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For over 50 years ST. ROBERT SCHOOL, located near Land Park, has provided a well-rounded education which focuses on academic excellence and spiritual and character development. In addition, ST. ROBERT affords students opportunities to participate in competitive and recreational athletics as well as affording other opportunities for involvement in community service activities.



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www.valcomnews.com

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sacramento **ZOO**

Food & Toy Drive

November through December



Receive \$1 off Zoo admission when you donate a new unwrapped toy or a non-perishable food item.



母 ☆ 査 @ Calif*rnia Kids! **B** Holiday Music Program ZooBiz

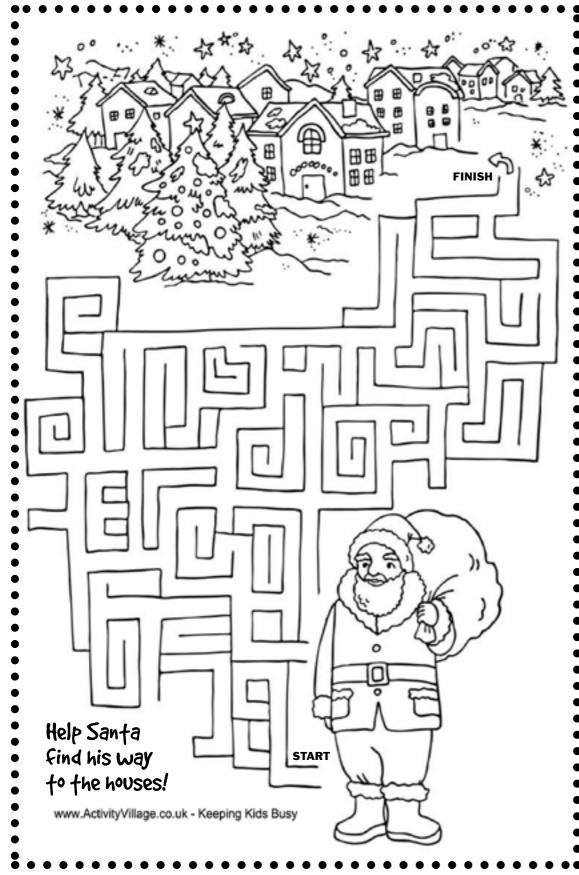
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et ready for some holiday fun on your next Gvisit to the California State Capitol Museum at a free holiday music program, held daily, December 1 through December 23, will be from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

To set a festive stage and spread holiday cheer, beautiful vintage decorations create a lovely backdrop for a variety of diverse and amazing live holiday musical performances in the Capitol Rotunda each day. Visitors will enjoy live musical entertainment that includes a Salvation Army brass quintet, a Cal-Trans choir (made up of a spirited group of state workers), trombone jazz, world and baroque music, bell-ringers, a harp circle, a youth violinist, a number of talented school choirs and many more. This special holiday experience is made possible by the State Capitol Museum and California State Parks in association with the California State Legislature Joint Rules Committee, the Governor's Office and the Department of General Services who have worked collaboratively to preserve holiday traditions inside the Capitol.

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The California State Capitol Museum is located at 10th Street between L & N Streets, Sacramento, First Floor Rotunda. For more information about scheduled performances, call (916) 324-0333 or visit www.capitolmuseum.ca.gov.



DECEMBER 2011 • CALIFORNIA KIDS! Family Fun Guide

Holiday Gifts that Give Winter is a great time to visit the Sacramento Zoo and take a break from the hectic holiday hustle. While visiting the zoo, stop by Zoofari Market and find some unique gift items for family and friends or find the perfect gift for those hard-to-buy-for people in your life at the membership office: a Zoo Parent certificate, a gift membership to the Zoo, or a brass paver. Call (916) 808-5888 for details or visit saczoo.org.

Holiday Magic - Holiday Animal Treats - Saturday, December 10, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Why should only humans receive gifts during the holidays? It's time for Holiday Magic - bundle up and watch the animals unwrap their holiday goodies and see Gus the Green tree frog in his holiday attire.

Pajama Party - Free Admission Day, Saturday, December 24, 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Celebrate Christmas Eve with a Pajama Party and the animals! Shop at Zoofari Market where you'll find a variety of unique last minute gifts. Have a Happy Holiday at the Zoo enjoying this free day. The zoo opens at 10 a.m. and closes at 1:30 on Saturday, December 24.

Zoo is closed Christmas Day, December 25.

Open since 1927, the Sacramento Zoo is home to over 140 native, rare and endangered species and is one of over 200 accredited institutions of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. Located near the corner of Land Park Drive and Sutterville Road in William Land Park, the Zoo is wholly managed by the non-profit Sacramento Zoological Society. This Sacramento treasure inspires conservation awareness through education and recreation. Open daily from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., general admission is \$11; children ages 2 to 11 are \$7 and one and under are admitted free. Parking is free throughout the park or ride Regional Transit bus #6. For information, call (916) 808-5888 or visit saczoo.org.

Optimizing Your Pension Plan Benefits Lunch & Learn

Whether you're getting ready to retire or just want to learn more about your pension and retirement options, find out how you can increase your pension benefits and reward yourself in retirement!

Esther Aw, CLTC, and Mark J. Pratt, CLTC, invite you to join them for an informational seminar to learn how you can get the most from your pension plan and still provide income for your spouse or dependent.

Thursday, January 19, 2012 Noon to 1:00 pm **Bank of California Center** 770 L Street, Suite 950, Downtown Sacramento

RSVP to Ruth at 916-646-0310 or ruth@estheraw.com. Lunch will be provided so please specify turkey, ham or vegetarian.

Can't Make It?

Please RSVP for one of the following dates: February 16, 2012 – Noon to 1 pm March 15, 2012 - Noon to 1 pm

Mark J. Pratt, CLTC CA Insurance License # 066922 Pratt Financial & Insurance Services 430 F Street, Suite G Davis, CA 95616 (530) 753-4195 Mark@prattfinancial.com



Esther Aw, CLTC CA Insurance License # OC15780 EMA Financial & Insurance Services 8110 Pocket Road, Suite 101 Sacramento, CA 95831 (916) 646-0310

This is an informational and sales presentation. Neither New York Life nor its agents provide tax, legal or accounting advice. Please consult your own professional for tax, legal and accounting advice.



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www.ActivityVillage.co.uk - Keeping Kids Busy

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Discovery Museum Science & Space Cenfer Calendar

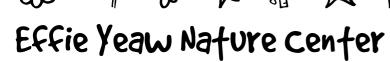
Creative Moon Cookies - Saturday and Sunday, December 3 and 4 In 2009, NASA verified the existence of water ice on the moon. This weekend, each child frosts a cookie and adds "sugar ice". Decorate this delicious treat and enjoy outer space fun in our Space Quest exhibit. Wash the cookie down with Tang- the drink of astronauts. Bring a camera for some photo shots! Planetarium shows are at 1 and 3 p.m. are included with admission (ages 4 and above only).

Food Factor Robot Challenge - Saturday and Sunday, December 10 and 11 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.: Science Discovery activities 12:30 to 4 p.m. The Discovery Museum Science and Space Center is celebrating 60 years of sensational science milestones. In the last ten years, there has been great advancement in food safety. This year the Museum's FIRST* LEGO League robotics team competed in the challenge, Food Factor. Visit the museum on this weekend to learn about their project (presentations at noon and 2 p.m.). Complete a coloring sheet! For a \$3 fee, guests have 30 minutes to add a special feature to a pre-built Lego Mindstorms NXT sumobot. After the feature is added, the sumobot competes against the Museum's FLL Robotics Team's sumobot. Planetarium shows are at 1 and 3 p.m. are included with admission (ages 4 and above only).

Cruisin' on Mars - Saturday and Sunday, December 17 and 18, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The Discovery Museum Science and Space Center is celebrating 60 years of sensational science milestones. In 2003, NASA selected two exploration rovers to go to Mars-Spirit and Opportunity. Working together, families build a Mars scene with a "rover" model and pretend Mars rocks. Remember to visit the Mars corner in our Space Quest exhibit. Planetarium shows at 1 and 3 p.m. are included with admission (ages 4 and above only) and are highlighting the science of the Mars rovers and the planet itself.

The Museum opens at 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Science Discovery activities are 12:30 to 4 p.m. Discovery Museum Science & Space Center is located at 3615 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento. Admission is \$6 adults (18+), \$5 seniors (60+), \$5 teens (13-17), \$4 children (4-12), \$0 children (3 and under). Ages appropriate for 4 to 12 years old. For more information, call (916) 808-3942 or visit www.thediscovery.org





Holiday Shopping Event - Saturday, November 3, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Help nature education programs and pick up some bargains for nature lovers and kids on your gift list. All profits from this annual sale benefit the Nature Center's education programs. Choose from many cool new shop items as well as special guest vendors.

Birding Basics - Sunday, November 4, 1:30 p.m.

Are you interested in bird watching, but don't know where to start? Come to the Nature Center to learn the basics for beginning birding. You can look for common winter birds found around the Nature Area. Bring your binoculars or borrow a pair from the Center.

By the River's Edge - Saturday, November 10, 10:30 a.m.

Who lives at the river's edge? Explore the habitat where beaver, otter, herons, and other wildlife live.

Nature Story Time - Sunday, November 11, 1:30 p.m.

Join a Nature Center Naturalist to hear a story from some of our favorite nature story books.

Tracks: What do they reveal? - Saturday, November 17, 10:30 a.m. Tracks reveal animals that you may not see while on your nature

hike. Become a nature detective and discover the tracks of animals living in the Nature Area.

Cold Blooded Creatures - Sunday, November 18, 1:30 p.m.

Some have scaly skin, some have slimy skin, some have legs and some don't! Can you guess what they are? Join the staff at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center and find out!

Coyote Tales - Saturday, November 24, 10:30 a.m.

Join us for a Native American story about Coyote, then get a close-up look at a coyote pelt, skull and mounted specimen.

Flying Tiger - Saturday, November 31, 10:30 a.m.

Have an up-close visit with the Center's newest animal resident, a young great horned owl. Find out how these birds have earned this fearsome nickname.

Winter Nature Camps – enrichment for children - 9 a.m. to Noon

\$20 members/ \$25 non-members per child per class; see full program descriptions and registration information at www.sacnaturecenter.net

Pre-registration recommended

- Dec. 20, Fishy Tails (K 2 nd grade) Holy Hibernation! (3rd 6th grade)
- Dec. 21 December After Dark (K 2 nd grade) Winter Solstice (3rd 6th grade)

Dec. 27 Mucky Marshes (K - 2 nd grade) - Wetlands of Life (3rd – 6th grade)

Dec. 28 Feathered Friends (K - 2 nd grade) - Solstice Song (3rd – 6th grade)

Family Nature Camps – activities for kindergarten through adult (children must be accompanied by an adult) 9 a.m. to Noon

\$10 members/ \$15 non-members per person per class; see full program descriptions and registration information at www.sacna-turecenter.net

- Pre-registration recommended
- Dec. 22 Designed by Nature
- Dec. 29 Plants of Winter Solstice

The Nature Center will be CLOSED on Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

There is an Ancil Hoffman Park entrance fee of \$5 per car. All programs are free unless stated otherwise. Donations gratefully accepted. The Nature Center is located in Ancil Hoffman County Park, California Avenue and Tarshes Drive, Carmichael. For more information call (916) 489-4918 or visit www.sacnaturecenter.net.

Natural Bridges State Beach

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Calif*rnia Kids!

Located at the end of West Cliff Dr. in Santa Cruz (831) 423-4609

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Tours of the Monarch Grove - All Saturdays and Sundays now through January at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Join a Docent Naturalist for a tour of a state designated insect preserve. Thousands of monarch butterflies are return each fall to one of the larger over-wintering sites in the United States. Learn the story of this beautiful creature and its fascinating seasonal migration. Public tours are offered on weekends and no reservations are necessary, or you may call 423-4609 to arrange a tour for a group of 10 or more. Meet at the Visitor Center for the hour-long program.

Events made possible by California State Park Docents, California State Parks and Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks.

Winfer Holiday!

The end of the year signals the beginning of the best time of the year: the winter holiday season! It's a wonderful time to enjoy family, friends, feasts, and festivities of all kinds. Have fun searching for the hidden words related to the winter holidays. Look carefully; words can appear vertically, horizontally, diagonally, backwards and upside-down. Make a copy and give one to a friend and see who can find everything on the list first! Have fun and Happy Holidays!

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Candy Canes	Jingle Bells	Reindeer
Christmas	Kwanzaa	Santa claus
Cookies	Mistletoe	Scrooge
Family	New Year's Eve	Sleigh
frosty	Nutcracker	Stockings
Grinch	Presents	Tinsel
Hanukkan		Toys

MAKE IT **YOURSELF!**

his felt Christmas tree softie craft for kids is simple enough for even beginner sewers to create a really nice Christmas decoration - and the possibilities for decoration are endless!

You will need:

Green felt (sparkle felt if you an find it!), needle and thread, ribbon (optional), fabric glue, decorations (buttons, sequins, ribbons etc). toy stuffing

You will need to:

Cut 2 tree shapes from green felt or a simple triangle will do just fine. If you plan on hanging the tree, cut a length of ribbon and slip the ends between the two felt trees so the ribbon hangs from the top of the tree.

With a small running stitch, sew the trees together. Leave a gap with which to stuff

the tree. Fill the tree with toy stuffing. Be careful not to overfill, as the tree should sit fairly flat. Sew the gap closed and glue on the decorations!

Snowman craft

his adorable snowman craft is a perfect Christmas or winter craft for kids of all ages - although younger children may need help and supervision.

You will need:

A 6cm polystyrene ball, a 4cm polystyrene ball, a baby sock, circle stickers, pipe cleaner (chenille stems), scrap of orange craft foam or card, card for base, glue.

You will need fo:

Cut out a circle of card. Glue the larger ball onto the card and the smaller ball on top. A hot

glue gun is best for this so best if an adult prepares this ahead of time. Make the hat by cutting through the sock at the heel. Tie the cut end with a small piece of yarn and slip the ankle cuff over the head. Cut diagonally across the remainder of the sock from the cut edge to the toe, then open it out so you have a strip of fabric. Tie this around the snowman as a scarf. Add stickers as eyes, mouth and buttons and stick on a scrap of foam as a carrot nose.

To make the arms, cut the pipe cleaner into 3 pieces. Cut one of the pieces in half again. Twist one of the smaller pieces around a longer piece to make the hand. Push the arm into the snowman (adult help may be required). Repeat with the other arm.



felt christmas Tree Soffie ¿ Paper Plate Rudolph

sn't this Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer handsome? He makes a lovely Christmas display and is an easy Christmas craft for all ages.

You will need:

A small paper plate, a large paper plate, brown paint, brown card, red pompom, 2 large wiggle eyes, brown pipe cleaners (chenille stems), glue

You will need to:



Paint the plates brown and leave to dry. Glue the plates together along the rim. The small plate is the head, the large is the body. Cut four rectangles of card and glue these along the back of the large plate to form the legs. On the small plate, glue a red pompom nose and the two eyes and draw on a mouth. Finally twist some pipe cleaners into antler shapes (maybe 3 pipe cleaners for each antler) and stick to the top of the head.

Window Angel Craft

his window angels make a lovely Christmas craft for kids that will help you decorate your windows for the holidays! They are fun to make and very pretty, too.

You will need:

Skin tone card, thread or wool (yarn), gold tissue paper, gold pen, tracing paper, gold pipecleaner (chenille stem), felt tip pens, glue stick

You will need to:

Cut a heart shape from tracing

paper for your angel's wings. Decorate with gold pen. Cut a triangle from gold tissue paper, glue the triangle onto the tissue paper wings. Cut a circle from skin tone card and glue it to the point of the triangle. Cut strands of wool for the angel's hair, and glue on. Fold the pipecleaner in half and form a loop in the center. Twist the ends together and stick to the back of the head. This is your halo. Finish by drawing on a face.

Stick to your window and watch the winter sun shine through and make her sparkle!

Crafts courtesy of: www.Activity Village.co.uk - Keeping Kids Busy

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By Carmel L. Mooney

BIG BEAR LAKE

One of California's best places for snow much family fun is Big Bear Lake, California. We love it more each time we go. There's so much to do once you arrive on "Big Bear time."

Even though Big Bear has some of the best skiing and snowboarding in the state, with virtually no lines, the pinnacle of our most recent trip was a 8 wheel drive off road adventure. It was more than spectacular to experience the back country of the San Bernardino mountains from a heavy duty off-road vehicle. Our tour with Big Bear Off Road Adventures was nothing less than fabulous and absolutely unforgettable, taking us to breathtaking vistas and allowing us a behind the scenes perspective on the beauty that is so unique to Big Bear.

We even got to "off-road it" and explore an area where Bonanza was filmed many years ago. The abilities of the off road vehicle allowed our family to traverse thick, virgin powder and to see winter wonderland sights that were literally inaccessible to anyone else. It's not just a ride; it's an adventure!

Right before we went off-road, we even stopped at Maggio's Pizza and got the best "to go" salads and calzones we could have ever dreamed of. Fresh, delicious ingredients made our lunch stand out as truly memorable.

We love skiing at Big Bear. Friendliness and no stress are what make skiing at Big Bear a sheer delight. Much more than just a skiing and snowboarding destination, it has all the bases covered when it comes to an all inclusive snowy family destination that rivals Tahoe or Vail. Snow Summit and Bear Mountain visitors will appreciate the unique flavor with beautifully manicured slopes, friendly and competent instructors, and the feeling that you've stepped back in to a simpler day when a family could spend more time skiing and less time waiting to have fun.

Moonridge Park is a wonderful zoo/ animal park open all year so a family can really enjoy seeing animals in their natural winter environment. It's exhilarating to actually see a snow leopard romping in the snow. or a bear family frolicking in fresh powder.

Try a beginners snow shoe tour at the Big Bear Discovery Center, or an afternoon on the Alpine Slide or tubing. The "snow much fun" options are virtually endless.

Before you retreat back to a comfy cabin, you'll want to explore the wonderful dining in Big Bear. Again, lots of choices. Sonora Cantina serves great food and great family ambiance at reasonable prices, and with good portions. The Himalayan is the only restaurant in Big Bear to offer Indian and Nepalese food. It is outstanding. With delicious sauces, warm and delicious Naan, Tandoori entrees, and using only the freshest herbs and ingredients, this place is healthy and wonderful. Even our tween loved every bite. It's family operated and provides great family food with exotic flavors. It's the perfect place to warm up with remarkably good and filling food after a day in the snow.

Mountain West Vacation Rentals provided us the ideal location from which to get the most out of our delightful Big Bear Adventure. Our cabin was clean, cozy, well-appointed and central to all the fun.

We enjoyed games, movies, a telescope, a wonderfully stocked kitchen, extra blankets, and nice, rock fireplace. It truly felt like a home away from home. That's so important when you travel with a family and are go, go, go with lots to do and see. The folks there were friendly and helpful. It's a top notch vacation rental operation.

Take note that Big Bear Lake is less than two hours from Disneyland and LAX or Orange County airport. With the great specials Southwest airlines is offering along with some fantastic specials Disneyland is running, its easy to combine the two into an affordable and frugal all-in-one southern California family vacation.

When visiting Big Bear Lake in the winter, remember that mountain weather can change quickly so stay informed of chain control warnings. For road conditions call: 1-800-427-ROAD Plan your next Snow-fari to Big Bear Lake! www. bigbear.com

1800-4.BIG.BEAR www.4bigbear.com/

CARNAVAL DE QUEBEC

Every year thousands of visitors from around the world come to Quebec City to enjoy the festivities of one of the world's most enormous family friendly winter festivals. Quebec Winter Carnival is ranked among the world's top ten best winter festivals and is considered one of the world's 1000 must-see destinations.

Parades, rides, attractions, sporting events, dog sledding, dining, ice sculptures, ice buildings, skating, skiing, snow shoeing and more create a world class vacation destination in one of North America's most majestic cities.

Flying into Quebec City at Jean-Lesage International Airport is hassle free.

The magical and historical city of Quebec is transformed into a winter wonderland worthy of a movie or fairy tale. Music, events, dining and activities abound that celebrate Carnaval. Bonhomme, the snowman, is the mascot whom children revel in spotting and meeting throughout the city during the Carnaval festivities.



Photo courtesy Lisa M. Power

We stayed at the Hilton Quebec which was within walking distance of everything the picturesque city offers. This proved invaluable.

We enjoyed dog sled races and show shoe races and live bands on the Plains of Abraham. The Carnaval Day Parade rivals the Macy's Parade and is a must see with dozens of gigantic inflatable characters including Bonhomme.

Also one magical evening we were enchanted by a lovely ice skating session just blocks from our hotel at Place D'Youville where families with kids of all ages skate under gently falling snow to music.

Bonhomme arrived and the kids went wild with excitement. It was like a scene out of the movie with the beautiful and historic buildings and lights framing the rink.

One highlight was a guided Snowshoer's Walk on the Plains of Abraham where our entertaining guide dressed in period costume, narrated and sang with us while weaving a tale of the history of the area.

Just a few beautiful miles from Quebec City is Le Nordique a gorgeous spa retreat where visitors can enjoy massages, hydrotherapy pools and more, all amongst majestic mountain backdrops and frozen rivers and lakes.

A beautiful hotel property nearby, Le Manoir du Lac Delage offers sumptuous meals and gorgeous views. We spent the afternoon eating a simply wonderful lunch and partaking in a fun outdoor activity called Rand Orientation where, on snowshoe, participants hunt for markers in the forest from coordinate clues and a compass. It was a wonderful way to see the back country and exercise while testing our skills.

Also nearby is the Wendake nation's hotel and museum. Home of the first inhabitants of the Americas, this village is very intriguing. The four star hotel, Hotel-Musee Premieres Nations, blends tradition and culture of the Wendake native people. The food is a cultural experience where delicious native foods like smoked sturgeon and seal are extraordinary. And home baked breads made by native grains like bannique bread made with wild berry corn and flour are tantalizing. The foods are prepared by native peoples or by elders using generations-old techniques. Local cheese and locally crafted adult beverages for mom and dad, make this so unique and delightful. Even the herbs used to prepare the foods, over 90 of them, are locally produced.

The entire community is full of historic and educational buildings and a walking tour is a must..

Also just outside the city of Quebec we enjoyed Montmorency Falls Park where we took the grand cable car ride up the mountain to a spectacular historical and natural wonder. These falls are higher than Niagra Falls and simply amazing. www.carnaval.qc.ca

Another novelty of the Quebec City area is the Hotel de Glace just a few miles form the city. Every year, for less than three months, a wonder of frozen water brings families from around the world into a mesmerizing world of sleeted chandeliers, indoor polar slide, ornate frozen furniture, and refrigerated artistry.

In just a matter of weeks this engineered spectacle is re-designed and re-constructed each winter season from hundreds of tons of ice and tens of thousands of pounds of packed snow.

No two years are alike as several dozen uniquely themed rooms and suites, and a glacial nightclub create an unforgettable lodging experience created for brave adventure-seeking families looking to be awed for a day visit or for a more adventurous overnight stay.

From the moment they enter this aesthetic spectacle, guests are taken into



another realm of beauty and tranquility as light plays a visual extravaganza on the eye with colors, textures, and lighting.

For those brave enough to take the class and prepare adequately, sleeping in the Hotel de Glace is successful only with the help of arctic rated sleeping bags, and meticulously planned presleeping organization. If sleeping in a room where cell phones freeze, cameras malfunction, and even boots and sweaters must be protected, sounds doable, get ready to slumber, or not, on top of a mattress placed on a block of ice as a bed foundation.

Upon arrival, and before entering the ice hotel, families warm up in the new, separate, and heated Entrance Pavilion to purchase tickets. There the North Face hosts a boutique which promises your last chance at cold weather gear before entry. Having entered, guests can access the Celsius Pavilion where soups, sandwiches, light fare, and beverages can be enjoyed in the new light snack area. Locker rooms are offered as most overnight guests do take the preparation course seriously which teaches them to raise their core body temperature before bed by indulging in the spas and sauna in a methodical manner, right before turning in. Most personal items are left in the lockers or back at the Sheraton as they would freeze in the rooms.

www.hoteldeglace-canada.com - The Hotel de Glace partners with the Four Points by Sheraton Quebec about a mile away. Check-ins take place through the Sheraton, where typical hotel amenities, and warmth are only a 2-3 minute complimentary shuttle away and a warm and cozy room is waiting, just in case. As locals say, "There is no shame in not making it through the night."

Overnighting parents at the ice hotel can enjoy an ice cocktail in the Ice Bar. Guests are provided complete sleeping equipment, access to the hot tubs and sauna area, a hot wake-up beverage, and breakfast.

Some suites at the Hotel de Glace even boast fireplaces that are strictly for ambiance and eye appeal, since they are specially designed to not emit heat.

In order for the arctic sleeping bags to function correctly one must wear the correct synthetic fibers and socks and have clean, dry, and unworn clothes separately reserved just for sleeping, as moisture is the enemy.

One amazing attribute is the extreme insulation and acoustic property of the ice structure. Even with the blaring music from the disco, the suites and rooms are supremely quiet and serenely peaceful at night. So quiet in fact, that some guests comment on the eerie stillness, even with no doors on the rooms.

A day or early evening visit and tour may be more enjoyable for most. The crystalline ice sculptures and intricately designed walls, indoor ice slide, bars, and discotheque are an unforgettable sight to see and experience. In fact, over a half million visitors have experienced this wonder just since 2001.

www.hoteldeglace-canada.com

GRANLIBAKKEN

Granlibakken Lake Tahoe Conference Center and Lodge offers a wonderful lowprofile, relaxing way to experience skiing and snow fun in the beautiful Sierra Nevada, without crowds, lines, and noise.

In a class all its own, Granlibakken provides a serene, high country, alpine setting for families to dine, ski, snowboard, sled, snowshoe, and unwind in a peaceful, unpretentious, tranquil, mountain setting.

The first thing you will notice upon arrival is that a warm and welcoming staff provides first class hospitality in a down-to-earth fashion.

Plan to dine in the lovely Cedar House restaurant in the main lodge. Daily specials change but delicious signature specialties like the flat iron steak, authentic German schnitzel with potato pancakes, fish and chips, and generous helpings of homemade spaghetti will help you fuel properly for the next day's activities.

The desserts are delicious... A talented musician, www.baronvonremmel.com, will serenade your clan in this lovely rustic, timber-built restaurant, where a blazing fireplace and full bar only add to the après ski ambiance. Kids love to dance and sing with the performer and a great time is had by all.

You won't want to miss an opportunity to unwind in the huge outdoor spa or heated outdoor pool, framed by a snowy backdrop and blanketed by the stars. After warming up in the sauna you'll probably choose to retreat back to your suite or condo to enjoy a relaxing board game or movie in front of your own crackling fire.

Get a good night's sleep so you don't miss the delicious buffet breakfast offered each morning. The fare changes daily but offers satisfying staples like omelets, bacon, sausage, hot cereal, an array of fresh fruit and berries, pastries, yogurts and more. Famous bread pudding, quiche Lorraine, cheese blintzes along with quality coffees and teas make this a superb way to begin the day.

After prepping for the day ahead with breakfast, it's time to decide what to do first.



Beautiful Quebec.

Located on 74 pristine wooded acres, Granlibakken offers groomed snowshoe trails, cross country trails, its own private ski hill, sledding hill, full rentals, lessons, and everything you'd find at a larger ski resort but on a smaller and much more intimate scale. The ski staff is helpful, patient, and knowledgeable. The ski instructors are excellent with children. If you've never skied or snowboarded or even if it's just been a long time and you need a refresher, a private or group lesson with one of the highly qualified instructors, can be the added boost you need. This is the perfect place for beginners.

At the bottom of the ski hill there's even a small Ski Hut restaurant, serving excellent fresh fare you might not expect. Outstanding freshly hand-made burritos, tacos, chili, guacamole, freshly-made chips, homemade soup and a dozen other choices will both surprise and satisfy your exercise-induced hunger pangs. The portions are positively huge and priced reasonably.

Should you decide that more challenging skiing or snowboarding is in order, Granlibakken partners with Homewood, Alpine Meadows, Mt. Rose, Northstar at Tahoe, Sierra at Tahoe, Squaw Valley USA, and Sugar Bowl to offer unbelievably inexpensive cooperative ski packages where you can stay at Granlibakken to enjoy the low key quietude, yet ski at these larger giants for greater challenge. Packages starting around \$100 will get you the best of both worlds plus a shuttle to these neighboring resorts.

The lodging at Granlibakken offers condos, townhouses, studios, suites, and varying types, with many plans offering full kitchens. This makes an environment perfect for several families to vacation together or for a winter family reunion. High speed Internet, spa quality toiletries, and daily housekeeping service all add to the comfort.

For nearly a century, Granlibakken has had a fascinating history with ties to the Olympics and much of the heritage of Lake Tahoe.

This gem may be small in comparison to some of the larger Tahoe area ski resorts but is big on hospitality, quality, and serenity. Unless you're seeking the hustle and bustle, noise, busyness, and excitement of the gigantic neighboring resorts, you will be pleased with every facet of this hidden treasure. Good things really do come in small packages.

www.granlibakken.com

Who wrote That?

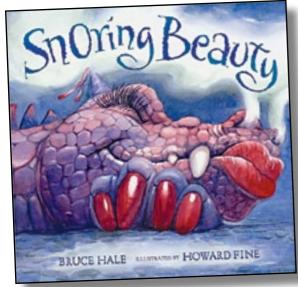
The Creators of Your Child's Favorite BooksFeaturing Bruce HaleBy Patricia M. Newman

n my head, there are pictures of what you have written. When I read your books and I stop, I always think that I had the TV on." –Bridget M.

In fourth or fifth grade, Bruce Hale once told his pal nicknamed Billy the Kid that he wanted to be a children's author—an about-face for a child who didn't like to read before third grade. "I was running around causing trouble," Hale says of his high-activity level. "[Although] I was into stories since I was really young. My dad was an amazing storyteller." One day, the Hale family television died. "It was a sad occasion," he says. His desperate parents read Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan of the Apes to him, and Hale was hooked. He and his pal Billy climbed their favorite tree to read classics such as The Wind in the Willows, Mad Magazine, and later The Hobbit and the Lord of the Rings Trilogy.

Hale grew up in Southern California, and moved to Japan to write, cartoon, and teach English. "I used Simon and Garfunkel and The Beatles songs as my text," he says about his teaching experience. After a couple of years, Hale flew to Hawaii to crew aboard a boat in the South Pacific, but fell in love with Hawaii and stayed for eight years until he moved to his current home in Santa Barbara, California.

While in Hawaii he self-published a few picture books, but did not find his passion until he came up with the idea for the Chet Gecko series. A film noir buff, Hale easily slid into the hard-boiled detective voice that makes the series popular with kids, and a gecko as a main character seemed logical for an author in Hawaii. "I gave myself permission to be goofy," he says, but he was two books into the series before he hit on the idea to parody his favorite





film noir titles, e.g. *This Gum for Hire* and *The Malted Falcon*. Unknowingly, Hale launched a competition between friends and family members who submitted their title ideas to him. In order for him to use the title it had to make him smile and be a close enough tie to the original film for people to get it.

"I love the Chet Gecko books. I bet even my grandfather

would love them, and he's dead." -Federico M.

Hale admits that his first Chet Gecko manuscript was long on voice and character, but short on structural development. The initial concept changed from easy reader to middle grade novel, with his editor providing the necessary instruction for constructing a successful mystery. With the release of *The Malted Falcon*, an Edgar Award nominee, Hale says, "I was really hitting my stride with the series."

An experienced cartoon artist, Hale conceived Chet Gecko's look. His cartoon style worked well for the interior art in the books, but the covers required a fully-dimensional commercial style for which the publisher contracted another artist.

The Underwhere series is part narrative, part graphic novel about a world beneath our own where the inhabitants wear their underwear outside their clothes. Hale draws on past experience with film scripts to make the dialogue as terse as possible. Although Hale read comics as a child, his cartooning experience wasn't quite right for the series, so a professional comic expert was hired to complete the graphic part of the books. "I didn't realize it at the time," Hale says, "but as a kid I read Edgar Rice Burroughs' books about Pellucidar—a world at the center of our world—and that must have gone deep into my subconscious." After the release of the second Underwhere title, Hale happened across one of the Burroughs' books. "Ah-ha! That's what I was doing. It was a completely unconscious homage."

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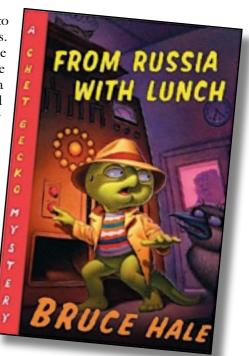
Hale recharges his creative batteries with hikes, rambles on the beach, movies, books, and music. He sings tenor with Latin and *a cappella* jazz groups to shift the energy to a different part of his brain, so when he returns to writing, fresh ideas pour out. In school visits, Hale encour-

ages students to express themselves

creatively. "Creative intelligence is not always emphasized in schools...There's some sort of alchemy that happens when you express yourself creatively. It feeds a deeper part of you."

Although Hale bows to the demands of adulthood, he says, "There's a part of me that never evolved past twelve years old...I'm plugged into what works and what doesn't." Hale attempts to find the fun in everything he does, and his books are his proof.

"Without your books sparking my interest in reading, I would have never finished the likes of To Kill a Mockingbird, The Merchant of Venice, or Of Mice



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and Men." - William M. (high school sophomore)

Next month: Donna Jo Napoli

Patricia Newman is the author of Jingle the Brass (Farrar, Straus & Giroux), recommended by the Smithsonian National American History Museum. Her newest book, Nugget on the Flight Deck (Walker), received the California Reading Association's Eureka! Silver Honor Award for excellence in children's nonfiction. Visit her website at www.patriciamnewman.com to watch the trailer.

MORE ABOUT BRUCE HALE

How to Contact Bruce Hale Websites: http://brucehale.com www.brucehalewritingtips.com

BRUCE HALE'S LIBRARY

Guys Read: Thriller, "Nate Macavoy, Monster Hunter," Walden Pond Press, 2011. *Snoring Beauty*, Harcourt, 2008.

The Underwhere Series (HarperCollins): Prince of Underwhere, 2008.

Pirates of Underwhere, 2008. Fat Cat of Underwhere, 2009.

Chet Gecko Mysteries (Harcourt): The Chameleon Wore Chartreuse, 2001. The Malted Falcon, 2003. The Possum Always Rings Twice, 2006. From Russia With Lunch, 2009.

Dial M for Mongoose, 2009.

UPCOMING

Pooch in Boots, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, TBD. Big Bad Baby, Dial, TBD. Mole Men of Underwhere, HarperCollins, TBD.

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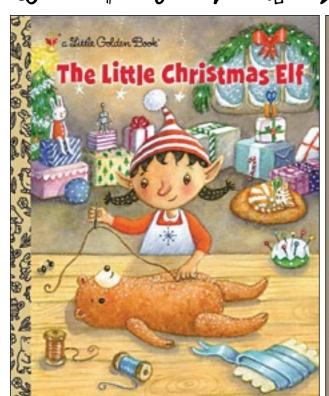
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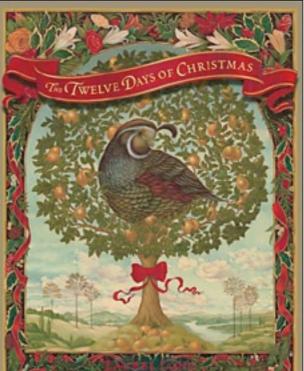
THE BOOK REPORT If's Almost Christmas!

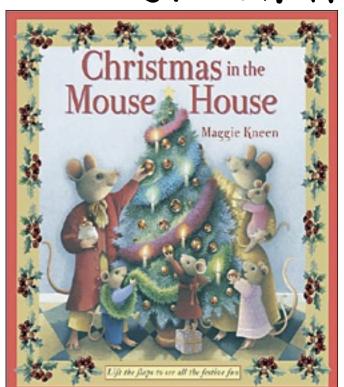
By Connie Goldsmith

A re you having a hard time finding that last-minute gift for a friend's child, a favorite nephew or niece? Look no further than your local bookstore. Think about making books part of your Christmas tradition. You're sure to find books to delight each discerning munchkin. Books often live on to become cherished memories, unlike many toys that break in a day or two. Check out the feast of Christmas books available this season.

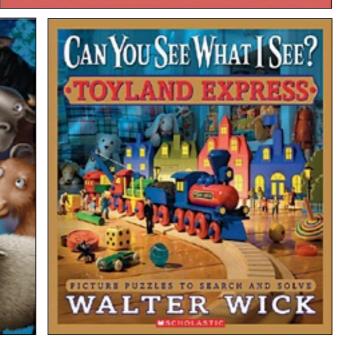
"The Little Christmas Elf," by Nikki Shannon Smith, illustrated by Susan Mitchell. (Little Golden Books). Did you grow up with Little Golden Books? Do you know many of your old favorites are still around and new ones are always being added? In this new story, the littlest elf Nina is working on her first toy. Santa shows up at the elf cottage with his sleigh to collect the toys, but Nina couldn't finish her teddy bear in time. She stays up late into the night to finish the bear and it's a good thing she did! For Santa is short one present for a very new baby. "A gift for the littlest baby from the littlest elf!" says Santa. This sweetly tender story feels like a Little Golden classic already and the gentle art evokes the happiest of childhood memories.

"Oh, What a Christmas," by Michael Garland. (Scholastic). Santa sets off as usual from the North Pole with his reindeer and a sleigh filled with toys. But when the harness breaks, what do the reindeer do? They streak off into the night leaving Santa and the sleigh to careen down a hill and crash into a barn. One sleepy sheep peeks out at Santa, followed by cows, goats, pigs, and an old dog. Santa will not fail in his duty to deliver gifts to the world's children. With a wiggle of his magical nose, he harnesses the surprised barnyard animals to his sleigh and flies into the night. One little boy can't believe his eyes when he spies the barnyard creatures pulling Santa's





Calif*rnia Kids!



sleigh! Filled with brilliant Christmas colors and glowing golden highlights, this humorous story is a blast to read aloud. The kids are sure to demand nightly readings long after the holiday passes. **** Reviewer's pick of the month****

MICHAEL GARLAND

OH, WH

"The Twelve Days of Christmas," by Laurel Long. (Dial). Each Christmas brings at least one new rendition of this old favorite lovingly drawn by a talented artist. This version is perhaps the most beautiful in recent years. The lush art suggests a medieval countryside with distant hillside castles, by turns softly glorious and bluely mysterious. As per tradition, previous gifts are included on the next day's page. See whose eyes are sharp enough to spot the hidden treasures (front and end papers hold clues). The final double-page spread where the true loves meet is exquisite. This is not just a children's book. It makes an outstanding holiday coffee table book or a gift for anyone who loves this two-hundred-year old English Christmas carol.

"Christmas in the Mouse House," by Maggie Kneen. (Templar Books). This adorable book is double fun. It's Christmas Eve at the Mouse house but Papa hid the tree ornaments – twelve golden stars. The Mouse siblings join together to search the charming cottage for the stars. Grandpa suggests the kids make their own ornaments. The little mice open doors, cupboards, windows, clocks, and books. Sometimes they find a gold star; sometimes they find other things they can decorate the tree with. Each spread shows a different room: kitchen, bedroom, dining room, and nursery. Your own little ones will have fun searching for the stars and finding unexpected treasures as well. Fold outs, pop-ups, lift-the-flaps, this book is a feast for the eyes.

"Can You See What I See? Toyland Express," by Walter Wick. (Scholastic). This is the newest in the best-selling series of search-and-find adventures by talented photographer and author Walter Wick. This story follows the life of a wooden toy train set from workshop through several scenarios. First, the trains are pictured in the window of a toy store, then as a gift to a lucky child. They pass through years of playtime and end up in an attic as the child grows up. Fortunately, our lovely train set is rescued at a yard sale and once more returned to its former beauty. The hidden objects are tricky to find. Younger children will need guidance to find many of them. Train lovers of all ages will enjoy this poignant story and its visual challenges.

Connie Goldsmith (www.conniegoldsmith.com) lives in Carmichael where she writes for adults and children. Her newest nonfiction juvenile books, "Battling Malaria: on the Front Lines Against a Global Killer," and "Leukemia," one of the USA Today Health Reports series, recently came out. Her books can be found in school and public libraries, and at online booksellers.

The holidays are here and it's time to enjoy the season! Bundle up the family for Holiday Magic at the Sacramento Zoo on Saturday, December 10, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Throughout the day, special gifts will be delivered to the animals. See them pounce, tear and stomp into their oneof-a-kind holiday gifts. Zoo keepers will be on hand to let you in on interesting animal facts and answer any questions you have.

Schedule of Enrichments

10:30 a.m. - All enrichments will happen at the animals's exhibits 11 a.m. - Orangutan: fabric stockings and presents with edible treats 11:30 a.m. - Bongo & Red River Hog:

pumpkin bowls with produce

Noon - Black and White Ruffed Lemur: cardboard gingerbread house

12:30 p.m. - Sumatran Tiger: wrapped boxes with spices and ice

l p.m. - Hyena: frozen snowman 1:30 p.m. - Ground Hornbill: holiday

piñata with crickets 2 p.m. - Lion: wrapped boxes and piñata

with spices and ice

2:30 p.m. - River Otters: frozen ornaments with treats inside

3 p.m. - Kangaroo & Emu: Christmas tree with edible ornaments

Giraffe: edible wreaths, Christmas tree and piñata

Visitors' tip: keep an eye out for off-schedule enrichments throughout the day

Bring a new, unwrapped toy or non-perishable food item and receive a \$1 off your Zoo admission. The U.S. Marine Corps and 101.9 The Wolf will be taking your toy donations for Toys for Tots and food donations go the Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services.

Searching for some great holiday gift ideas? Sacramento Zoo has something for everyone on your holiday list, including Zoomemberships, Zoo Parent packages and unique items in the Zoofari Market.

A Sacramento Zoo membership makes a great gift; for only \$80, families (2 adults and their minor children) receive FREE admission to the Zoo for one year, many other discounts, and free or discounted admission to more than 100 zoos nationwide.

A Zoo Parent package fits everyone! Give a gift of a snow leopard, orangutan, or any other animal at the Zoo. We'll keep them here, of course, but for \$50, your special someone will receive a certificate of adoption, animal fact sheet, bumper sticker and an invitation to our annual Zoo Parents' Picnic.

Zoofari Market's doors open to a world of monkeys, snakes, jaguars and many more exciting and unique items. Unusual wildlife items are a specialty of Zoofari Market. There are glass animals, jewelry, puzzles and stuffed anteaters. Children will love snow leopard and tiger masks, giraffe hats, books about zoo babies as well as zoo games.

Open since 1927, the Sacramento Zoois home to over 450 native, rare and endangered animals and is one of over 200 accredited institutions of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. Located near the corner of Land Park Drive and Sutterville Road in William Land Park, the Zoo is whollymanaged by the non-profit Sacramento Zoological Society. This Sacramento treasure inspires conservation awareness through education and recreation. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., general admission is \$11; children ages 2 to 11 are \$7 and one and under are admitted free. Parking is free throughout the park or ride Regional Transit bus #6. For information, call (916) 808-5888 or visit saczoo.org.









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art your holiday shopping. Why not avoid the crowds at the malls and shop locally at your neighborhood ed a little help this holiday season? Gheck out the retailers in California Kidsl They have fabulous ideasl

Dinomazes

The colossal fossil Book of fun!

hey're ginormous! Two things kids love--dinosaurs and mazes--"DinoMazes "is a one-of-a-kind collection of 31 super-sized, colossal fossil mazes. It is hours and hours of fun that spans hundreds of millions of years. Created by Elizabeth Carpenter, Mazeology founder and author of the award-winning "Mummy Mazes," "DinoMazes "features several new mazes and redrawn original mazes.Work your way through the skeletons of a Stegosaurus, Velociraptor, T. Rex, Triceratops, plus giant sloths and a saber-toothed tiger. Discover the earliest known turtle, Proganochelys--unable to retract its head, it grew fierce spikes on its neck--and Acanthostega, an ancient "fish" with feet instead of fins. The dazzling illustrated mazes are challenging--start at a tail, find your way through the rib cage, and exit at the mouth. Interspersed are miniature speed mazes--how fast can you get through the Styracosaurus head? Each maze comes with sidebars and captions about the animal, including meaning of the name, when the creature lived, and its lifestyle and habitat. And once completed, kids can decorate and color them. The pages tear out as 12" x 171/2" posters, ready to be displayed.



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Winfer Wonderland af fairyfale Town

•ather Christmas will be making a special holiday stop this season at Fairytale Town for its Winter Wonderland event on Saturday, December 10 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Father Christmas will take the center stage, listening to holiday wish lists, and welcoming families to take holiday pictures for \$5 each. The Children's Theater will become Santa's Workshop filled with holiday decorations and cheer. Also happening throughout the park will be free arts and crafts celebrating the

seasonal holidays from around the world.

To enjoy this Winter Wonderland affair regular weekend park admission is only \$4.50 (Children 1 years of age and under will be admitted free). For more information call (916) 808-7462 or visit our website at www.fairytaletown.org.

Fairytale Town is located at 3901 Land Park Drive, Sacramento. For more information, call (916) 808-7462 or visit www.fairytaletown.org

Suffer Creek old-fashioned Christmas

njoy Victorian splendor this Holiday Season in historic Sutter Creek, with its annual Old Fashioned Christmas Open House celebration. The streets of Historic Sutter Creek come alive with Christmas spirit as they are transformed to an era gone by with Charles Dickens characters and carolers in period costume, strolling along the beautifully lit streets of this magical Gold Rush Town.

Friday Night, at around 6 pm, Santa and Mrs. Claus will arrive in their sleigh to light the community Christmas tree next to City Hall. On Main Street the shopkeepers will be open late to offer a warm and friendly Open House, with snacks, refreshments, and wonderful displays of unique items ready for your Christmas List. And for the children, free photos with Santa will be available inside the Methodist Church where Santa will hear their Christmas wishes. Arts and crafts will also be available there along with homemade cookies and hot cider. The whole community is invited to share in the holiday fun on Friday evening from 5 until 9 p.m.

The merriment continues on Saturday with holiday music, festive shopping, and Charles Dickens characters strolling down the street. In the evening, at 7 p.m. is the Las Posadas Candlelight Walk. The public is invited to participate in this beautiful reenactment of Joseph and Mary's journey to Bethlehem. The parade will begin at the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church on Spanish Street where Mary will mount a donkey and she and Joseph will process down historic and beautiful Spanish Street, lined with flickering luminaries, and then onto Main Street as they go from Inn to Inn looking for shelter. Narrators will retell the familiar story and musicians will lead in singing familiar Christmas carols that everyone is urged to join in and sing along. Truly a heart warming experience for all ages, the Las Posadas Candlelight Walk will be an evening you will cherish forever. Dress warm so you can enjoy the entire evening.

Sutter Creek, with all of its classic Holiday charm, will rekindle the Spirit of Christmas in your heart. Come and enjoy these free events. For more information call (209) 267-1344 or visit www.suttercreek.org.



Christmas at Northminster

Northminster Presbyterian Church, located at 3235 Pope Avenue, Sacramento, is gearing up for the holiday season and invites everyone to join in the following special Christmas activities.

Advent Craft Faire - Saturday, December 3, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

It's a family fun day of "Make and Take" free Christmas crafts including ornaments, charm bracelets, Gingerbread houses and Christmas centerpieces. Materials and assistance are provided free by Santa's helpers. Enjoy a light lunch served at noon. All ages are welcome.

The Jazz Music from A Charlie Brown Christmas - Sunday, December 4, 1 p.m.

Renowned Jazz musician Jim Martinez has been recently named A "Steinway Artist," one of the most

distinguished honors that a pianist can achieve. Other artists receiving this distinction include Leonard Bernstein, Billy Joel and Van Claiborne. He will recreate the music from *A Charlie Brown Christmas* for a fun-filled, very child friendly concert. Tickets are \$10/Adults, \$5/children.

The Long Christmas Dinner - Friday, December 9, 8 p.m. and Saturday, December 10, 2 and 8 p.m.

The Northminster Players present their first production of Thornton Wilders' "Long Christmas Dinner," directed by Brian Frishman. The play depicts 100 years of the

Bayard family Christmas dinner, breaking the boundaries of time as one measures it, and inviting the audience to share in one long happy Christmas dinner; past, present and future. The audience will experience family stories told and retold in this serious and tender play lightened with the humor of Wilders' understanding of the human character. Tickets are \$10/Adults, \$5/Students.

Jesus Birthday Party - Friday, December 16, 7 p.m.

Celebrate the true meaning of the season. Enjoy *The Christmas Story*, followed by ice cream and birthday cake, piñata, and games. Special features will include music by the Children's Choir, Youth Praise Band and Children's Orchestra. Attendees are invited to bring an unwrapped gift for an underserved child in the community.

Christmas Eve Service - Saturday, December 24, 5 p.m.

A special family service of candlelight and lessons and carols. The Children's Choir and Praise Band will be sharing in the music. Come and experience a Living Nativity with a donkey, sheep, goats, and the Holy Family. Come celebrate this Holy Night!

For more information call (916) 487-5192 or visit northminsteronline.org.





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Located 17 miles north of Santa Cruz off Highway 1 (831) 425-1218

Wildflower Hikes - Sunday, December 11, 10a.m.

Meet at the Rancho del Oso Hwy 1 Gate at the base of the Skyline to the Sea Trail to take a hike among wildflowers in Rancho del Oso's Waddell Valley! A docent will lead a 3-mile hike to view a variety of wildflowers-there's always something exciting in bloom! The hike starts at the Rancho del Oso gate. Photographers are easily accommodated. For more information or to sign up, call the nature and history center at (831) 425-1218, or just show up with lunch and energy to hike. The park is located 17 miles north of Santa Cruz on Highway 1.From Half Moon Bay take Highway 1 south 30 miles. The gate to Rancho del Oso is located along Highway 1 just south of Año Nuevo State Reserve.

The Hidden Lives of Native Animals - Sunday, December 18, 1 p.m.

Join a state park docent on this leisurely 2-hour walk to search for tracks and other "signs" that animals leave. Search for clues and evidence of how predator and prey, from deer and bobcats to hawks and lizards, survive in our streams, forests and fields. Bring walking shoes, water and a snack. Park and meet at 1 p.m. at the Highway 1 gate to Rancho del Oso/Big Basin State Park, approximately 17 miles north of Santa Cruz / 30 miles south of Half Moon Bay. Heavy rain cancels the walk. For more information or questions call (831) 425-1218





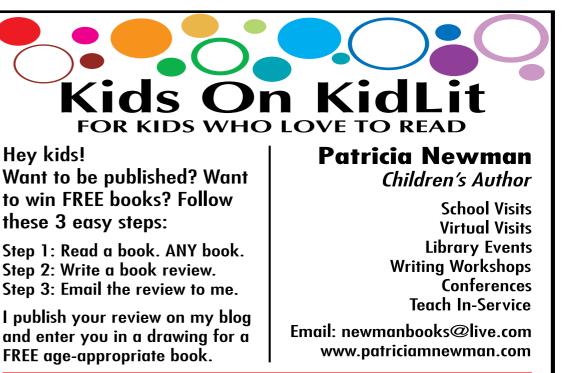
The Polar Express refurns fo IMAX 3d

B ack by popular demand, The Polar Express: An IMAX® 3D Experience will return this holiday season to the Esquire IMAX Theatre now through December. Ticket prices are \$16.50 for adults, \$14 for seniors and \$13 for children. Tickets are available now online at www.imax. com/sacramento.

"We are pleased to be able to bring back this IMAX holiday favorite this holiday season," exclaimed Doug Link, Esquire IMAX Theatre director. "Every year we have special requests for this film and we are happy bring back this special family holiday tradition to downtown Sacramento." Audiences will become totally immersed in the IMAX 3D presentation, digitally re-mastered using proprietary IMAX 3D DMR[™] technology ... grasping at falling snowflakes, ducking as the train screeches into their lap and feeling the howl of the steam whistle via state-of-the-art digital surround sound.

Polar Express, an inspiring holiday adventure, is based on the classic Caldecott Medal-winning children's book by Chris Van Allsburg. When a doubting young boy takes an extraordinary train ride to the North Pole, he embarks on a journey of self-discovery that shows him that the wonder of life never fades for those who believe.





Maidu Museum & Historic Site Events

Decorated Pine Needle Basket Class - Saturday, November 11, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Spend a Saturday getting back to nature as you create a beaded pine needle basket for your home or as a beautiful gift for someone special. Native Californian artisan basket weaver Joan Denys will instruct this day-long workshop. Fee: \$42/ 39 Resident Discount; \$10 material fee due at class/ Course Code: 55931/ Pre-registration is required

Holiday Indian Arts and Crafts Fair - Saturday, December 3, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Come join the staff at the Maidu Museum for a rare opportunity to purchase one of a kind Native American art. Basketry, jewelry, carvings, painted gourds, Christmas ornaments, carved abalone and many other beautiful objects will be available for sale. Buy directly from the artist. It is on the same day as the Maidu Community Center Craft fair which is from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. This is a free event.

Free Holiday Museum Days at the Maidu Museum

Please join the Museum staff for the holiday season with free admission to the museum on December 20, 21, and 22. Bring your out-of-town family and friends to enjoy a cultural treasure of the area.

Drop in activities:

3rd Sat Art Walk / Night Out at the Museum

Enjoy an evening at the museum with cultural heritage programs, exhibits and speakers. View current Native American Art exhibits in the Zents Gallery on the main floor and the Indigenous Art Gallery on the mezzanine. Refreshments served.

November Feature: Gardening, Eating and Healing with Native Plants

Saturday, November 19 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Living Wild author Alicia Funk and Mountain Maidu Language teacher Farrell Cunningham will facilitate a discussion about gardening, cooking and healing with native plants of the Sierra Nevada, followed by a food tasting. This event will serve as an appetizer for our upcoming Salmon Seaweed and Manzanita Cider Exhibit which opens in January.

Museum Hours are Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Saturday, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and free 3rd Saturday evenings of each month 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Historic Site: Guided Tours Saturdays at 10 a.m. The Maidu Museum and Historic Site is located at 1970 Johnson Ranch Drive, Roseville, Roseville. For more information, call (916) 774-5934 or visit www.roseville.ca.us/indianmuseum.

Winter warehouse book sale

he Friends of the Sacramento Public Library are sponsoring a big Warehouse Book Sale on two consecutive Saturdays, December 3 and December 10. Public sale hours will be noon to 4 p.m. on December 3 and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on December 10. A preview for Friends' members only is scheduled for 9 a.m. to noon, December 3. Prospective members may join at the door for \$15 and attend the preview. The sale will be held in the Friends' warehouse, at the rear of their Book Den store. 8250 Belvedere Avenue, Suite E, between Power Inn Road and Florin-Perkins Road just south of 14th Avenue. More than 70,000 paperback and hard-bound books,

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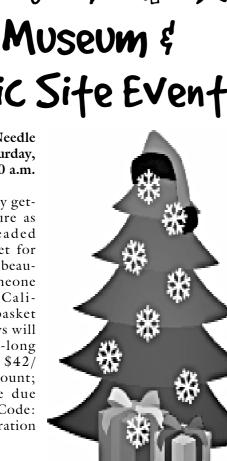
videos, books on cassette and more will be sold at prices ranging from \$.50 to \$2. Many items would make great holiday gifts. All proceeds, after expenses, benefit the Sacramento Public Library.

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The Book Den store will be open during Warehouse Sale hours. At the Book Den shoppers select from individually priced better books, including collectibles, and other materials, with most books priced at \$3 and up. The Book Den is regularly open Thursday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Book donations are welcome. For more information call (916) 731-8493 or visit fspl@att.net.

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A Simple Emigrant Christmas

n Saturday, December 10, step back in time to holidays past with festive, hands-on activities such as stringing popcorn and cranberries, candle dipping and crafting paper cut-out ornaments when Sutter's Fort State Historic Park presents "Hands on History: A Simple Emigrant Christmas." Friends and families are encouraged to visit the Fort, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., to enjoy docents in period attire as they interpret and demonstrate a variety of early holiday traditions and cultural activities similar to what early emigrants did in the 1840s. For instance, docents will help demonstrate and share holiday traditions from Germany, Scandinavia, Mexican California, England, and Russia. In fact, Sutter's Fort was one of California's early gathering places where people from around the world passed through the gates and shared differing holiday traditions, many of which are still celebrated today. Don't miss the special "A Simple Emigrant Christmas" for one day only this December.

Admission is \$6 per adult, \$4 per youth (ages 6-17), free for children 5 years and under.

Sutter's Fort is located at 2701 L Street, Sacramento. For more information call (916) 445-4422 or visit www.parks.ca.gov/suttersfort

Christmas Memories

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6 et ready to experience lavishly re-created period décor, an impressive array of live holiday music and captivating storytellers during two upcoming special "Christmas Memories" events at the Governor's Mansion State Historic Park. Surrounded by docents in period costume,

Mansion visitors will be transported back in time to the very place where thirteen of California's early governors and their families lived, spent Christmas seasons and shared holiday traditions. In fact, then-Governor Edmund G. Brown and his family were the last first-family to celebrate Christmas in the stately mansion. And, to add to the festive activities, Mr. and Mrs. Claus will make special visits to the Mansion to meet excited little ones and be available for holiday photographs.

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Christmas Memories will be held December 3 and 10, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Governor's Mansion State Historic Park is located at 1526 H Street, Sacramento. Admission is \$6 for adults, \$4 for youth (ages 6-17), children five and under are free. For more information, call (916) 323-5916 www.parks.ca.gov/ governorsmansion



First 5 Sacramento offers its top 5 parenting tips for winter season

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Rolidays, weather and current economic conditions are among the seasonal challenges families with children ages zero to five may face.

While the winter months traditionally usher in holiday celebrations, seasonal cheer and fun activities for many, this time of year can also create stress and concerns for others. To help families with children ages zero to five cope with challenges they may face this winter season, First 5 Sacramento is providing its Top 5 parenting tips along with some valuable resources where people can get support.

The stress of the holidays, the seasonal weather change, and the down economy can add strain for parents, shorten their patience and test their parenting skills. First 5 Sacramento offers the following effective parenting tips to help relieve stress while investing in your child's growth: • Take time out for yourself – go somewhere safe until you feel calmer.

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• Build a support network of family and friends.

• Be consistent and create routines – kids need structure.

• Simplify routines during stressful times – for example, set out school clothes the night before.

• Take care of yourself – exercise, rest and eat well. Model these positive behaviors for your children.

Research shows that when parents have the right tools and get the advice they need, children have the best opportunities in life to be fulfilled, healthy citizens. First 5 Sacrmaneto's goal is to prevent crises from happening and protect children from events that can disrupt their developmental cycle."

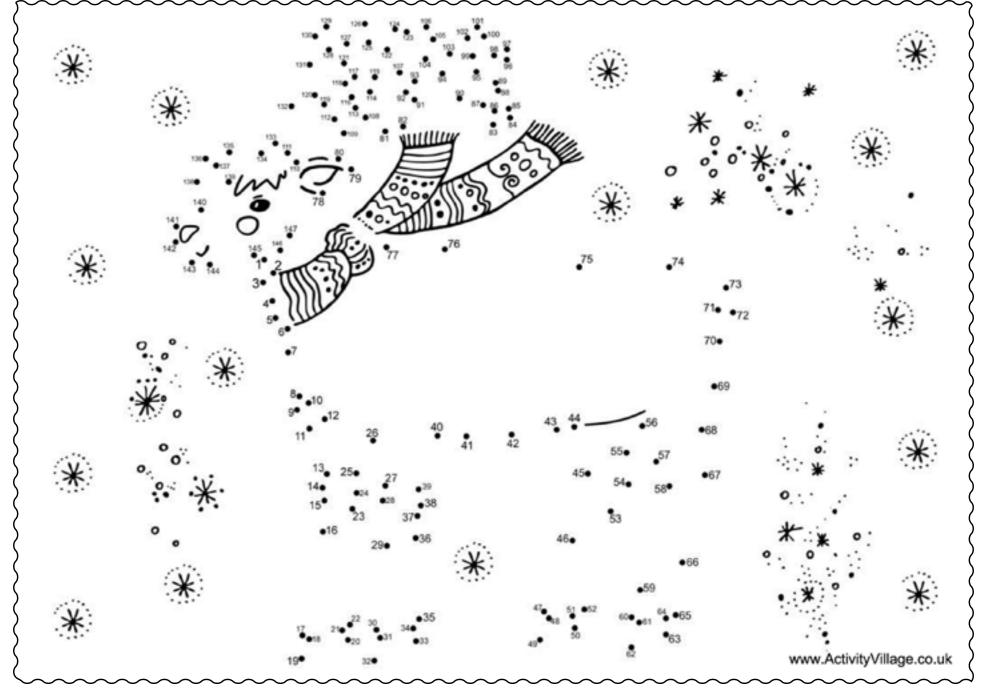


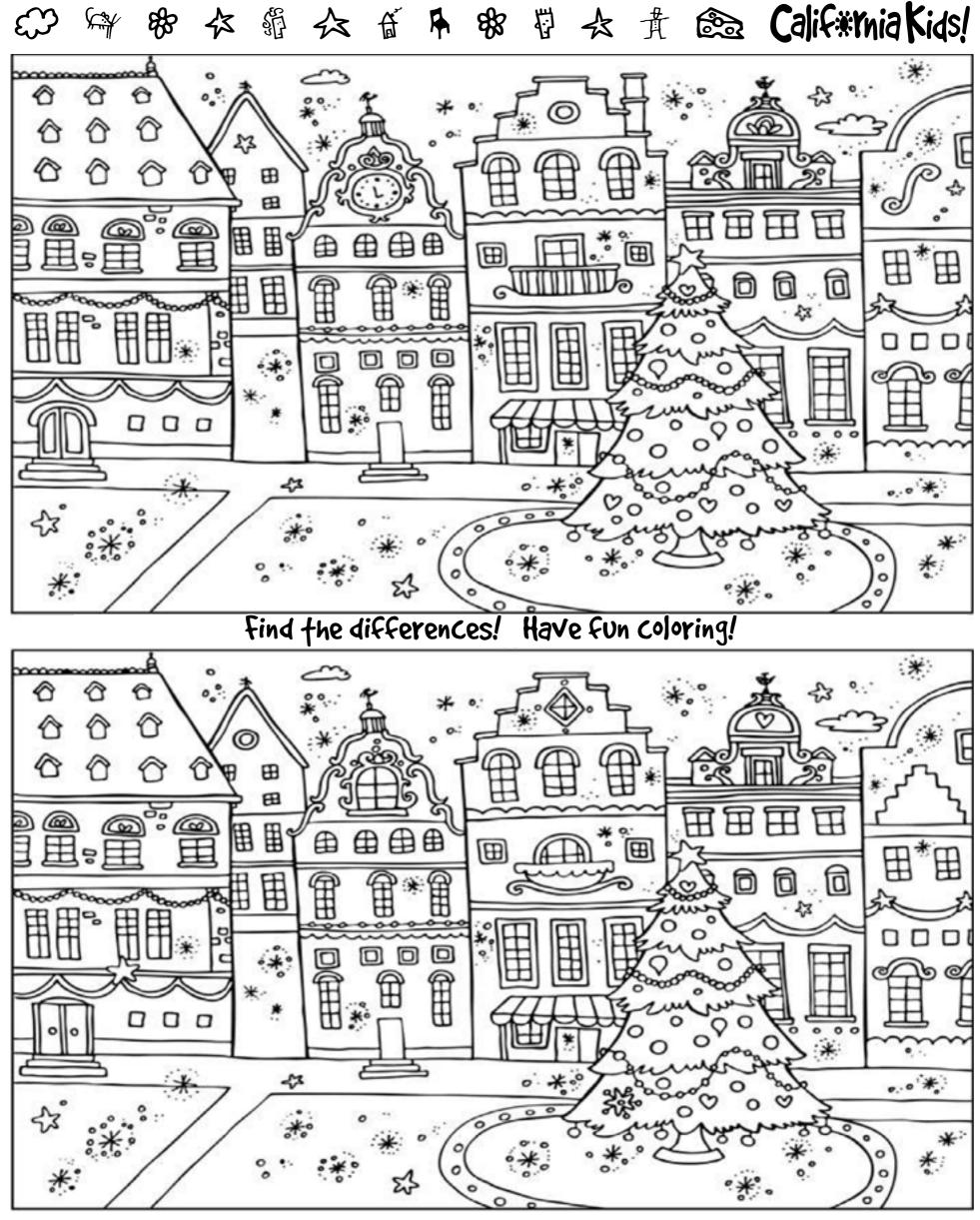
First 5 Sacramento offers resources on a variety of topics including effective parenting, breastfeeding, nutrition, school readiness for children ages zero to five, crisis intervention and more. The organization also works with community partners to increase support of parenting services available to families in the area. Among those is 2-1-1 Sacramento, a free, confidential phone line with information on community, health and social services.

2-1-1 Sacramento offers a one-stop source of information for community services and resources. By dialing 2-1-1, callers can receive personalized information from a live resource specialist about programs and services to help families in many different ways, ranging from access to healthcare or learning effective ways to discipline your children. 2-1-1 is confidential and available in more than 150 languages.

About First 5 Sacramento

Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on tobacco products to support programs for expectant parents and children ages zero to five. In the last year, First 5 Sacramento distributed approximately \$14 million a year in Prop 10 revenues to programs and services that meet local needs. Each county has a First 5 Children and Families Commission providing unique local services for that county. Surrounding First 5's include: First 5 Yolo: 530-669-2475; First 5 Placer: 530-745-1304; and First 5 El Dorado: 530-672-8298.





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Arts & crafts

December 3, Monthly Holiday Card Craft, 1 p.m. 5600 South Land Park Drive, Sacramento. The Belle Cooledge Library presents a free craft-making program monthly. Join the fun and bring the family for this craft-making craft. There will be a variety of craft supplies to make your own special greeting cards or gift tags. Plus, the library will provide rubber stamps, stickers, and many other crafting materials. For more information, call (916) 264-2920 or visit www. saclibrary.org.

December 3, Jewelry Workshop, 1 p.m., 2901 Truxel Road, Sacramento. Teens and adults are invited to the South Natomas Library each month for a jewelry workshop. Work with different jewlery-making materials each month; all craft supplies are provided. For more information, call (916) 264-2920 or visit www. saclibrary.org.

December 8, Felted Soap Craft, 4 p.m., 9845 Folsom Boulevard, Sacramento. Teens are invited to the Rancho Cordova Library to make Felted Soaps. Make weird felted soap sculpture which is a great gift and is fun and amazingly easy to make. For more information, call (916) 264-2920.

December 10, Gingerbread Houses, 2 p.m., 9845 Folsom Boulevard, Sacramento. Families are invited to the Rancho Cordova Library for this fun holiday project. Make gingerbread houses iwth graham crackers, candies and frosting. You bring the creativity, and the library will provide the supplies. For more information, call (916) 264-2920.

December 15, Holiday Crafts, 4 p.m., 4660 Via Ingoglia, Sacramento. Families are welcome to join the fun with the staff at the North Natomas Library making holiday crafts. For more information, call (916) 264-2920.

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December 4, Birding Basics, 1:30 p.m., 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael. Are you interested in bird watching, but don't know where to start? Come to the Effie Yeaw Nature Center to learn the basic for beginning birding. You will guided to look for common winter birds found around the Nature Area. Bring your binoculars or borrow a pair from the Center. For more information, call (916) 489-4918.

December 10, By the River's Edge, 10:30 a.m., 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael. Who lives at the river's edge? Come to the Effie Yeaw Nature Center and explore the habitat where beaver, otter, herons and other wildlife live. For more information, call (916) 489-4918.

December 17, Tracks: What do they reveal?, 10:30 a.m., 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael. Tracks reveal animals that you may not see while on your nature hike. Become a nature detective and discover the tracks of animals living in the Effie Yeaw Nature Area. For more information, call (916) 489-4918.

December 18, Cold Blooded Creatures, 1:30 p.m., 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael. Some have scaly skin, some have slimy skin, some have legs and some don't. Can you guess what they are? Join the staff at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center and find out. For more information, call (916) 489-4918.

December 24, Coyote Tales, 10 a.m. 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael. Join the staff at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center for a Native American story about Coyote, then get a close-up look at a coyote pelt, skull and mounted specimen. For more information, call (916) 489-4918.

December 31, Flying Tiger, 10:30 a.m., 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael. Have a close-up visit with the Effie Yeaw Nature Center's newest animal resident, a young great horned owl. Find out how these birds have earned this fearsome nickname. For more information, call (916) 489-4918.

Nature Events

December 11, Nature Story Time, 1:30 p.m., 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael. Join a Effie Yeaw Nature Center Naturalist to hear a story from some of their favorite nature story books. For more information, call (916) 489-4918.

Special Events

December 1 through 23, Holiday Music Program, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., 10th Street between L & N Streets, Sacramento, First Floor Rotunda. Visit the California State Capitol Museum for this free program. Enjoy vintage decorations and live holiday musical performances in the Capitol Rotunda each day. For more information, call (916) 324-0333 or visit www.capitolmuseum. ca.gov.

December 3, Holiday Shopping Event, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael. Come to the Effie Yeaw Nature Center, located in Ancil Hoffman Park, and help nature education programs and pick up some bargains for nature lovers and kids on your gift list. All profits from this annual sale benefit the Effie Yeaw Nature Center's education programs. Choose from many cool new shop items as well as special guest vendors. For more information, call (916) 489-4918.

December 3, Advent Craft Faire, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., 3235 Pope Avenue, Sacramento. It's a family fun day at Northminster Presbyterian Church. Families can enjoy "Make and Take" free Christmas crafts including ornaments, charm bracelets, Gingerbread houses and Christmas centerpieces. Materials and assistance are provided free by Santa's helpers. Enjoy a light lunch served at noon. All ages are welcome. For more information, call (916) 487-5192 or visit northminsteronline.org. December 3 and 10, Winter Warehouse Book Sale, Noon to 4 p.m., 8250 Belvedere Avenue, Suite E, Sacramento. The Friend of the Sacramento Public Library will host this book sale at the Book Den store, between Power Inn Road and Florin-Perkins Road, just south of 14th Avenue. More than 70,000 paperback and hardbound books, videos, books on cassette and more will be sold at prices ranging from 50 cents to \$2. For more information, call (916) 731-8493.

December 4, Jazz Program, 1 p.m., 3235 Pope Avenue, Sacramento. Renowned Jazz musician, Jim Martinez, has been recently named A "Steinway Artist," oneof the most distinguished honors that a pianist can achieve. He will recreate the music of A Charlie Brown Christmas for a fun-filled, very child friendly concert at Northminster Presbyterian Church. Tickets are \$10/adults, \$5/children. For more information, call (916) 487-5192 or visit northminsteronline.org.

December 9, The Long Christmas Dinner, 8 p.m., 3235 Pope Avenue, Sacramento. The Northminster Players present their first production of Thornton Wilders' "Long Christmas Dinner," directed by Brian Frishman. The play depicts 100 years of the Bayard family Christmas dinner, breaking the boundaries of time as one measures it, and inviting the audience to share in one long happy Christmas dinner; past, present and future. The audience will experience family stories told and retold in this serious and tender play lightened with the humor of Wilders' understanding of the human character. Enjoy another show Saturday, December 10, 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Tickets are \$10/ adults, \$5/students. For more information, call (916) 487-5192 or visit northminsteronline.org.

December 13, Holiday Concert, 4 p.m., 891 Watt Avenue, Sacramento. Families are invited to this free holiday folk concert at the Arden-Dimick Library. Musicians Ann Howard and Jason Wright of the lively folk group Scarves will perform holiday favorites. Delicious treats will be provided. The program will begin with a brief meeting to elect new members to the Friends of Arden-Dimick Library board which the public is welcome to attend. For more information, call (916) 264-2920.

December 16, Jesus Birthday Party, 7 p.m., 3235 Pope Avenue, Sacramento. Celebrate the true meaning of the season. Join the members of Northminster Presbyterian Church for The Christmas Story, followed by ice cream and birthday cake, piñata, and games. Special features will include music by the Children's Choir, Youth Praise Band and Children's Orchestra. Attendees are invited to bring an unwrapped gift for an underserved child in the community. For more information, call (916) 487-5192 or visit northminsteronline.org.

December 24, Christmas Eve Service, 5 p.m., 3235 Pope Avenue, Sacramento. A special family service of candlelight and lessons and carols will be held at Northminster Presbyterian Church. The Children's Choir and Praise Band will be sharing in the music. Come and experience a Living Nativity with a donkey, sheep, goats, and the Holy Family. Join and celebrate this Holy Night. For information, call (916) 487-5192 or visit northminsteronline.org.

Storytime

Thursdays, Storytime, 11 a.m., 2901 Truxel Road, Sacramento. Children ages 3 to 5 years are invited to the South Natomas Library for preschool storytime. For more information, call (916) 264-2920.

Saturdays, Storytime, 11 a.m., 2901 Truxel Road, Sacramento. Infants to age 5 are invited to the South Natomas Library for "Story and Play Time". For more information, call (916) 264-2920.



Drop In Family Craft – Candle Dipping - Saturday, December 3, 1 to 4 p.m.

You can hand-dip a wax candle in the garden courtyard at this free event. Rain Cancels. Gardens of Time

Hides and Tallow - Saturday, December 17, 1 to 2 p.m.

Come and see how Mission Santa Cruz participated in a world economy back in the early 1800's. Look at some of the major products of the mission; leather and tallow, and demonstrate how they were used. You will see how a branding iron works and get to make your own candle. The event is free. Rain Cancels.

Drop In Family Craft – Ramillettas - Friday, December 23, 1 to 4 p.m.

Create colorful layered paper decorations at this free event. Rain Cancels.

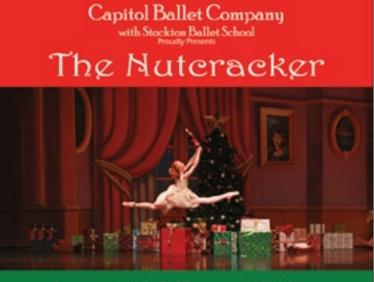


Drop In Family Craft – Luminaria - Friday, December 30, 1 to 4 p.m.

You can fashion a tin lantern in the garden courtyard. The event is free. Rain Cancels.

Candle Dipping - Saturday, December 31, 1 to 4 p.m. You can hand-dip a wax candle in the garden courtyard at this free event. Rain Cancels.

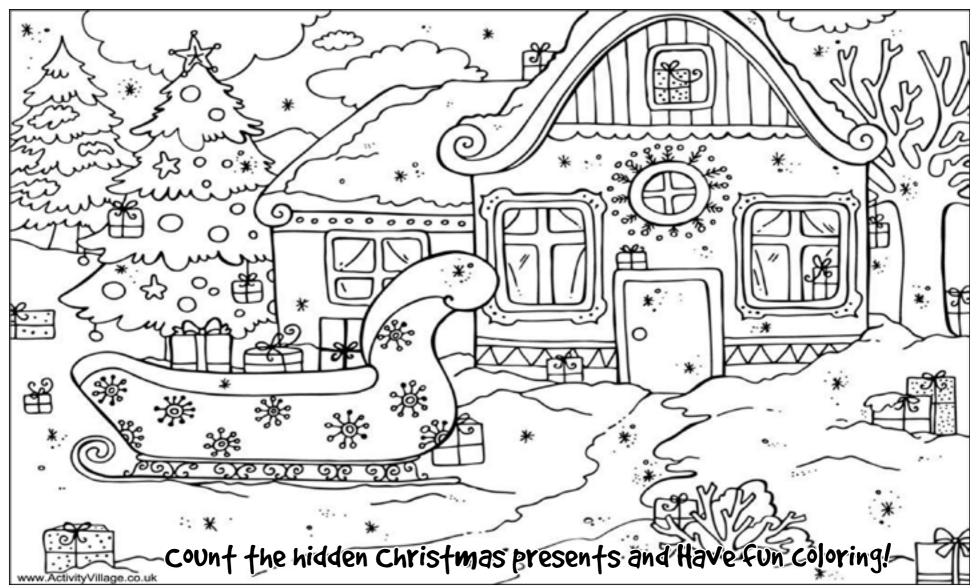
The Santa Cruz Mission State Historic Park is located on School St. off of Mission and Emmet Street in Santa Cruz. Please call (831) 425-5849 for more information.



December 10, 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm Sheldon High School Performing Arts Center

> www.capitolballet.com (916) 484-1188







fun ideas for an Art Party Birthday

www.birthdaypartyideas4kids.com

Mix and match these ideas to create your own special party.

Invitation Ideas for an Art Party

• Make invitations for an Art Party in black and white coloring book design and attach a crayon so birthday party guests can color in the Art invitation.

Have your child color a picture on the front of blank note cards, then send through the printer to add the birthday information on the inside.
Or use any brightly colored pre-made invitation.

Art Party Decorations

• Attach large sheets of white butcher block paper to cover the



be sitting. On the white paper scatter pens, pencils, markers and color crayons around the table and ask them to color where they will be sitting.

• Use empty paint cans to hold flatware.

table(s) where the children will

• Set out large artist palettes with a different colored candy (skittles or M&M's work great) in each place on the palette.

• Use artist palettes for plates.

• Buy several different packages of solid colors plates, napkins, cups and flatware and mix and match them around the birthday cake table.

• Tie brightly colored helium balloons on the back of each chair around the table and tie with several different colors of curling ribbon.

• Tie brightly colored helium balloons to the mailbox.

• Large crayons (the big plastic crayola banks), large paint brushes (string mops) and posters. Fun Idea: Ask your local hard-

ware store for aprons or find inexpensive aprons at a craft store. Use to keep clothes clean and also as a party favor they can decorate and take home. Art Party Games Paint the nose on the clown - Draw or print out a large poster size clown. Place a large round white circle where his nose is. Assign each party guest a different color paint. Blindfold them one at a time and them have them try and paint a nose on the clown in their color. The birthday party guest who gets the closest to the nose wins a prize.

Play Dough sculptures - Give each child a small can of play dough. Tell them that they will be sculpting different things that are birthday related ... but they only have 1 minute to make their sculpture. Call out a birthday item and have all the kids sculpt that item within 1 minute. Then have them mash their creations into a ball and call out another birthday item. Some fun birthday items for the kids to sculpt are: birthday cake, candle, cupcake, number (age of the birthday child), balloon, ice cream in a bowl. etc.

Art Party Activities Art Centers - Set up several Art centers around the art party area. Some fun Art center ideas



are: **Dart Paintings** - Pin balloons filled with paint on canvases and let the party guests throw darts at the balloons to pop them. Have one large canvas that the birthday child can hang up in their room after the Art party or use smaller canvases and let each party guest take their masterpiece home as a party favor after the party.

Sidewalk Chalk - Set out several containers filled with sidewalk chalk on a paved

See Birthday Party Ideas, page 27



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Birthday Party Ideas

Continued from page 26

surface and let the party guests make their own sidewalk art. For fun you can also set out spray bottles filled with water (for erasing) and items to trace around.

Painting - Hang up large poster boards on fences or walls. Give each poster station a set of watercolors, a brush, small container of water and paintbrushes.

Paint Can Glam - Ask your local paint or home improvement store for empty paint cans. Let party guests decorate the outside with paint pens or stickers. Use these as goody bags to hold party favors after the Art party.

Masterpiece Copy - Choose a famous painting and make a color copy of it. Cut the copy into different pieces and label them 1, 2, 3, 4 ... etc. on the back. Buy several canvases and also number them on the back. Give party guests a piece of the masterpiece art copy and a canvas. Ask them to paint their piece of canvas to match the smaller copy piece. When they are done put the pieces together and show them the finished masterpiece.

Bead Bracelets - Make colorful art bracelets from beads. Let the party guests take them home as a party favor.

Picture Frames - Decorate picture frames with foam stickers, paint and stick on jewels.

Finger Paints - Cover tables with large sheets of butcher paper. Set out differnt colors of finger paints, brushes and sponges and let them experiment with the finger paints.

Play Doh - Set out cans of Play Doh, rolling pins and cookie cutters. Let the guests create freely or give them objects to copy such as a party hat, birthday cake or birthday card.

Art Party Food Ideas

Instead of birthday cake - Let the kids create their own works of art by serving birthday cookies they can ice and decorate themselves, or serve birthday party sundaes with lots of toppings they can make to order, or individual birthday party cakes the kids can ice and decorate themselves.

Set up a cupcake decorating station and let the kids decorate their own cupcakes. Supply lots of different kinds of frostings, sprinkles, candies and writing gel.

Kool-aid or Sprite - For a fun Art Party experiment mix Sprite or water with a little food coloring in the primary colors of red, yellow and blue in 3 separate pitchers. With these colors you can mix drinks for party guests in any color of the rainbow. Green = yellow + blue, Orange = red

+ yellow, Purple = blue + red. Masterpiece cupcakes - be-

Masterpiece cupcakes - before the party make small copies (about 2 x 3 inches) of famous paintings. Glue them onto toothpicks and place the toothpicks in already baked cupcakes. Display them on a cupcake stand.

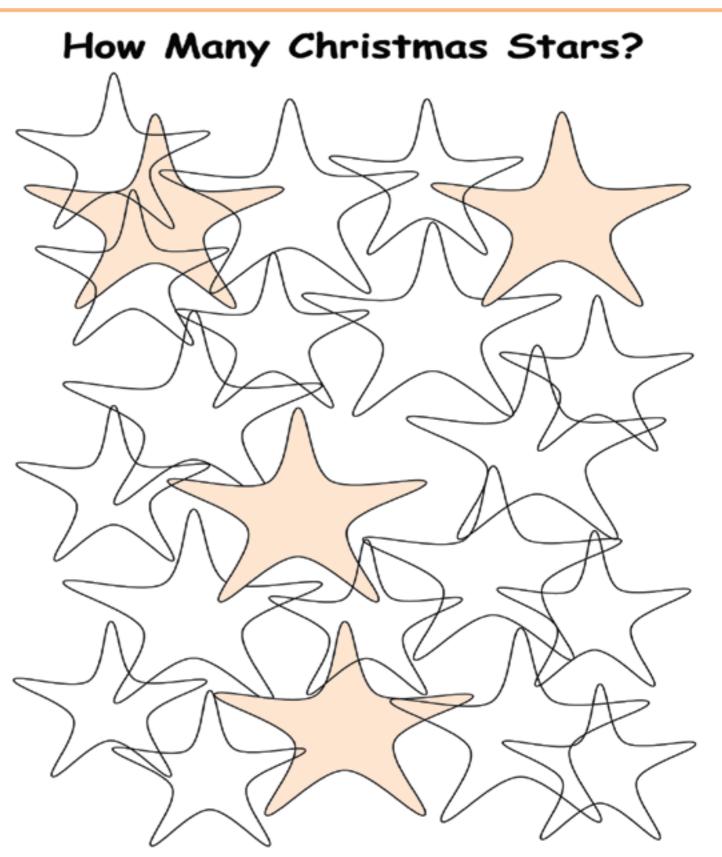
Let the kids make food sculptures with baby carrots, cheeses, celery, olives, etc. - held together with toothpicks.

Art Party Favors

Aprons that the kids can decorate at the party. Art supplies - paint brushes, paper, pastels, small pads of drawing paper, markers or crayons. Art shaped candies, Play Dough mini cans, sidewalk chalk

Goody bags

Empty paint cans the kids can decorate, buckets or containers that will hold art supplies, apron with pockets - fill pockets with art supplies and fun art shaped candy.



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MERRYHILL Elementary & Middle School





You're invited to an OPEN HOUSE! Visit one of our Open Houses in January and February at the school nearest you. Dates, times and locations are listed below.

MerryhillSchool.com

Merryhill School January-February Open Houses All Welcome!

Merryhill School, K-3rd - Pocket 7450 Pocket Road • Sacramento, CA 95831 916-429-6044

OPEN HOUSE: Thursday, January 26, 5:30-7:00 pm

Merryhill School, 4th-8th - Park City 7334 Park City Drive • Sacramento, CA 95831 916-429-6055

OPEN HOUSE: Thursday, February 2, 5:30-7:00 pm

Merryhill School, K-6th - Elk Grove 9036 Calvine Road • Sacramento, CA 95829 916-689-7236

OPEN HOUSE: Thursday, January 26, 9:00 am - 2:00 pm

Merryhill School, Pre K-3rd - Natomas 2565 Millcreek Drive • Sacramento, CA 95833 916-564-7343

OPEN HOUSE: Thursday, January 26, 5:30 - 7:00 pm

Merryhill School, Pre K-6th - Roseville 1622 Sierra Gardens Drive • Roseville, CA 95661 916-783-3010

OPEN HOUSE: Thursday, January 26, 5:00 - 7:00 pm

Merryhill School, K-8th - Stockton 4811 Riverbrook Drive • Stockton, CA 95219 209-477-9005

OPEN HOUSE: Thursday, February 2, 5:00 - 7:00 pm

Merryhill School, Junior K-6th - Davis 2650 Lillard Drive • Davis, CA 95618 530-297-5100

OPEN HOUSE: Thursday, January 26, 5:30 - 7:00 pm