children need to be exposed to a variety of different types of play. Their talents and interests have yet to be developed, and parents can learn a lot about their children by observing the way in which they respond to any particular play experience. Is my child ready for toys that encourage specific developmental skills? Puzzles or letter and word recognition games might be appropriate. Do I have a particularly imaginative child? Then try toys that provide a setting for this imagination, for example, dress-up clothes, puppets, miniature animals, fantasy figures, or role-playing toys like dolls, tea sets or tool sets. Is my child artistic? A simple set of crayons or markers, paints, and clay may bring hours of enjoyment. Would I like to create an opportunity for my child to interact with her friends? Introducing simple games will teach her how to take turns, play cooperatively, and learn what it feels like to win or lose.

When we are asked about the age appropriateness of toys, we often recommend that parents wait before introducing a toy that might be too old for a child. The danger in giving your child a toy (*continued page 4*)

Gifts That Give Twice: Teaching Kids about Charity Through Meaningful Gift-Giving

by Robin Schoenthaler

The holidays are full of "life lessons" that we want to transmit to our kids. Certainly we try to convey that despite its commercialism, the holidays should be a time when we think of others, a time when we hope to give (as well as receive!) gifts that will delight, and a time when we work extra hard to help others in need.

In the new global village, it's becoming possible to do all three, all at once. Thanks to smart organizations and clever technology, there are now many ways you can show your children ways to make the holidays a happy time not just for Uncle Max

and Grandma Katherine but also for distant strangers in dire need who will benefit from their gifts.

There are three broad ways to use your family's gift-giving as an opportunity to improve the lives of others. Perhaps the easiest is to simply buy native crafts and food products specifically from organizations (such as Fair Trade Vendors) that have made a commitment to funnel a significant amount of their profits straight back to the original craftspeople. This connection is simple and easy to demonstrate to the kids: if they (*continued page 3*)

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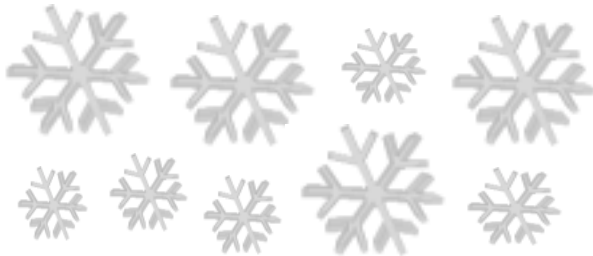
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Happy Holidays!

This issue of the AFC Newsletter is pretty chock-full of holiday material. Some AFC members have been busy compiling lists of the many ways that we can give back, either by donating time or energy or just buying what we might normally buy, but through special charity Web sites. The choices are many and varied, and I am grateful to both Robin and Abby for giving me an easy resource for doing what I always mean to do at the holidays.

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Chanuka, Kwanzaa or some other seasonal ritual, AFC wishes you a happy and healthy holiday season and a wonderful 2004.

-Jen Goebel, Editor



Join the AFC Steering Committee!

For more information about AFC, please contact any of the following Steering Committee members or join us at our next meeting, Tuesday, December 9 at 8 pm. Contact anyone below for the meeting's location.

All Steering Meetings are open and AFC members are encouraged to attend. We will be planning future events and discussing issues of interests to Arlington families. If you would like to get more involved with AFC, or if you have a special interest you would like to see us pursue, please come to a meeting!

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Editorial policy

The **Arlington Family Connection** (AFC) newsletter is published monthly and is free with membership. Published articles reflect the views of the respective authors and do not necessarily represent the views of AFC. Childcare, healthcare and legal information is provided for informational purposes only. It is not intended as a substitute for medical or professional advice. Always consult your own healthcare provider for any decisions relating to your child's well-being.

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AFC Volunteers Needed to ...

... Assemble AFC's Calendar

We need a newsletter calendar editor to gather and confirm new and continuing listings for our very much referred-to calendar section. If you are interested in being our new calendar editor, contact Ruth at calendar@arlingtonfamilyconnection.org.

... Edit/Design AFC's Newsletter



AFC needs an editor/designer! The job can be done by one person or a team of people. Short time commitments welcome! Some experience with computers is important for the designing part, but will teach layout in Pagemaker to anyone interested. For more info, please contact Jennifer

Goebel at newsletter@arlingtonfamilyconnection.org.

... Help Plan AFC Outings

We need fun-loving members to help organize and lead outings both with and without children. We also welcome suggestions for future activities and trips. Contact Ruth at outings@arlingtonfamilyconnection.org or 781-643-2362.

... Join the Community Service Committee

We envision a group whose purpose is to facilitate simple projects that will involve preschool-age children in giving back to the children and senior citizens of our community. Whether it be collecting outgrown board books to donate to the library, maintaining a public garden, or making a simple craft to brighten the residence of a senior, it will introduce young children to community service. Please contact Ruth at 781-643-2362 or at outings@arlingtonfamilyconnection.org.

... Join the Newsletter Team, Submit Articles

We want to hear from you! Send articles or suggestions to newsletter@arlingtonfamilyconnection.org.

Send calendar items and event listings to calendar@arlingtonfamilyconnection.org.

January article deadline: December 10

January calendar deadline: December 17.

Teaching Kids about Charity Through Meaningful Gift-Giving

(continued from page 1)

buy grandma a scarf made in a poor town in India, the money will directly go to help the children in that village.

Another way—although a bit less concrete—is to simply skip the “physical” gift-giving entirely and instead spend the money on a charity or charitable act in the recipient’s name. You can make things a bit more real for the kids by reading the stories on the Web sites and seeing the incredible impact simple services can make.

Finally, if you want to buy standard fare on a standard Web site (such as Toys R Us or Barnes & Noble), your family can choose to buy through on-line charity malls that will funnel a percentage of your purchase to the charity that you and your children choose.

Here are some Web sites for each of these methods:

Native Goods

More and more often at craft shows you can see, scattered among the quilted ducks and seashell earrings, handmade wares from other countries. In some cases these are charities sending the money back as part of their mission. In other situations, the charitable group has actually helped set up the craftworkers’ infrastructure, supplying materials or start-up funds, and helping create a mini-industry that can make a huge difference in the lives of its artisans. You can find these goods at craft shows and Fair Trade Stores (www.fairtradefederation.com/memret.html#MA). Many are too small-scale to sell on-line, but do check out the following:

- ▶ www.tabitha.ca/crafts.html -- Cambodian crafts.
- ▶ www.selling-womens-stuff.org -- African textiles, American quilts and much more
- ▶ www.crossroadstrade.com -- indigenous crafts
- ▶ www.servv.org -- goods from many different countries
- ▶ www.globalexchange.org/stores -- A wide variety of goods including coffee
- ▶ www.tenthousandvillages.com-- list of local stores
- ▶ www.missiontraders.org-- items grouped by country

Give a Gift of Charity

Making a gift in your recipient’s name means they’ll get a card outlining the impact their gift will have. And these are big, established organizations, so your kids can read all about it on their Web sites.

- ▶ www.heifer.org -- Give someone a cow, sheep, pig, chickens or other animals.
- ▶ www.seva.org -- Gifts of service, including cataract surgery for the blind, water-reclamation plants, etc.
- ▶ www.treesforlife.org/ttfla/ttfla.htm-- Plant 30 fruit trees for someone; comes with seeds to plant yourself!
- ▶ www.marinemammalcenter.org/get_involved/adopt/adoptaseal.asp. Adopt an otter in grandpa’s name! Or a manatee, or a wolf, or a whale, or a primate. (Editor’s note: Or for a local option, check the New England Aquarium’s adoptions at www.neaq.org/support.)

- ▶ www.justgive.org/html/ways/giftideas.html#2 -- A long list of “Sponsorship” sites, and probably the kids will know just who should have a gorilla named after them!

Make Your On-line Shopping Count

Some small on-line stores promise that a percentage of your purchase will go to a charitable cause while others are charity mall Web sites that allow you to shop at major consumer sites while still contributing to charity. If Aunt Betty has already told you precisely what she wants, and it needs to come from Amazon (the Web site, not the river), there are several charity mall Web sites that you can use to make those purchases count, too. Be sure and check that the donated percentage seems worthwhile to you – it ranges from 1% to “up to” 50%.

- ▶ www.equilter.com -- Quilting, sewing and fashion; donates 2% of purchase to charity of your choice.
- ▶ www.gearthatgives.com-- Links to sites supporting hunger, breast cancer, the rainforest, and more.
- ▶ www.gretergood.com -- Links to major consumer Web sites: Amazon, Toys R Us, Land’s End.
- ▶ www.igive.com -- Links to major consumer Web sites, lets you add your own charity.
- ▶ www.buyforcharity.com-- Links to major consumer Web sites: Amazon, Toys R Us, Land’s End.
- ▶ www.mycase.com -- Links to major consumer Web sites, lets you add your own charity.
- ▶ www.workingforchange.com/shop/ -- Links to Coldwater Creek, Patagonia, UncommonGoods & more.

Some Great Miscellaneous

- ▶ www.underoneroof.org/shop.html-- San Francisco store/site have raised 8+ million dollars for the fight against AIDS and “every penny from your purchases goes to AIDS service organizations.” Many unique items, lots of new age or gay/lesbian themed gifts.
- ▶ www.geezer.com -- Buy crafts and homemade goods from older Americans, particularly from rural areas. Best combination of downhome internet cleverness and backwoods charm. Be sure and have the kids read the “Artisans’ Stories” for a taste of a whole different kind of life.
- ▶ www.sweethomeproject.org -- Buy Dancing Deer cookies from an organization that helps homeless families by assisting with employment, housing, etc.
- ▶ www.supportunicef.org/cards/index.htm -- Gorgeous greeting cards for every occasion, supports Unicef.
- ▶ www.justgive.org/html/kidscorner/index.html--This site has a section on other ways kids can help feel that they can make a difference.

For the complete article, visit our Web site at www.arlingtonfamilyconnection.org/resources/alternative_gifts.html.



Raising Bilingual and Bicultural Kids

by Bettina Velona

Christmas is slowly approaching. Time again for all the wonderful customs that accompany it. For our household, that means incorporating both the German and American Christmas traditions. They complement each other wonderfully and enrich our lives.

My daughter Nina is four-and-a-half, speaks both English and German fluently and has a great understanding of my culture as well as the American culture in which she lives. I would like to stress how beneficial it is for children to experience both parents' languages and cultures first-hand. They learn without effort. I have witnessed how this experience has enriched our family and the people we have shared it with. Bilingual upbringing expands children's minds. They learn another language and culture better than any school could teach. It lays pathways in the brain that make it easier to learn other languages. Bilingual kids are considered to be more tolerant toward other cultures, more flexible and adaptable. Their home environment serves as a microcosm in which they learn how two different cultures interact and coexist. Nina is very comfortable visiting Germany. My parents, who live in Germany and speak no English, really appreciate that as well as her motivation to communicate with them in German.

I have to admit, I have never touched a book about raising a bilingual child. I can only speak from experience. I act purely intuitively and confidently. I am not worried what other people think. I have ignored critics that warned that it could cause developmental problems, confusion and identity crisis. I haven't seen any evidence of these problems in any of the bilingual kids I have met.

As the parent of the "foreign" language, I have been asked many times, "How do you do it? Doesn't she want to speak English with you?" She doesn't. She's been in preschool for over a year and still speaks German to me. Why? Because I consistently speak German to her at all times. No exceptions. I have observed that any deviation



from that consistency translates directly into a reduced motivation to speak that language.

In addition to being consistent, I find it important to make being bilingual the most natural thing in the world. That means exposing the child to the foreign language and culture from as many sources as possible. The German language and culture is part of our life and my daughter never questions it. She has built up an immense vocabulary beyond what I teach her. We read books, listen to tapes, sing songs, recite poetry, go to kids' Web sites, and watch an occasional video – all in German. When I read books, I read them in German (even English books). When we're among people, I speak German to her, and if need to, explain what I said to the other person. We cook German food. We celebrate German holidays. We travel to Germany at least once a year and have many visitors. We have a German playgroup, lots of German friends and have always had a German babysitter (I have to admit we got lucky on that one...). As you can see, we are immersed in the language.

It also helps if both parents are on the same page. My husband makes an effort to learn German. And my daughter hears me speak English to others. Again, this reiterates to her that being bilingual is the most natural thing in the world.

So, if you are a parent who would like to bring up your child bilingually, I hope that my experience is an inspiration to you. There are also many Web sites that offer support and information for bilingual families (try www.nethelp.no/cindy/biling-fam.html). I encourage you to keep speaking your language and carry on your traditions. If nothing else, we may foster in our children and the people with whom they come in contact the belief that foreign languages and cultures are really not that foreign. It might be our small contribution to a more compassionate attitude toward other cultures. In this spirit: Let there be peace on earth!

Meaningful Toys for the Holidays

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that is too advanced is that he or she will be frustrated in trying to play with it, and may give up on it. Then, when the time is right, the toy might remind the child of a frustrating and unhappy experience. Also, a toy doesn't necessarily lose its value if a child grows out of it. Returning to play with an old familiar toy can be very reassuring and comforting.

Children who have had lots of great play experiences, through pretending, playing games, drawing, and learning

certain skills, are developing a sense of themselves, and how they fit into the world. In an increasingly "programmed" world, it is our job to give children the time and the tools to find out who they are and to develop confidence in their ability to manage their world. By providing rich and open play experiences, with good toys, we can help them have healthy and happy childhoods.



The Natural Connection: Homeopathy Made Easy...



by Dianna Dixon

I love the precision of homeopathy, the little details that help us prescribe exactly for an ailment, for example, knowing the difference between treating the headache at the back of the neck (that feels better with a heating pad) versus the headache at the temples (that feels better with a cold pack). I love the fact that human idiosyncrasies can be part of an accurate prescription: you like Indian food when you get a cold? You only sneeze when going out into the sun? You go off coffee when pregnant? This is the homeopathic remedy for you. But sometimes...

Wouldn't it be great if homeopathy were a bit more like conventional medicine, in that you could get a "cold formula" or a "headache tablet?"

So I was really pleased to see, while walking in the health and beauty section in Wild Oats, a greatly expanded section devoted to homeopathic remedies. A large number of these remedies are "combination remedies," blends of homeopathic medicines tailored to fit a specific ailment. For instance, there is a Hyland's "headache" combination remedy that contains four different remedies. Each of these remedies will address a certain kind of headache – stress headache, or back-of-neck headache, or too-much-sun headache – but the combination remedy is designed to address many or all of these headaches.

While not all homeopaths would agree with me, I think combination remedies help make homeopathy very accessible. Not everyone has the time or inclination to probe the exact nature of a headache (or other common complaint) so, much like with conventional medicine, one can simply choose a homeopathic remedy designed to help with headache pain.

As always, a major benefit of homeopathic remedies is their gentle, non-toxic nature, free from worrisome side effects.

Here are a few of the combination remedies available:

- **Hyland's** (brand name) sells combination remedies for cough, hayfever, insomnia, arthritis pain, backache, poison ivy, motion sickness and PMS, among others.
- **Natra-bio** sells homeopathic combination remedies for acne, caffeine withdrawal, smoking withdrawal, cold sores and sinus conditions, among others. It also sells an impressive line of anti-allergy homeopathic liquids, covering everything from animal dander to plant pollen.
- **Boericke & Tafel** sells combination remedies for migraine, colds and flu and sinus conditions, and also does a useful range of chewables – for cough, headache, indigestion and aches – that are packaged in little tin cases like mints.
- **Boiron** has catchy names for their combination remedies, like "Optique" for eyestrain, "Quietude" for insomnia and "Sportenine," billed as homeopathic sports medicine. Boiron also sells a range of very snazzily packaged homeopathic "kits." While not combination remedies, these packs-of-three cover a given range of ailments. For

instance, the "Summer" kit has a remedy for insect bites/allergies, for bruises and for indigestion. Very handy.

- **Historical Remedies** gets my vote for the most trendy packaging of homeopathic combination remedies, offering "Sore Spots" for aches and pains, "Pick-up" drops for fatigue, "Moon Drops" for sleep troubles and "Passion Drops" for you can just imagine.

- **Liddell** offers the "letting go" series of homeopathic combination remedies in liquid form, offering help for anxiety and tension, frustration, grief and "the blues," plus weight loss and energy formulas.

Let these combination remedies take some of the work out of prescribing homeopathics, so you and your family can just enjoy the benefits of inexpensive, gentle, non-toxic modern medicine.

As always, the information in this column is for education only and is not intended as medical advice. Dianna Dixon is a UK-trained and licensed homeopath practicing in Arlington.

Giving Back

by Abby Subak

After e-mailing a simple request for ideas of ways that Arlingtonians can give back, I received an incredible outpouring of enthusiasm and suggestions. If you have additional suggestions, I have an ongoing list and hope we can find ways to support them throughout the year (please e-mail me at abbysubak@yahoo.com). After all, these causes need support year-round, not only during the surge of holiday generosity. But, in the holiday spirit...

Arlington Food Pantry, 21 Marathon Street (off Mass Ave.).

Donations to Church of Our Savior, Fridays, 1-3 pm.

Coats for Kids Drive, Anton's Cleaners, until Jan 15.

All sizes are needed.

Hat and Mitten Collection, Park Avenue Congregational Church is collecting for Waltham's Sandra's Lodge, a family shelter.

Gifts for Families, Human Services of Arlington, Call Patsy Kraemer (781-316-3250) or Liz Carey (781-316-3264) to get a family match. Gifts to be donated Friday before Christmas.

Gifts for Single Moms, Donation Box at Carberry's thru Dec. 14 for Crittenton Hastings House in Brighton.

Gifts for Girls at Germaine Lawrence School, their annual holiday gift drive includes clothing, school supplies and much more. Contact the Development Office at 781-648-6200 ext. 120. www.germainelawrence.org/web/ftemplate.html?fhlp

Gifts for Seniors, Minuteman Senior Services, Crafty Yankee in Lexington sponsors a Senior Santa giving tree.

Gifts for City Mission Society, Support the CMS Christmas Shops, where parents of inner city kids can 'buy' gifts. Donations should be new, unwrapped and be brought to the Park Ave. Congregational Church by Sunday, Dec. 7.

Volunteer Opportunities

Minuteman Senior Services, Deliver holiday gifts to 5 people during the week before Christmas. Call Poppy Coffin, 781-221-7034 at Minuteman Senior Services.

Christmas in the City, Huge annual Christmas Party for homeless families and those in transition at the Bayside Expo. Volunteer on Saturday 12/20 or 12/21. To sign up to help out, see <http://www.christmasinthecity.org>.

Calendar

Sing-alongs

Tuesdays Robbins Library: 10-10:30 am. Songs and singing games for ages 0-3. Space limited, tickets are distributed beginning 9am day of event. December 2, 9 & 16 only. Call 781-316-3234 or visit www.robbinslibrary.org.

First Thursday of the Month

Sing-along at Fox Library, 10 am. For Preschool children of all ages with Liz Buchanan.

Friday, December 12

Sing-along with Diane Taraz. 10-10:30am, Calvary United Methodist Church, 300 Mass Ave, \$1. Info www.dianetaraz.com.

Storytimes

Storytimes at Robbins and Fox libraries will not be held in December, but check back in January.

Vacation Week at Robbins Library

Karuna: Holiday Songs and Family Sing-along, a multicultural celebration of the holidays. All ages. Space limited, tickets distributed beginning 9 am day of event. Sat. Dec. 27, 2-3:30 pm

Thank You Letters for ages 4 up. Drop in and write your thank you letters. We will supply paper, envelopes, pens or markers and some decorative stickers. Mon. Dec. 29, 10 am-3 pm.

Snowman Craft for all ages. Drop in and design a decorative snowman. Wed. Dec. 31, 10 am-2 pm.

Vacation Week at Fox Library

Surprise, Mystery and Magic, an interactive magic show with Bonaparte, for ages 4 and up on Tues. Dec. 30, 10-11 am. Space limited--tickets available at Fox Library beginning Dec. 16: Call 781-316-3198 to reserve tickets or pick up at circulation desk.

Groups

Older First-time Moms' Group

Meets in Arlington third Wednesday every month, 7-8:30 pm. Social and support discussion group for first-time moms in their late 30s and 40s in the Boston area. Free. \$1 donation suggested. Call 781-674-2029 for location.

Baby Talk Drop-in Group

Tuesdays, 10:15-11:30 am at the Boys & Girls Club. For parents/caregivers and

their babies, birth to 18 mos. old. Come socialize while your infant or toddler plays with age appropriate toys in a cozy room overlooking Spy Pond. \$3 per visit. Runs Dec. 2- Jan. 13. For info contact lynnhorgan@Comcast.net.

New Mothers' Drop-in Group

Thursdays, 10-11:30 am, Calvary United Methodist Church, 300 Mass Ave. Free, nonsectarian, facilitated group. All new parents are welcome with their babies. Sponsored by Jewish Family and Children's Services. Info: 617-558-1278.

New Mothers' Drop-in Group

Alternating Tuesdays, 9:30-10:30 am, Henry Bear's Park, 685 Mass Ave. Free, informal drop-in group for new mothers with infants. Info: 781-646-9400.

New Mothers' Group

Wednesdays, 10-11:30 am, Beth Israel Deaconess & Children's Hospital Medical Care Center, 482 Bedford Street, Lexington. 617-667-2229.

Grandparents Support Group

Second Tuesday of the month, 12-1:30 pm. For grandparents who are primary caretakers of their grandchildren. Sponsored by the Town of Arlington. Call 781-316-3410 for more information.

Arlington Fathers' Group

Tuesdays 7:30-9 pm. Sponsored by Parents Helping Parents. Free support group for fathers who are feeling isolated, overwhelmed, or concerned about their anger toward their children. For location and information, call 800-882-1250.

Other Fun Stuff

Puddlestompers Monday Playgroup

Drop-in preschool playgroup meets Mondays from 10:30 am-12:30 pm. In winter, we meet in the Fox Library Community Room (\$1/family contribution for use of the room.) We meet outside when the weather is nice. To join the group's email list, contact: julielucey@comcast.net or call 781-641-0944.

Toddlers and Twos

Drop-in gym time sponsored by the Arlington Recreation Dept. Wednesdays and Fridays 9:30-11 am. Gibbs School gym. Ages 15 mos.-3 years \$3 per day. Last meeting this month is December 19. Info: 781-316-3880.

Art Beat Drop-in Studio Art Time

Children 4 and up. Project prices start at \$8. 212-A Mass Ave. Monday-Friday, 10 am-5 pm. Info: 781-646-2200.

Capitol Theater Movies for caregivers with babies. Movies chosen weekly. Shows start Mondays between 1-2 pm. \$4.50. To join the e-mail list send an e-mail to BabyFriendlyMovies-subscribe@yahoo.com or, to find out more about the e-mail list visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BabyFriendlyMovies>.

Full Moon Restaurant

Monday night is movie night, kids can come in pajamas. 5-8 pm. Preschool-oriented kids' movies in the play area. 138 Mass Ave. 781- 646-1404.

Public Skating

422 Summer Street, Veteran's Memorial Sports Center. \$2 children, \$4 adults. Fridays: 11am-1pm, 2:30-4:45 pm, 7-9 pm. Sundays: 9:30-11:30 am, 2-4 pm. Info: 781-316-3880.

Regent Theatre

The Regent offers great family programs most Saturday mornings from 10:30-11:30 am. \$5 for kids & seniors, \$7 adults. Tickets available at the door starting at 9:30 am, or in advance the week before at Henry Bear's Park. Dec. 1: Holiday Dance Spectacular by Dance Inn of Lexington
Dec. 13: Ben Rudnick & Friends Holiday Show (see *Save the Dates*)
Visit www.regenttheatre.com for more details.

A Christmas Carol

Sat. Dec. 6, 2-2:45 pm
Presented by the Hampstead Players, for ages 4-12 at Robbins Library. Space limited, tickets distributed beginning 9 am day of performance.

7th Annual Ciclismo Classico "Jingle Ride"

Sun. Dec. 14, 9:30 am-2 pm
Leisurely 25-mile bike ride through Arlington, Somerville, Cambridge, and Boston. Cyclists dress festively (bright colors, bells and lights), sing Christmas Carols, and hand out candy canes to children; fun pit-stops along the route. Free, but bring a teddy bear or book to donate to the Italian Home for Children in Jamaica Plain. For more details, visit www.ciclismoclassico.com/community/community_events.jsp or contact Julia Kropp at juliak@ciclismoclassico.com or 1-800-866-7314.

Beyond Arlington

Babes in The Woods

Strolls and hikes through the Medford Fells every Tuesday, 10-11:30 am. Free. Call 781-396-8994 for maps, schedules or info or visit www.fells.org/babes.html.
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Calendar, continued

Belmont KidSpace

Indoor playspace for ages 5 and under. \$45 family season pass or \$3 a day. 365 Belmont Street, Belmont. Hours: M/Th 1-5 pm; Fri 5-8 pm; Sat 9 am-12 noon; 2nd & 4th Sundays 2-5 pm; 3rd Sunday 2-5 pm for special families. For more information call 617-484-7703 or visit www.belmontkidspace.org.

Barefoot Books

1771 Mass Ave., Cambridge is a dreamy setting for regular storytimes and special readings and events. 617-349-1610 or www.barefootbooks.com.

Culture for Kids Holiday Show with Ben Rudnick and Friends.

Tues, Dec. 2, 3:30-5:50 pm, Club Passim, Cambridge. For reservations call 617-492-7679.

Waldorf School Holiday Fair

739 Massachusetts Ave., Lexington
Come to this unusual fair for truly one-of-a-kind presents, delectables and performances throughout the day! \$4 for adults, \$2 for kids. Sat. Dec 6, 10 am-4 pm.

Benefits

Kans for Kids

Sat. Dec. 6, 10 am-2 pm
Donate clean returnable bottles and cans to benefit Arlington Recreation's Youth Activities. Gibbs School on Tufts St., 781-316-3880.

Toys for Tots

Sat. Dec. 13, 10 am-4 pm
Bring in a new unwrapped toy for Toys for Tots and kids will get a FREE 5x7 picture taken with Santa and his elves. Kids can also take pictures with the U.S. Marines and a REAL Hum-Vee. Zeff Photo Supply, 11 Brighton St., Belmont, 617-489-3311, www.zeffphoto.com

Classes

Arlington Boys & Girls Club offers a variety of classes for all ages including swimming, music, sports, tumbling, crafts, cooking and more. Session III starts Dec. 1. For a list of offerings, visit www.abgclub.org or call 781-648-1617.

Arlington Parks and Recreation offers a variety of sports and other activities for children of all ages. Winter registration starts Dec. 8. For a list of offerings, visit www.town.Arlington.ma.us/recnws.htm or call 781-316-3880.

Fidelity House (25 Medford St., Arlington) offers many programs for youngsters of all ages. Their preschool classes include: Tot Time, Preschool Sports, and Gymnastics. For a list of offerings, visit www.fidelityhouse.org or call 781-648-2005.



The Compleat Day Tripper on Sale for the Holidays!

Already losing your mind trying to figure out places to take the kids when the wind-chill is approaching single digits or the weather outside is frightful?

Go to www.piercepress.com and buy your own copy of *The Compleat Day Tripper, an Annotated Compendium of Short, Family-Friendly Expeditions in and around Boston & Northeastern Massachusetts* written by your friends and fellow AFC moms Charlotte Pierce and Robin Schoenthaler.

This book started at the Bishop School, originating with Bishop-dad Mark Wilke's long list of science and nature-related activities. Since then, countless Arlington families have contributed ideas and finds, and the end result is a fabulous list of daytrips written especially for Arlington families — with particular attention to places near Arlington where you can take the kids when you just can't stay outside another minute. Just whip on over to page 32 where you'll find an entire section on "Beating the Sleet (or Rain or Snow)" with details about libraries, museums, arty stores, and best of all, indoor playgrounds!!!

You can buy a booklet on-line at piercepress.com (\$10) or get copies for you and EVERYBODY on your gift list at Crossroads Trade or the BookRack (in Arlington Center) for only \$8! All proceeds go to the Arlington Public Schools.

AFC Membership/Renewal Form



New Member Renewal Date:

Names:

Address, Zip:

E-mail:

Phone:

Please list your children:

Name Gender Date of Birth

I am a:

Parent Grandparent Health Care Provider
 Educator Child Care Provider Other

I am:

Stay-at-home Parent Employed full-time
 Employed Part-time Other

Newsletter Delivery Preference:

US Mail E-mail Both

School District (for geographic location):

Bishop Brackett Dallin Hardy

Peirce Stratton Thompson Other

Areas of Interest:

Events/Parties New Parent Outreach Newsletter

Outings w/ Kids Outings w/o Kids Seminars

Playgroups Web site Other:

Membership Fees: All memberships renew in September.

One-year membership \$20 (joining July-January)

Mid-year membership \$10 (joining Feb-June)

Please make check payable to "Arlington Family Connection" and mail it with this form to:

Arlington Family Connection, PO Box 150, Arlington, MA 02476

For information or questions, contact Ruth Schmidt at (781) 643-2362 or membership@arlingtonfamilyconnection.org

Save the Dates!

Thursday, Dec. 4

AFC Book Club

Meets first Thursday of every month. New members always welcome. Info: Nancy Flynn-Barvick at barvick@comcast.net.

Saturday, Dec. 6

Children's sing-along with Liz

Buchanan at 11 am, part of the free Kids' Corner at the Alternative Gifts Fair, Church of Our Savior, 21 Marathon St. Kids' Corner, 11 am-1 pm. Alternative Gifts Fair, Dec. 6, 10 am-3 pm and Dec. 7, 11:30 am-12:30 pm, will raise money for Third World artisans. Free, but please bring a non-perishable item to donate to the Arlington Food Pantry.

Tuesday, Dec. 9

AFC Steering Committee Meeting

8 pm. Details inside on page 2.

Wednesday, Dec. 10

Transitioning to Kindergarten

7-8:30 pm, Peirce School (85 Park Ave. Extension). An informative discussion for parents of preschool-age children regarding the issues families face as their children enter kindergarten. Kathleen Donovan (Superintendent of Schools),

Judi Bohn (Arlington Partners in Education) and others will present information and strategies to assist parents in supporting their child's transition. Free, donations accepted. Please call 781-316-3570 with any questions.

Saturday, Dec. 13

Ben Rudnick and Friends' Second Annual Holiday Extravaganza.

10:30 am at the Regent Theatre, Arlington Center. Featuring everyone's favorite holiday tunes (Rudolph, Frosty, Jingle Bells, Hava Nagila) plus band originals. Tickets are \$7 adults, \$5 children. For information call 781-643-4849.

Wednesday, Dec. 17

Tot Holiday Party with crafts, songs, refreshments, and a special North Pole visitor. Free. Arlington Boys and Girls Club. 10:30-11:30 am. 781-648-1617.

Wednesday, Dec. 31

Arlington Celebrates 2004

Join the annual town-wide celebration for the youth of Arlington. A fee of \$5 allows you to join in one or all of the events. Purchase buttons at Arlington Recreation, Arlington Boys & Girls Club, or Fidelity

House. (Children under the age of 6 must be accompanied by an adult in the pool.) 9:30-11:30 am, Skating at Sports Center 1-2:30 pm, Swimming & Games at Boys & Girls Club 2:45-3:45 pm, Musical Celebration at Fidelity House

Tuesday, Jan. 13

AFC Mom's Movie Night

Join us for a movie at the Capitol Theater (7 pm-ish), followed by dessert and discussion at Flora. An e-mail will be sent the week prior announcing the movie title, time, and other details. No reservations needed. For more info contact jpetrie@xensei.com or jbgascoigne@rcn.com, or call 781-643-4842 (Janet).

Wednesday, Jan. 21

AFC visits the Children's Discovery Museum

11 am-12:30 pm, 117 Main St., Acton (45 mins from Arlington) Special AFC group visit to one of the most fun places in Boston for kids ages 1-5. \$4.50 per person age 1 and up. Spaces are limited, advance reservation and payment required - contact Ruth Schmidt at outings@arlingtonfamilyconnection.org or 781-643-2362. More info on the museum: www.discoverymuseums.org.

Arlington Family Connection
PO Box 150
Arlington, MA 02476

