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# California Kids!

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**General Manager:** Kathleen Egan

**Contributing Writers:** Connie Goldsmith,  
Carmel L. Mooney, Patricia M. Newman

**Art Director:** John Ochoa

**Junior Designer:** Ryan Vuong

**Sales Manager:** Patty Colmer

**Advertising:** Jen Henry • 916-429-9901

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# Autism Service Dogs, A Pawsitive Direction

By Carmel L. Mooney

Autism Service Dogs, also commonly referred to as Sig Dogs, Sensory Signal Dogs, or Social Signal Dogs are a relatively new trend in service animals.

That trend is likely to continue and to grow rapidly as more children are diagnosed each year with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), than with Diabetes, Cancer, and AIDS combined.

About one in 100 children is challenged by ASD, and the numbers are growing at a staggering rate which is increasing the need for these service dogs that are specifically trained to mitigate the growing number of challenges these special children and their families face.

For children challenged by Autism and their families, a simple outing to a shopping mall, an excursion to the grocery store, or an afternoon errand is often a sheer impossibility. When attempted, these seemingly normal family activities often result in behavioral meltdowns, tantrums, wandering, and a multitude of dangerous behaviors which could easily endanger the entire family while in busy parking lots, in public places, and in crowds.

Further challenges are experienced in public when the individual challenged with Autism is unfairly ridiculed, and judged, often along with the parents and siblings, by uninformed or ignorant passers-by who mistakenly judge the child as misbehaving, undisciplined, or being raised by "bad parents." Sometimes law enforcement or security are even summoned by passers-by in public places and many times they are uninformed or uneducated about Autism and its manifestations.

Things are not much better at home for these same families. Often these young people affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders escape during the night, damage property by head banging, kicking, or throwing objects or even themselves. Sometimes they eat unacceptable items from the home and yard. Many of them engage in repetitious behaviors both at home and in their educational environments.

Parents and siblings are in a constant state of stress, duress, exhaustion, and sleep deprivation. Marriages fall apart, siblings endure physical and emotional consequences, and the families, as a whole, are taxed physically, emotionally, and financially.

Recently, hundreds of families dealing with ASD have found peace of mind, reprieve, safety, security, and a new sense of freedom and normalcy due to the relatively new existence of Autism Service Dogs. These highly trained service dogs not only help to keep a child from wandering, can find a child in a crowd, can help halt repetitive behaviors, can calm meltdowns and prevent them, but they serve as a reminder and educational tool of awareness to the public that the child has a disability and needs compassion and empathy rather than judgment and ridicule.

Several organizations are beginning to fill this growing niche and serve families struggling with Autism's unique challenges. Pawsitive Service Dog Solutions ([www.pawsitivesolutions.org](http://www.pawsitivesolutions.org)) is one such Sacramento area, non-profit organization whose mission is to train and partner healthy, reliable, exclusively bred, highly-trained service dogs with individuals of all ages challenged by Autism Spectrum Disorders and other developmental disabilities.

An organization's cost to raise, train, and place an Autism Service Dog isn't cheap, running between \$20,000-30,000 per dog. Many organizations, including Pawsitive Service Dog Solutions ([www.pawsitivesolutions.org](http://www.pawsitivesolutions.org)) are overcoming the cost barrier by providing these highly-trained dogs to their families with little or no cost to the recipient families by cooperative fund raising efforts, scholarships, grants, and donations.

In addition to the wonderful support and safety measures they offer, an Autism Service Dog often becomes a friend that the child may speak to when they won't speak to adults.

These dogs are also frequently fitted with two leashes — one for the child to hold or be tethered to and another one for the parent/handler/caregiver to hold. The dog will accept commands from the parent/handler/caregiver, thus providing a new sense of freedom and safety for the child and the parents. Some children have even been known to give verbal commands to the dog even when they won't speak to anyone else.

Best of all, service dogs help people challenged by Autism to communicate with the world around them. Being with a service dog often helps lengthen attention spans and improves the ability to focus longer on people and tasks. Service dogs help increase the willingness of



those with Autism to communicate with others and to make improved eye contact. All of this can happen when a child's life is enriched with an Autism Service Dog.

[www.pawsitivesolutions.org](http://www.pawsitivesolutions.org)

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# Discovery Museum Calendar

## Dino-Volcano Mobile, Sunday, February 5

- Make your own Blast from the Past! souvenir -- a fun take-home craft. Each visitor ages 12 and under may assemble a Dino-Volcano mobile with pre-cut shapes. Remember your day of exploring rocks, fossils, crystals and dinosaurs in the exhibit! Bring a camera to catch all the memorable moments. Planetarium shows are at 1 and 3 p.m. for ages 4 and older.

## Dinosaur Stamp-A-Rama, Saturday and Sunday, February 11 and 12

- Make your own dinosaur fact book! Children 12 and under use a dozen different dinosaur stamps and match them up with interesting prehistoric facts to construct a personal take-home memento. Remember to bring your camera for the many photo opportunities available in the Blast from the Past! exhibit, featuring rocks, crystals, dinosaurs, and fossils. Planetarium shows are at 1pm & 3pm for ages 4 and older.

**Terrifying Tyrannosaurs, Saturday, Sunday and Monday, February 18 - 20** This holiday weekend, visit our Blast from the Past! exhibit and explore the world of dinosaurs. Fossils and eggs are on display and costumes

are available for kids to try on. Roaring fun for the whole family! Learn about one of the most famous dinos of all- the Tyrannosaurus rex. Kids assemble a paper T. rex puzzle to take home as a souvenir. Planetarium shows are at 1pm & 3pm for ages 4 and older.

**Family Engineering Day, Sunday, February 26** - Celebrate "Engineers Week" at the Discovery Museum. Engineers help make many aspects of life better -- here's a great opportunity to share engineering fun with your kids. Kids ages 12 and under can be little engineers as they construct a sugar dome out of candy and toothpicks. Planetarium shows are at 1 and 3 p.m. for ages 4 and older.

*Museum opens at 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Science Discovery activities are from 12:30 to 4 p.m. The Discovery Museum Science and Space Center is located at 3615 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento. Admission is \$8 adults (18+), \$6 seniors (60+), \$6 teens (13 to 17), \$5 children (4 to 12), \$0 children (3 and under). The exhibits are age appropriate for 4 to 12 year olds. For more information, call (916) 808-3942 or visit [www.thediscovery.org](http://www.thediscovery.org).*

## Natural Bridges migration Festival Annual Educational Event celebrates Santa Cruz's Rich Natural Heritage

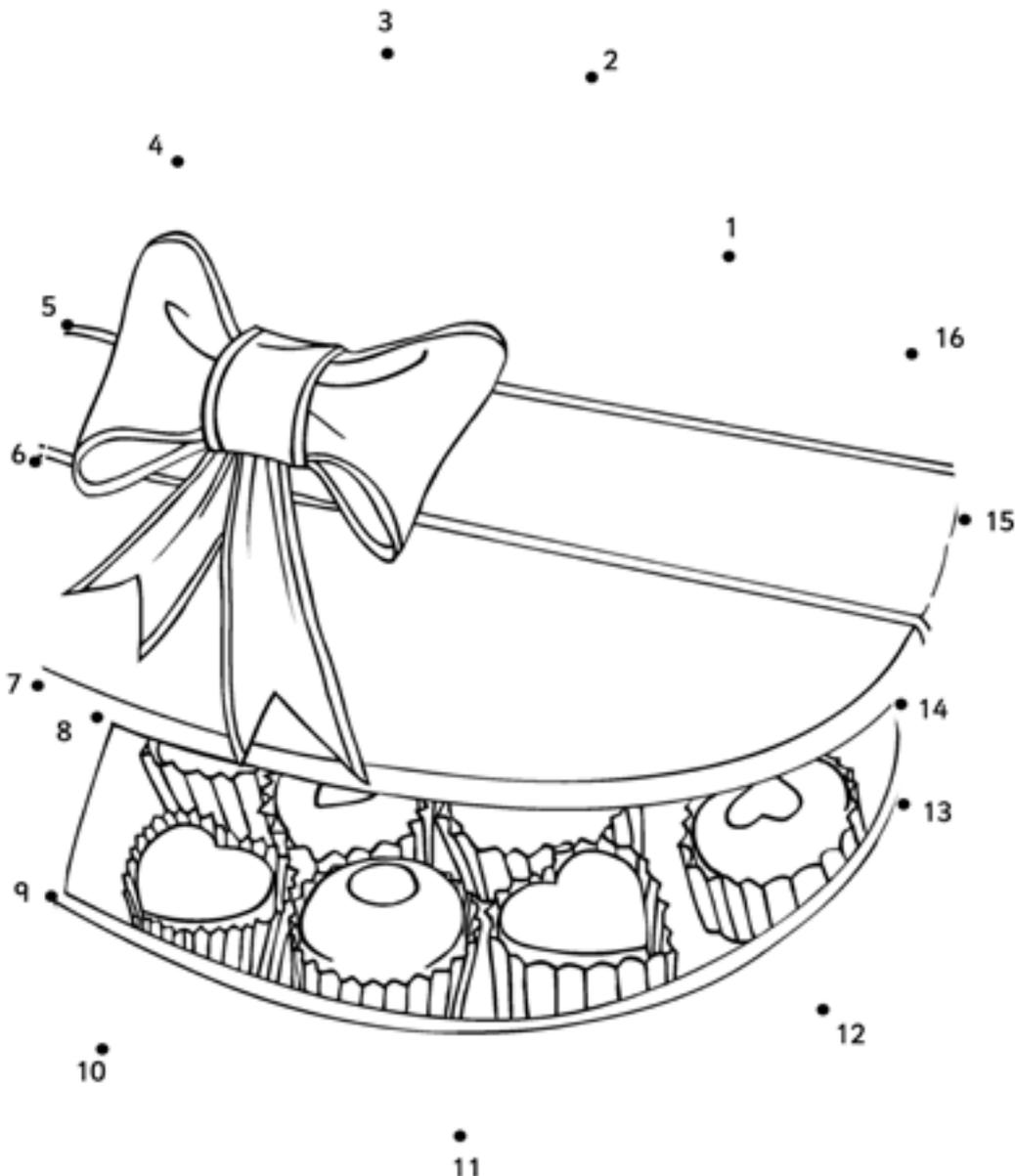
California State Parks invites you to fly, swim, waddle, walk, bike or drive to Natural Bridges State Beach for the annual Migration Festival, a celebration to honor the journey of whales, butterflies, birds and the many creatures that travel. On Saturday, February 11, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., activities at the park will focus on the science and wonder of migratory animals from creatures that travel far including gray whales and monarch butterflies, to those with an annual journey of less than a mile, like the California newt.

The event features live music by the nature-loving 5M's Band, engaging guest speakers, a chance to learn about migratory animals with community groups hosting a variety of activity stations, active docent-led games for kids, theatrical skits, and hands-on art projects and crafts. To end the day of migration fun and games, the now-famous free habitat-cake will be served at the conclusion of the event.

The festival celebrates the many creatures that travel in, through and beyond the Santa Cruz area as they migrate to feeding or breeding grounds as part of their lifecycle. At Natural Bridges State Park, it's time to say a fond farewell to the migratory monarch butterflies departing from their winter home in the park's state designated insect preserve. Many other creatures are also "on the move." Gray whales travel to the warm waters of Baja California far away from their summer home in the Bering Sea, elephant seals come ashore to birth their pups, and soon, swallows will be winging-it along the Pacific Flyway on a return flight from their winter home in South America. "There's just so much going on to see, appreciate and celebrate," notes Elizabeth Hammack, State Park Interpreter III. The event is educational and interpretive in nature, allowing visitors to gain knowledge and understanding of the animals that travel among our parks and through the Santa Cruz area. "We hope visitors come away with a spark of curiosity and a desire to learn more about how to protect these species and their habitat," Hammack adds.

You can purchase an inexpensive picnic which supports education programs at the park or bring your own. A day use parking pass is \$10; the event is free. Natural Bridges State Beach is located at the end of West Cliff Drive in Santa Cruz. More information is available by calling (831) 423-4609 or visit us on the web at [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov).

## Connect the dots and have fun coloring!



[www.ActivityVillage.co.uk](http://www.ActivityVillage.co.uk) - Keeping Kids Busy



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# Effie Yeaw Calendar

**Saturday, February 4, 10:30 a.m., Those wacky Woodpeckers!**  
Woodpeckers are instantly recognizable by their unique behavior of pecking vertically on trees and poles, but how much do you really know about these outstanding birds? We will clue you in. All ages welcome.

**Sunday, February 5, 1:30 p.m., Fun Facts about Otters and Beavers**  
These two are not related, but are often mistaken for each other. Did you know that Otters are highly intelligent and that Beavers are actually rodents? Come learn some fun, yet important facts about these creatures who roam our local waters. All ages welcome.

**Saturday, February 11, 10:30 a.m., Astonishing Animal Adaptations**  
We live in a wild world! There is no end to the mind-boggling ways in which animals have adapted to live in the extremes of the Earth! See these marvels of nature live and up close, including exotic insects, invertebrates, reptiles, and much more! Hosted by Eric San Gregorio of Insect World. All ages welcome.

**Sunday, February 12, 1:30 p.m., Nisenan Maidu Village Walk**  
Step back in time as you tour the replica of the village of the Nisenan Maidu people, who had a flourishing culture before the arrival of the European settlers. See how these wonderful people lived in harmony with their environment and hear a traditional story. All ages welcome.

**Saturday, February 18, 10:30 a.m., The Great Backyard Bird Count**  
Take part in this wonderful event hosted by the Audubon Society and geared towards the first-time birder, families and children who might be trying the hobby for the first time. You can even track the events progress at: [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org) All ages welcome.

**Sunday, February 19, 1:30 p.m., Birds of the River**  
Ducks and geese are often the most familiar types of birds to many beginning birders and non-birders, but even experienced birders may not know just how unique these birds can be. Join the fun and you will find out. All ages welcome.

**Saturday, February 25, 10:30 a.m., Let's Draw a Cougar**  
Take a shot at creating your own drawing masterpiece using our mountain lion taxidermy display. **THIS DISPLAY IS NOT LIVE!** The staff will also amaze you with some little known cougar facts. All ages welcome.

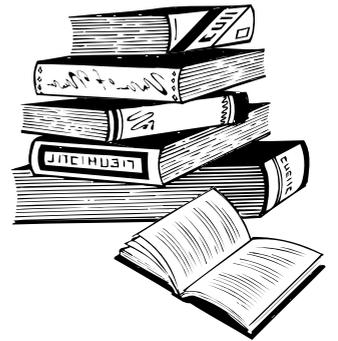
**Sunday, February 26, 1:30 p.m., Hawks and Falcons**  
The physical features and behaviors of these daytime raptors are fascinating. You will also have a chance to get up close and personal with our resident hawk Skye and Kestrel Rocky. All ages welcome.

**Special Event:** New speaker series, "Nature of Things," features Dr. Art Shapiro, Friday, February 17, 6:30 to 7:45 p.m. Dr. Shapiro's 39 years of site visits have tallied approximately 83,000 individual records of 159 butterfly species and subspecies. Find out how butterflies act as indicators of a changing climate as well as a changing landscape.  
Pre-registration is required, space is limited. Fee: \$5/person. Call (916) 489-4918 or go to [www.sacnaturecenter.net](http://www.sacnaturecenter.net) to register.

*Donations gratefully accepted. There is a \$5 per car entrance fee into Ancil Hoffman Park (Free to members). Please note: The Nature Center may be closed due to stormy weather. Please call to confirm. The center is located at 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael. For more information, call (916) 489-4918.*

## Arden-Dimick Library hosts used book sale

The Sacramento Public Library invites the public to find used book discount bargains on Saturday, February 4, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Arden-Dimick branch, 891 Watt Avenue, Sacramento. Thousands of titles include children's books, mysteries and thrillers, adventure, romance, history, art, cookbooks, travel, biographies, science fiction, sci-fi/fantasy and more. All books are reasonably priced, starting at 25 cents each. Sale proceeds will benefit the library branch. For more information, call (916) 264-2920.



## Fun February!

Hey kids! February is the shortest month, but it is a month filled with holidays. Beginning with Ground Hog Day, there are hearts and presidents and flags and flowers and all kinds of things to decorate your bedrooms and classrooms with. Here's a puzzle to see if you can pick out the words that remind you of all those special days. From the list below, find the words hidden in the puzzle. They can be backwards or forwards, up or down, or even diagonally. See how fast you can find them. Whoever finishes first gets the candy kiss!

G T C A N D Y H E A R T S W S Y Y  
R O M S R Z F T L N D C V N E A B  
O L I N C O L N S B I R T H D A Y  
U N Z S U D A R N A U A H S A R A  
N D G B P M G J P N X B E W R Z D  
D U E K I S S E S D T N A E A M S  
H O L I D A Y S D S I P R E P K T  
O M C H O C O L A T E M T T A E N  
G B O X O F C A N D Y R S H D N E  
D R A X Z B M E J E N I M E B C D  
A G S D N K L O V E K X D A A R I  
Y W O R R A D N A W O B N R M Z S  
N Z T J V K X P S T M K D T S A E  
E W A S H I N G T O N S D A Y N R  
F L O W E R S E B R A M X N T E P

Be Mine  
Bow and Arrow  
Box of Candy  
Candy hearts  
Cards  
Chocolate  
Cupid

Flags  
Flowers  
Ground Hog Day  
Hearts  
Holidays  
Hugs  
Kisses

Lincoln's birthday  
Love  
Parades  
Presidents Day  
Sweetheart  
Valentine's day  
Washington's day





# Who Wrote That?

The Creators of Your Child's Favorite Books

Featuring Alan Silberberg

By Patricia M. Newman

Alan Silberberg received the 2011 Sid Fleischman Humor Award from the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators for *Milo: Sticky Notes and Brain Freeze*, a story about a boy who copes after the death of his mother. Not the usual fare one would expect to find in a humor book, but *Milo* is also Silberberg's personal story. "This was something I experienced as a kid," he says. When he was in third grade, his mother complained of headaches and was diagnosed with a brain tumor. Two months later she passed away. "Third grade will always be that before and after moment of my life." A funny kid before his mother died, Silberberg shielded himself with humor to deflect any talk of death.

When Silberberg began *Milo*, his second book, it was "a silly junior high novel with cartoons." The narrative cartoon hybrid style was gaining momentum and he wanted to jump aboard. "The cartoon, My Dad [in which Milo understands the weight of his father's grief], helped define the book...turning it in a new direction," he says. "Milo realizes his dad is gone, too." This heavier cartoon became the lynchpin of the story, and Silberberg's personal experience informed how Milo would react.



As a college student, Silberberg knew his destiny lay in kids' television. "I created a major called Cartoon Communication Education at the University of Massachusetts." After graduation he wrote, cartooned, and produced television shows for networks such as Nickelodean and Disney. His latest Disney Channel effort is called "Dadnapped," a story about a famous children's author kidnapped by rabid fans and rescued by his James Bond-like daughter. "I always saw myself doing something in education," he says, but is quick to qualify that he never wanted to teach. "I wanted to use different media as educational tools."

In one of those "a-ha" moments that become the stuff from which books are made, Silberberg was swimming in a pond when a friend warned him about leeches in the pond scum. At the time, he thought *Pond Scum* would make a great title for a TV show, but at his wife's urging *Pond Scum* set his career in children's literature afloat. "[The book] evolved from my own childhood because I was forced to make new friends," he says recalling the frequent moves his family made. As the architect of his main character's life, Silberberg gave him the power to transform into animals to ease his assimilation into country life. Chapter by chapter the story grew into a book, but Silberberg was so intent on becoming an author he steered clear of incorporating cartoons with his text.

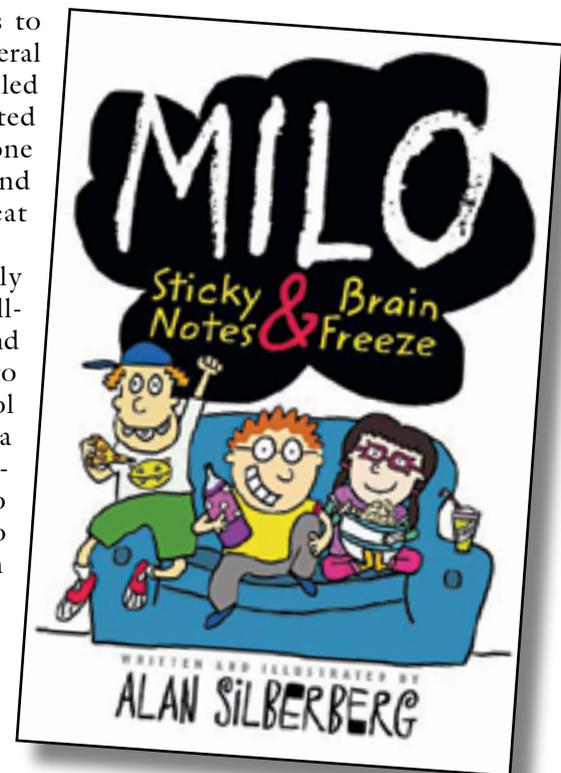
Silberberg thought the transition from television to printed page would be a "piece of cake." After all, it was a natural progression to a new form of writing.

*Pond Scum* took 18 months to write and was rejected by several agents before one agent called to say she loved it and wanted to represent him. "I had one of those cartoon moments and said, 'Can you please repeat that?'"

His third book, currently titled *Draw*, is a wish-fulfillment story that centers around two best friends who aspire to be cartoonists for the school newspaper. They acquire a magic pen that makes everything they draw come to life. "I remember wanting to change things with a wish so badly," Silberberg says, "but not having that power. Unfortunately my Mom's death is such a touch point for my life. Everything kind of goes back there. I no longer live in that moment, of course, but it certainly has a defining place."

He sent what he thought was a good draft of the manuscript to his editor, but she commented that it ended in the middle of the second act. "It was missing the emotional payoff of the story," he says. "My subconscious brought me to the edge, but I didn't want to do the icky stuff." With his editor's guidance, Silberberg turned in a more satisfying final draft. Of the revision process he says, "I love it and I hate it at the same time."

Silberberg begins each day in his Montreal home with a cup of espresso which he sips in his "big fat chair" while web-surfing, responding to email, and checking Facebook. Depending on the status of his work in progress, he will write or draw for several hours, his dog Zeus on his lap, taking breaks for snacks and the daily crossword puzzle. Finding a character's real narrative voice is the most difficult part of writing for him. Many writers "adopt a kid's voice," he says that is more like "an accent" rather than delving into what makes a particular character tick. Silberberg

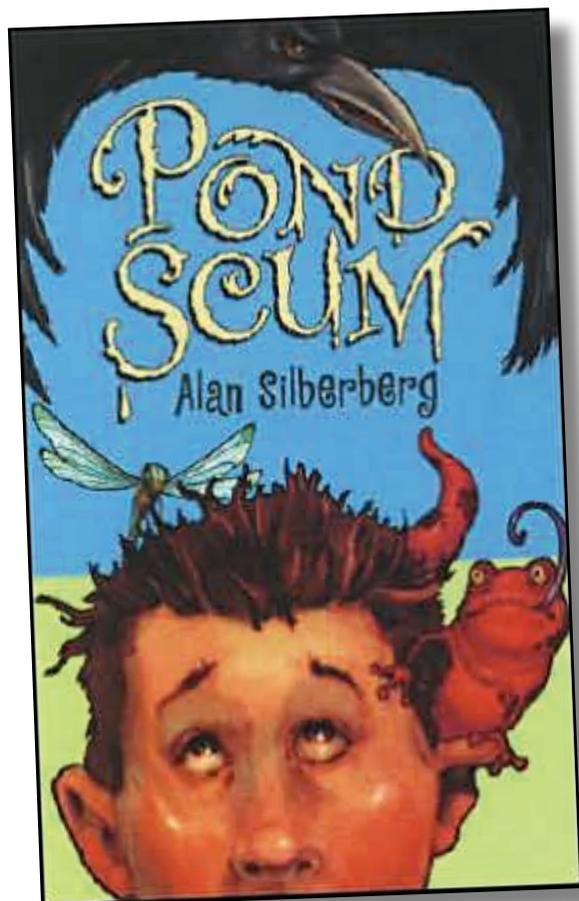


mines his junior high school feelings in order to develop a fully layered character that evokes emotion in his readers. In a letter from one woman whose husband had died, she tells how she and her two sons found *Milo* and took turns reading it aloud. "If one cried, the other would pick it up and continue."

On his website, Silberberg describes writing as "the mortar that holds all of life's loose bricks together. I may not always build a perfect wall or a straight house or a story without holes, but getting messy trying to hold all the crazy pieces together makes it all worthwhile."

Next month: David Ezra Stein

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](http://www.patriciamnewman.com) to watch the trailer.



## MORE ABOUT ALAN SILBERBERG

How to Contact Alan Silberberg  
Website: [www.silberbooks.com](http://www.silberbooks.com)

### ALAN SILBERBERG'S LIBRARY

*Milo: Sticky Notes and Brain Freeze*, Aladdin/Simon & Schuster, 2010.  
*Pond Scum*, Hyperion, 2005.

### UPCOMING

*Draw*, Aladdin/Simon & Schuster, 2013. [note: title is likely to change]





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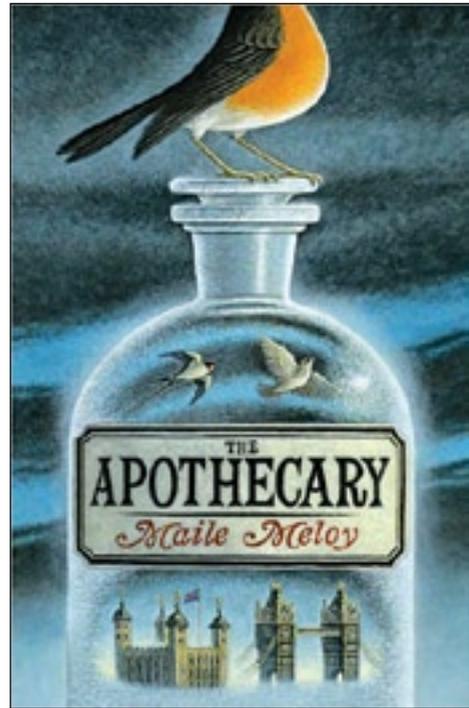
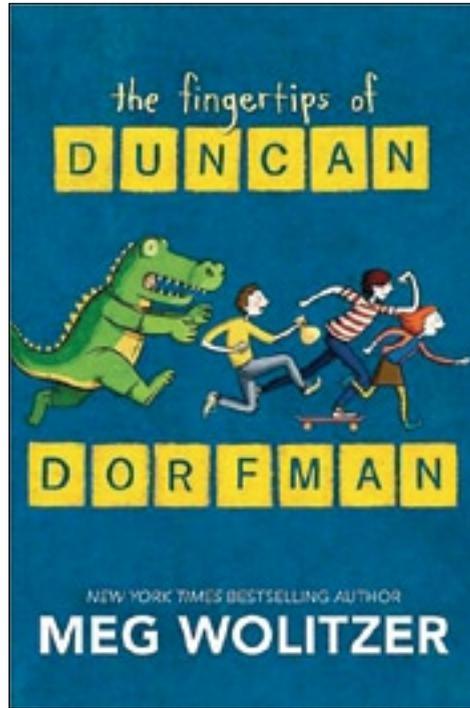
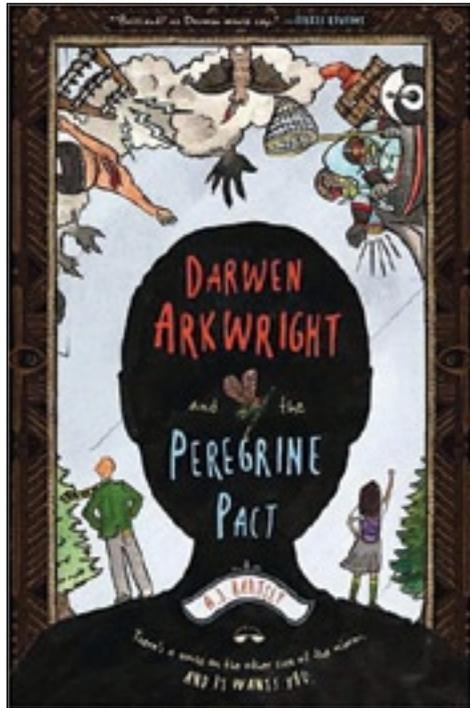
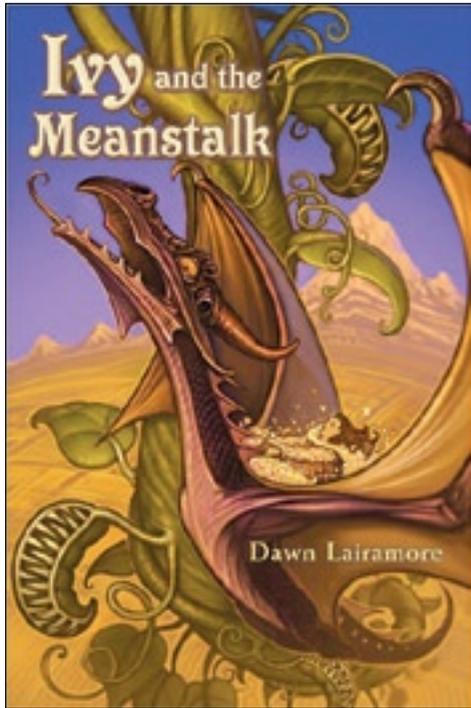
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THE BOOK REPORT

# Middle Grade Novels

By Connie Goldsmith

Middle grade novels are aimed at the voracious readers aged 8 to 12. Many of these children are very good readers. Middle grade novels are the meat and potatoes of the publishing business, and some of today's best writing is found in these books. If your young reader isn't quite up to the task, the stories are ideal for family read-aloud time. Many adults will enjoy these stories as much as their children.

"*Ivy and the Meanstalk*," by Dawn Lairamore. (Holiday House). Princess Ivy and dragon friend Eldridge are back for another adventure. First they must fly up the giant man-eating meanstalk to rescue the stolen pixie goat that belongs to Ivy's fairy godmother. Ivy must track down Jack (of Jack and the giant beanstalk fame) to save her kingdom. For the Giant's wife has been sleepless for one thousand years since Jack stole the magical harp. Ivy and Eldridge reach Jakopia, the kingdom founded long ago by the thieving Jack. Everything in Jakopia is made of gold (remember the hen that lays the golden eggs?) and the king is unwilling to right past wrongs. Ivy and Eldridge team up with Jakopia's prince to retrieve the magical harp and save her kingdom. Entertaining and engaging, this novel is a must-read for all little girls with princess aspirations!

"*Darwen Arkwright and the Peregrine Pact*," by A. J. Hartley. (Razorbill). When 11-year-old Darwen spots a birdlike creature with leathery wings and a human face flying through a busy mall, he chases it into a magic mirror shop. A sign says, "Mr. Octavius Peregrine's Refractory Emporium: Mirrors Priceless and Perilous." Darwen receives his own priceless perilous mirror. That night at home, he climbs through it into a lovely forested land called Silbricia. He joins forces with the dellfey – little winged people similar to fairies – who are working to save their world (and ours) from the dangerous scrobblers, gnashers, and shades. This rollicking good story is filled with monsters, machines, mayhem, and a trio of brave kids, making it an enticing selection for young readers who enjoyed *The Golden Compass* and *The Chronicles of Narnia*.

"*The Fingertips of Duncan Dorfman*," by Meg Wolitzer. (Dutton). Duncan Dorfman is one of those kids who have trouble fitting in. He and his mom moved to a new town. He's starting a new school. His clothes are all wrong. But Duncan has a secret – he can 'read' letters with his fingertips. The school bully Carl is in the Scrabble club, so when Duncan reveals his secret to Carl, he's propelled from nerdhood to instant popularity. Duncan, Carl, and friends April and Nate, set off for the National Youth Scrabble Tournament, all

with their own agendas and hopes for winning. Despite pressure from Carl, Duncan realizes being able to read the letters on Scrabble tiles is cheating. Readers will enjoy this interesting story and will learn a bit about Scrabble at the same time.

"*The Apothecary*," by Maile Meloy, illustrated by Ian Schoenherr. (Putnam). The Cold War is in full swing in 1952 when Janie moves to London with her parents. She meets an unusual apothecary and his son, Benjamin, who dreams of becoming a spy. When Benjamin's father is kidnapped by a mysterious Russian, the children discover the apothecary has mysteries of his own, especially his sacred book, the Pharmacopoeia. Using the transformative potions found in the book, the children learn to become invisible and to turn into birds. With a little help from friends, they foil a Russian plot to explode a dangerous nuclear bomb. Every kid dreams of flying or being invisible – this fascinating story fulfills those fantasies while good triumphs over evil. Like so many new middle grade novels, the book is lavishly illustrated inside, with an absolutely gorgeous cover. Readers are sure to enjoy this quirky, quickly-paced story filled with adventures from beginning to end.

"*Okay for Now*," by Gary D. Schmidt. (Clarion). Garnering a bevy of starred reviews, this novel is best reserved for a slightly older



reader. Doug is 14 and just moved to a new town; he has no friends, his brother is accused of stealing from local stores, and his father is neglectful. But Doug finds a good friend in Lil Spicer. Doug begins drawing birds from Audubon plates in the library. He succeeds at a Saturday delivery job. His hope and hidden talents shine their light into his previously dismal life. Schmidt weaves together childhood themes of self-discovery and family issues with a deft hand and distinctive characters. Read this one aloud to your family over a couple of weeks. It will especially appeal to those most elusive of all readers – boys!

**\*\* Reviewer's pick of the month\*\***

Connie Goldsmith ([www.conniegoldsmith.com](http://www.conniegoldsmith.com)) lives in Carmichael where she writes for adults and children. See 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, in school and public libraries, and at online booksellers.



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## Unique stage production for children

The Kinderwise Music Company, founded by Joe and Nancy Francis, is a stage production for children under ten, featuring music, animation, props, and comedy. The show is

uniquely designed to make each young one feel as though they are co-stars in the action and not merely passive observers. Nancy and Joe (Sparkles and Bubbles) are joined on stage by Sunny and Busy-Bee, the production's two larger-than-life mascots. The concert itself is a celebration of music and childhood lights, and a giant HD movie screen. Several holiday-themed shows will be

performed throughout 2012 in Folsom and their current production, "The Easter-Bunny Blast," will feature special Easter Bunny photo opportunities for parents and kids after the show (bring your camera!) and a guest appearance on stage from Mr. B. himself. Tickets are \$8, no charge for children under the age of 1. Tickets can be purchased through [www.kinderwisemusic.com](http://www.kinderwisemusic.com).

# Pig Out on Pig Day



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[www.DavisFarmersMarket.org](http://www.DavisFarmersMarket.org)



**KVIE Day at The Discovery Museum**  
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**Saturday, February 25th**  
**10am - 4:30pm**

Free Admission!

Special guest appearance by Sid from Sid the Science Kid

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# Calendar of Events

## Arts & Crafts

**February 5, Dino-Volcano Mobile, 12:30 to 4 p.m., 3615 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento.** Make your own Blast from the Past! souvenir, a fun take-home craft at the Discovery Museum Science and Space Center. Each visitor ages 12 and under may assemble a Dino-Volcano mobile with pre-cut shapes. For more information, call (916) 808-3942 or visit [www.thediscovery.org](http://www.thediscovery.org).

**February 11 and 12, Stamp-A-Rama, 12:30 to 4 p.m., 3615 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento.** Make your own dinosaur fact book at the Discovery Museum Science and Space Center. Children 12 and under use a dozen different dinosaur stamps and match them up with interesting prehistoric facts to construct a personal take-home memento. For more information, call (916) 808-3942 or visit [www.thediscovery.org](http://www.thediscovery.org).

**February 25, Let's Draw a Cougar, 10:30 a.m., 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael.** Take a shot at creating your own drawing masterpiece using Effie Yeaw Nature Center's mountain lion taxidermy display. This display is not live! The staff will also amaze you with some little know cougar facts. All ages are welcome. For more information, call (916) 489-4918.

## Critter Events

**February 4, Those Wacky Woodpeckers, 10:30 a.m., 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael.** Bring the family to the Effie Yeaw Nature Center located in Ancil Hoffman Park for this free program about woodpeckers. Woodpeckers are instantly recognizable by their unique behavior of pecking vertically on trees and poles, but how much do you really know about these outstanding birds? The staff will clue you in. All ages are welcome. For more information, call (916) 489-4918.

**February 5, Fun Facts about Otters and Beavers, 1:30 p.m., 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael.** These two are not related, but are often mistaken for each other. Did you know that otters are highly intelligent and that beavers are actually rodents? Come to the Effie Yeaw Nature Center and learn some fun, yet important facts about these creatures who roam our local waters. All ages are welcome. For more information, call (916) 489-4918.

**February 11, Astonishing Animal Adaptations, 10:30 a.m., 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael.** We live in a wild world. There is no end to the mind-boggling ways in which animals have adapted to live in the extremes of the Earth. Come to the Effie Yeaw Nature Center and see these marvels of nature live and up close, including exotic insects, invertebrates, reptiles, and much more. Hosted by Eric San Gregorio of Insect World. All ages are welcome. For more information, call (916) 489-4918.

**February 18, The Great Backyard Bird Count, 10:30 a.m., 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael.** Take part in this wonderful event hosted by the Audubon Society and geared towards the first-time birder, families and children who might be trying the hobby for the first time. You can even track the events progress at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org). All ages are welcome to attend this program at the Effie Year Nature Center. For more information, call (916) 489-4918.

**February 19, Birds of the River, 1:30 p.m., 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael.** Ducks and geese are often the most familiar types of birds to many beginning birders and non-birders, but even experienced birders may not know just how unique these birds can be. Join the fun and you will find out. All ages are welcome at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center. For more information, call (916) 489-4918.

**February 26, Hawks and Falcons, 1:30 p.m., 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael.** The physical features and behaviors of these daytime raptors are fascinating. You will also have a chance to get up close and personal with the Effie Yeaw Nature Center's resident hawks, Skye and Kestrel Rocky. All ages are welcome to attend. For more information, call (916) 489-4918.

## Special Events

**February 2, Science Program, 3:30 p.m., 4660 Via Ingoglia, Sacramento.** The Sacramento Public Library is celebrating National Science Literacy Month by hosting a special school-age children's program at the North Natomas branch. A representative from Mad Science will present a high-energy, interactive science show for ages 5 to 12. For more information, call (916) 264-2920 or visit [www.saclibrary](http://www.saclibrary).

**February 4, 11, 18, 25, March 3, Pig Day, 1 p.m., Central Park, Davis.** Pig out at the 21st annual Pig Day, Davis Farmers Market's big pig gig. Pet the baby pigs, dance with people dressed as pigs, and pig out on pork dishes. The event will be held at the Davis Farmers Market in Central Park. Come celebrate pigs, food and local agriculture.

**February 4, Book Sale, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., 891 Watt Avenue, Sacramento.** The Sacramento Public Library invites the public to find used book discount bargains at the Arden-Dimick branch. Thousands of titles include children's books, mysteries and thrillers, adventure, romance, history, art, cookbooks, travel, biographies, science fiction, sci-fi/fantasy and more. All books are reasonably priced, starting at 25 cents each. Sale proceeds will benefit the library branch. For more information, call (916) 264-2920.

**February 4, 14th Annual Sacramento Museum Day, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Various locations, Sacramento.** Twenty-eight Sacramento area museums will offer free or half-priced admission all day. It was suggested to visit no more than two or three different museums on this day in order to allow adequate time to enjoy the experience and to travel between individual sites. And, since some museums must limit the number of admissions for safety reasons, guests are asked to check out detailed Sacramento Museum Day information online at [www.sacmuseums.org](http://www.sacmuseums.org) prior to the event. For more information, visit online or call (916) 808-7777.

**February 11, Food Preservation Demonstration, 10 am. to noon, 4145 Branch Center Road, Sacramento.** The public is invited to the Sacramento Cooperative Extension Office for a "The Pressure's On!-Basic introduction to safe pressure canning techniques." This is a free demonstration by the Sacramento County UC Cooperative Extension Master Food Preservers. For more information, call (916) 875-6913.

**February 11, Martial Arts Competition, 9 a.m., 4700 College Oak Drive, Sacramento.** An open invitational martial arts competition will be held at American River College beginning 9 a.m. and going throughout the day. The competition will feature local, state, national and international champions. Admission is \$12 at the door, parking is free. For more information, visit [www.robinsonstkd.com](http://www.robinsonstkd.com) or call (916) 332-6979.

**February 12, Nisenan Maidu Village Walk, 1:30 p.m., 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael.** Bring the family to the Effie Yeaw Nature Center and step back in time as you tour the replica of the village of the Nisenan Maidu people. The Nisenan Maidu lived in harmony with their environment and hear a traditional story. All ages welcome. For more information, call (916) 489-4918.

**February 15, Food Preservation Demonstration, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., 4145 Branch Center Road, Sacramento.** The public is invited to the Sacramento Cooperative Extension Office for a "Winter Wonders - Asparagus, Beets, etc." The cost to attend is #3 and no advanced registration is required. The demonstration will be presented by the Sacramento County UC Cooperative Extension Master Food Preservers. For more information, call (916) 875-6913.

**February 17, "Nature of Things" speaker series, 6:30 to 7:45 p.m., 2850 San Lorenzo Way, Carmichael.** New speaker series at the Effie Yeaw Nature Center, "Nature of Things," features Dr. Art Shapiro. Dr. Shapiro's 39 years of site visits have tallied approximately 83,000 individual records of 159 butterfly species and subspecies. Find out how butterflies act as indicators of a changing climate as well as a changing landscape. Pre-registration is required, space is limited. The fee to attend is \$5 per person. For more information, call (916) 489-4918 or visit [www.sacnaturecenter.net](http://www.sacnaturecenter.net) to register.

**February 18 to 20, Terrifying Tyrannosaurs, 12:30 to 4 p.m., 3615 Auburn Boulevard, Sacramento.** Visit the Blast from the Past! exhibit at the Discovery Museum Science and Space Center and explore the world of dinosaurs. Fossils and eggs are on display and costumes are available for kids to try on. Learn about one of the most famous dinos of all, the Tyrannosaurus rex. Kids can assemble a T Rex puzzle to take home. For more information, call (916) 808-3942 or visit [www.thediscovery.org](http://www.thediscovery.org).

**February 25, Open Garden Day, 9 a.m. to noon, 11549 Fair Oaks Boulevard, Fair Oaks.** The public is invited to the Fair Oaks Horticulture Center for "Open Garden Day." Wander the gardens, ask questions. Watch Master Gardeners groom ornamental grasses, prune shrubs, start a compst pile, set up a worm composting bin, and finish pruning dormant fruit trees. Bring your list of gardening questions and get one-on-one advice. This is a free event. For more information, call (916) 875-6913.

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# Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport, Family-Friendly Excellence all the way

By Carmel L. Mooney

Our recent visit to the Hyatt Regency San Francisco Airport was wonderful. When you find a place with outstanding service, impeccable cleanliness, convenience and hospitality, and completely family-friendly, all in one locale, it raises the bar for the other properties to follow. Such was the case with our more-than-pleasant stay.

From the moment we arrived we were offered the best hospitality and service imaginable.

Our room was well appointed and comfortable with high speed wireless internet, an in room refrigerator, an iHome stereo and iPod docking station, and luxurious Hyatt Grand beds and bedding.

A nice 24 hour fitness center, outdoor bayside jogging path and heated outdoor pool and whirlpool rounded out the activity options.

The guest services were what really struck us as exceptional. Sure there were numerous beaches within 20 minutes, several golf courses within 15 minutes, and other hot points of interest within minutes such as downtown San Francisco, downtown Burlingame, the Silicon Valley, Fisherman's Wharf, and Paramount's Great America...but what proved especially helpful for us on this trip was the proximity to the San Francisco Airport. Complimentary 24 hours shuttle service to the airport as well as Bay Area Rapid Transit, and the Burlingame Trolley, give convenience an A+ at this property for traveling families.

Unlike most places we've stayed in recent years, there were absolutely no glitches. The plans for the hotel to keep our vehicle in their covered parking garage and to shuttle us to and from San Francisco International Airport, went smoothly and effortlessly. Imagine no stress, and relaxation on both sides of our trip to the airport.

Currency exchange, concierge service, laundry, daily newspapers, safety deposit boxes, and many more conveniences only add to the overall exceptional experience.

We had the added bonus of access to the Regency Club Lounge on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor. A cut above most concierge level services and amenities, this was truly spectacular and I would recommend it to all



traveling families. Mid day service offered teas, gourmet coffees and juice but the evening service was outstanding with healthy meats, cheeses, breads, salads, pastas, delicious desserts, pies, cakes and cookies. We enjoyed watching the sunset over the bay while indulging in the delicious fare which far exceeded our expectations. Printing off our boarding passes while we snacked was a breeze, and gourmet teas and coffees only added to the indulgence, along with a cocktail for mom and dad in the evening.

Continental breakfast was anything but a mere continental breakfast in the morning with a show stopping array of fresh baked muffins and pastries, countless hot and cold cereals, imported cheeses, cold cuts, wonderful berries and fresh sliced fruits, numerous juices, and again, wonderful gourmet specialty coffee and teas.

The morning of our departure, we actually received our wake up call which sadly seems to be the exception rather than the norm most places. It's one of my pet peeves, but none at this property.

The atrium style of the architecture was both beautiful and functional allowing us to get a



wonderful night's sleep before departing for the airport.

All in all, whether you plan to explore San Francisco or San Mateo county, or are looking for a restful respite before departing the airport for a longer getaway, this is the best property you will find in the area.

Rarely can a property offer exemplary service, location, amenities, recreation and accommodations without any hiccups, all in a family-friendly package. But it can be

done and the Hyatt San Francisco Airport has set the standard and raised the bar.

<http://sanfranciscoairport.hyatt.com/hyatt/hotels/index.jsp?null>

*Carmel L. Mooney is the editor of Roadtripsforcouples.com, an online travel magazine. She is also a travelblogger on Travelingmom.com. Carmel co-hosts a travel radio show every Sunday at noon on KJAY 1430 AM in Sacramento. You can follow her on Twitter: @roadtriplover or Facebook: www.facebook.com/roadtripsforcouples*





# Healthy Teeth Happy Smiles

A message brought to you by First 5 Sacramento

Oral health begins even before children start teething. Paying attention to your child's oral health early can prevent problems down the road such as chronic pain, impaired chewing and speech development, as well as reduced concentration and self-confidence.

## The Facts about Cavities and Children

- Cavities are five times more prevalent than childhood asthma and four times more common than childhood obesity.
- Pain and suffering can lead to problems with eating, speaking and learning.
- Over 51 million school hours are lost each year due to dental related problems in the US.
- Cavities can lead to costly and extensive dental treatment, usually under general anesthesia.
- Cavities are completely preventable!

Here are some resources to help parents establish positive dental habits early and ensure your child's teeth are healthy:

Dental Resources at your Finger Tips!

Looking for a children's dentist? Questions about fluoride? Visit First 5 Sacramento's dental website at: [www.first5sacramento.org](http://www.first5sacramento.org). The website features children and parent dental care and resources in English, Spanish, Russian and Hmong including videos highlighting local dental programs; tip sheets; local dental resources; and a section dedicated to dentists that focus on training modules for children's dentistry.

The latest Sacramento County fluoridation map is also on site so you will know if you live in an area with fluoridated water. Fluoride plays an important role in the healthy tooth development in children and helps prevent the early stages of tooth decay.

### Looking for a Children's Dentist?

Helping parents' access dental care these days is especially important because Sacramento County schools now require it prior to enrollment in school. Finding a dentist and scheduling checkups can be difficult. Parents worry about costs and it can be hard for families to find a clinic



that accepts their insurance plan, or Medi-Cal.

Uninsured families should contact Cover the Kids at (866) 850-4321 to get signed up for health insurance.

New, state of the art children's dental clinics, funded by First 5 Sacramento, are open now and will see very young children at low-cost or no-cost arrangements, depending on insurance.

Three are currently operating and accepting new patients at the following locations:

- The Effort North Highlands Clinic, 6015 Watt Avenue, Suite 2, (916) 737-5555
- The Effort Oak Park Clinic, 3415 Martin Luther King Blvd., (916) 737-5555
- The Sacramento Native American Health Clinic, 2020 J Street, (916) 341-0575

### See a Dentist by your Child's 1st Tooth or 1st Birthday

Your child's teeth and gums are important – even his or her baby teeth.

A child's first set of teeth is crucial for chewing, speaking and speech development, jaw development, self-esteem and are placeholders for permanent teeth. Smart oral health practices are just one step in preparing a child to begin school on the right track.

### 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 \$16 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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**VISIT** the California State Railroad Museum in Old Sacramento, open daily 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. It's a family learning experience that will delight like no other.

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**RIDE** behind a vintage railroad locomotive for a 40-minute ride atop the Sacramento River's levees, departing Old Sacramento every Saturday and Sunday hourly 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. April – September.

**SHOP** for children's items, gifts, books, DVDs, clothing and dazzling reproduction dining car china at our Museum Store – a year-round supplier of *Chuggington* and *Thomas* products!



CALIFORNIA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM  
Corner of 2nd and "I" Streets, Old Sacramento  
(916) 445-6645 [www.californiastaterailroadmuseum.org](http://www.californiastaterailroadmuseum.org)





# I Heart Sacramento Zoo

Bring your Valentine to a special "I Heart Sacramento Zoo" day organized by the Sacramento Zoo Teen volunteers, Sunday, February 12, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The event features valentine-themed animal enrichments, informative talks and activity tables – all included with general admission.

Scheduled enrichments will include scented Valentine cards for the lemurs and a special piñata for Val-lynn-tine, the giraffe as she celebrates her 17th birthday. Keepers and Zoo Teen's will be present during each enrichment to give information and answer questions about the animals. Also, don't miss this opportunity to sign a Valentine card for the animals from Zoo staff and guests.



## Schedule of Animal Enrichments:

- 9:30 a.m. – Orangutan
- 10 a.m. – Chimpanzee
- 10:30 a.m. – Lion
- 11 a.m. – Giraffe
- 11:30 a.m. – Black and White Ruffed Lemur
- 12 p.m. – Thick-billed Parrots
- 12:30 p.m. – Giant Anteater
- 1 p.m. – Ground Hornbill
- 1:30 p.m. – Bongo and River Hogs
- 2 p.m. – Spotted Hyena
- 2:30 p.m. – Reptile House
- 3 p.m. – Kangaroo and Emu
- 3:30 p.m. – Sumatran Tiger

Zoo Teens are 13 to 19-year-old volunteers interested in animals, the earth, and the community who spend their weekends at the Sacramento Zoo. Zoo Teens develop their own ideals, views and passions to encourage Zoo patrons to become better stewards of the Earth. "I Heart Sacramento Zoo" gives the teen volunteers experience communicating with the public and offers visitors an opportunity to learn more about the Zoo's unique animals.

*The Sacramento Zoo is located near the corner of Land Park Drive and Sutterville Road in William Land Park and is open daily from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. General admission is \$11.25; children ages 2 to 11 are \$7.25 and one and under are admitted free. Parking is free throughout the park. For information, call (916) 808-5888 or visit [saczoo.org](http://saczoo.org).*



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## OPEN HOUSE: Thursday, March 29, 2012, 6:30 – 8:30pm

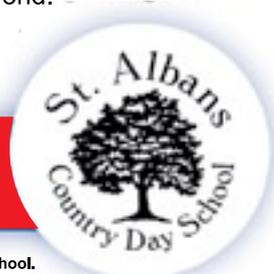


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**Parties! Parties! Parties! Parties! Parties! Parties! Parties! Parties! Parties!**

# Flower Power and Love, 1960's Birthday party theme

[www.birthdaypartyideas4kids.com](http://www.birthdaypartyideas4kids.com)

## 1960's Invitations

Look for ready made invitations with bright bold colors. Add your own touch to plain invitations by gluing on pictures of flowers, smiley faces, peace signs, VW beetles or words like "groovy", "peace", "far out".

- Glue artificial flowers (remove the stems) to the front of plain invitations.

- Send invitations wrapped in tie dye bandanas and ask the guests to wear them to the party.

- In the invitation ask guests to dress in a 60's costume. Suggest fun items to wear such as headbands, wigs, tie dye shirts, round sunglasses etc. and give

a prize for the best 1960's costume.

- Yellow smiley face cards or plain yellow cards that you can draw a smiley face onto with markers.

- Print out invitation and then roll up into a thin scroll and place a mood ring over the invitation to keep it from unrolling. You could word the invitation to say "In the mood for a 60's party?"

**60's Party Decorations** • At the entrance to the party create a time machine that guests have to walk through to get to the party. Use large appliance boxes or build an entrance using a pop up tent or canopy and decorate it in tie dye or bright colors, use beaded curtains that guests have to walk through. Place a sign on the front that says "Time

Machine ... Set destination - 1960's!" or "Welcome to the 60's!"

- Bright bold colors - yellow, pink, orange, green and blue. Tie dye anything! Wrap up flatware in tie dye bandanas and wrap hippie beads around the bandana (guests can wear them at the party and then take them home for a 60's party favor.)

- On the party table and around the room set out 60's themed items such as lava lamps, smiley faces, bean bag chairs, hang up tie dye sheets, beaded curtains and strobe lights. • Play 1960's dance music, Beatles or Rolling Stones in the background. • Make 45 style records from



construction paper and label them with 1960's song titles - then hang on the walls or from the ceiling with fishing line. • Make large letters from construction paper and spell out famous 1960's phrases such as: groovy, peace, love, flower power, etc.

If you are having a dance area make posters with 1960's dances such as the Locomotion, Twist, Mashed Potato, Swim, Funky Chicken, Stroll, Pony, etc.

**1960's party games** • Make up a fun 1960's trivia quiz for 60's music, movies or tv shows. • Groovy guess- Fill a large glass or clear plastic container with bubble gum, skittles or any rainbow colored candy and count every piece in the jar and write down the total. Place the jar on a table near the party entrance along with some small pieces of paper and some pens. When the party guests are arriving, ask them to guess how many candies are in the jar. On the papers have them write down their name and their guess and then fold the paper so no one can see

See Flower Power, page 23



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Parties! Parties! Parties! Parties! Parties! Parties! Parties! Parties! Parties!

# Flower power

Continued from page 22

their guess. You can have them lay the papers on the table by the jar or have a basket or container to put in the guesses. Near the party end announce who guessed the closest to the number of candies in the jar. The one who guessed closest wins the jar and the candy inside.

- 60's dance competition - Teach party guests the dances which were popular in the 60's. YouTube has great videos that will teach you the Mashed Potato, The Swim, Funky Chicken, The Penguin, The Locomotion, The Stoll, The Hitch Hike and The Pony. Give fun prizes away to the winners.

**Crafts** • Tye Dye t-shirts- Before the 1960's party buy several white t-shirts and pre-wash and dry them. Mix up the dye in large plastic tubs - outside if at all possible. Have the party guests wrap rubber bands around their shirt and then dip into the different colors of dye. Rinse and hang up the shirts to dry on a clothesline outside or throw them in the dryer. The shirts will take some time to dry so this is a good craft for the beginning of the party. Make sure to tell guests to wash them separately for the first few washes or they could bleed onto other fabrics.

- Make groovy fringe t-shirts- Provide a t-shirt for each guest. Have them cut 1/2" strips about 3" long around both sleeves and the bottom of the t-shirt. Thread large eyed beads onto the strips and tie at the bottom so the bead is at the bottom of the fringe.

- For older tweens and teens put on the movie Hairspray and let it play in the background.

**Food Ideas:** Tye Dye cupcakes, Fondue, Chocolate Fountain, Psychedelic Fruit Kabobs - cut up fruit and place on skewers, Jello jigglers cut into groovy shapes - hearts, flowers, peace signs etc., Colorful veggie tray with Ranch dip, Pizza with toppings placed as a "Peace Sign."

**Party Favor Ideas:** Round John Lennon glasses, VW beetle hot wheel cars, Peace sign necklaces and buttons, Glow necklaces and bracelets, Tye Dye fruit rollups, CD of 60's music, temporary tattoos of peace signs, flowers, hearts, etc. Also good ideas are, Mood rings, Troll dolls, smiley face items.

**Goody / Loot Bag Ideas:** Wrap party goodies up in a tye dye bandana, tye dye colored bags, plain colored bags tied with rainbow or multi strings of colored ribbon, yellow boxes or bags with a smiley face drawn on the sides.

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Visit one of our Open Houses in March and April at the school nearest you. Dates, times and locations are listed below.

[MerryhillSchool.com](http://MerryhillSchool.com)

## Merryhill School March-April Open Houses All Welcome!

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

SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE: Thursday, March 22, 10:00 am-1:00 pm  
CAMP OPEN HOUSE: Saturday, March 24, 10:00 am-1:00 pm

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

OPEN HOUSE: Thursday, April 19, 5:30-7:00 pm

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

SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE: Thursday, March 22, 9:00 am-2:00 pm  
CAMP OPEN HOUSE: Saturday, March 24, 10:00 am-2:00 pm

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

OPEN HOUSE: Saturday, March 24, 10:00 am-2:00 pm  
Lic# 343605765

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

OPEN HOUSE: Thursday, March 22, 5:00-7:00 pm  
Lic# 313615425

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

OPEN HOUSE: Thursday, April 19, 5:00-7:00 pm

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

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