

American Nanny

Alternative Holiday Gift Giving

By Tasha Donahue

At a time when our portfolios have dived quicker than Michael Phelps, this is a great opportunity to rethink how we approach our respective Christian-Judeo holidays. This is a chance to teach children it is not a given "right" to have floor to ceiling presents each year. While you might want to give your children a few small remembrances, you could also teach them to be less self-absorbed. I can remember Christmases of long ago where my children tore apart gifts at the speed of lightening, never bothering to look up and acknowledge their appreciation. "Stop!" I can still hear myself exclaim. "We are not going to open anything else now!" Gads, it can be frustrating for parents who try so hard to provide something special for their kids!

Let's remember something here: the term holiday emanates from "holy day". How did we get so off track, anyway? Whether it is Christmas or Hanukah you celebrate, perhaps, it is time to bring back the true meaning of the December celebrations. Only two people spread the entitlement attitude: Mom and Dad. Sorry, but it is true. They make the decisions about how much extended family members bestow on their little darlings. Year after year, they set the tone.

In a country of consumers whose credit cards exceed ability to pay, where jobs are being outsourced, where homes are being foreclosed, North County San Diego remains a community of abundance. Do your kids have any idea that there are millions of children who have nothing, absolutely nothing? Limit gift giving. Just take the bull by the horns and tell everyone (Grandparents, aunts and

uncles alike) your philosophy. Emphasize, instead, what you and your family can do for others.

Here are wonderful alternative ways to share with those less fortunate:

Alternative Christmas Markets offer gifts that will change the world one step at a time. Right here in North County we have one of the biggest alternative Christmas Markets in the country.

Solana Beach Presbyterian Church (www.solanapres.org) hosts its annual Alternative Christmas Market this year on Sunday, Nov. 23. Last year they netted about \$125,000 for deserving local and world-wide causes. It is open to the community. Go online to sponsor one of their well thought-out charities. The choices are many, the need great. \$10 buys study material for 150 Hispanic students in the free tutoring program at SBPC. \$25 buys part of a Yak for a school of orphans in Tibet. \$50 buys part of a solar heating system for Native Americans in South Dakota. These are only a few of the local and world offerings they showcase. What a great way to teach your children that there is a world of need beyond your doorstep.

Another idea: Google (with kids at your side), children's charities and let your children help to fund (through their piggy banks or funds earned from chores) another child in need. Make them an active part of the decision. Ask extended family members to cooperate and participate. Talk about it on the holiday; the conversations will light up your festivities. Some of the charity websites I found:

www.monarchschoools.org - Charity begins at home. Right here in San Diego, just ten miles away, we have one of two target schools for at-risk and homeless children.

Save The Children: helps children in poverty and need.

Seedlings.org: provides books in Braille to visually impaired children.

Make a Wish Foundation: caters to seriously and terminally ill children.

World Vision.org: For \$35 a month you can sponsor a child and keep up a correspondence with them!

Kiva.org: You can have a dramatic effect on a struggling family on the other side of the world. With loans as little as \$25 most of our American children can invest in another human being without (financial) help from mom and dad. Ninety-eight percent of the loans are repaid! (See below book review).

Whatever your choice, you can be sure it is a life lesson that your children will never forget. And that is the greatest gift they could ever receive.

Book Recommendation: "If the World Were a Village" by David J. Smith, illustrated by Shelagh Armstrong, published by Kids Can Press, all ages. Here is a book that makes my point for me. The author divides the 6.7 billion people in the world into 100, each representing 67 million people. Then he divides issues and lists how many people on this globe go to bed hungry, what religion they are, how the wealth is divided, who consumes and who doesn't etc. In a few short pages with wonderful illustrations he says a whole lot. This is a book that should be read and discussed.

"One Red Hen," written by Katie Smith Milway, Illustrated by Eugenie Fernandes, Published by Kids Can Press, ages 3 to adult. Here is a wonderful story of how small loans through such organizations as Kiva can affect a community a half globe away. It is the story of one young boy named Kojo with one small loan to buy one brown hen and where it leads. It puts in kids' terms how one small loan makes a big difference in many lives.

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What's happening in theatre in San Diego? Plenty!

By Alice Cash



Alice Cash

Last weekend, the La Jolla Playhouse hosted its annual gala "Moon Over Morocco." With its new Artistic Director Christopher Ashley, the playhouse is kicking off a new "Xanadu," the hit Broadway musical (not the lame '80s movie), which opens Nov. 11! You better grab your tickets now for this Greek muse, rollerskating, musical! You can call (858) 550-1010 or go online to www.lajollaplayhouse.org for

Theater review — from a teen perspective

more information.

•A good family play now open is "Cats," produced by San Diego Junior Theatre in Balboa Park. Based on T.S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, with music by Andrew Lloyd Webber, large dance numbers and no plot, this is an ideal trip for all ages, especially young children who have not experienced theatre before. You can go online to www.juniortheatre.com or call (619) 239-8355 for more information.

•From the fabulous company that brought you the award-winning, and laugh-your-socks off Victoria Martin Math Team Queen, Moxie Theatre is kicking off its new season with a play by the same author, *Bleeding Kansas*. To find out more information go online to www.moxietheatre.com or call (858) 598-7620.

•Compass Theatre is bringing *Britannicus* to life by French playwright Racine. Local teenager Jenna Selby is appearing! The story is of the woes and struggles of the will to power (Nietzsche anyone?) of Nero. Through Nov. 23 you may call (619) 688-9210 or go online to www.compassstheatre.com for more information.

•Coming Nov. 11 to the beautiful Balboa Theatre is "Defending the Caveman," the longest running one-person show on Broadway. You can go online to www.sandiegotheatres.org or call (619) 570-1100 for more information! Go to the theatre!

To Your Health MS and Lifestyle: An Integrative Approach

By Kulreet Chaudhary, M.D., Scripps Memorial Hospital La Jolla

If you have a health problem such as diabetes or heart disease, you probably wouldn't be surprised to hear your physician say that you need to eat right, exercise, manage your stress and get enough rest. Now, we're finding that advice is valuable not only for physical diseases such as diabetes, but neurological ones like multiple sclerosis as well.

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic, progressive neurological disease that affects the central nervous system—the brain and spinal cord. Experts believe the disease causes the immune system to attack and break down myelin, which is a protective coating around nerve fibers that helps transmit signals from the central nervous system to the body to control physical and psychological functions. Without adequate myelin, nerve impulses to and from the brain are interrupted. This "interruption" in the signal presents as a sudden neurological symptom, known as a relapse in multiple sclerosis. Symptoms include blurred vision, loss of muscle strength in the arms and legs, feelings of numbness, tingling or burning, problems with balance or coordination, fatigue, sexual dysfunction and constipation.

Symptoms vary from person to person; some people may experience many symptoms while others have just a few. The first signs of the disease usually emerge between the ages of 20 and 50, often affecting young people in the most active years of their lives. Relapses can occur unpredictably and then resolve just as suddenly, so people with MS may live with the constant uncertainty of not knowing whether they will be healthy from one day to the next.

Current treatments, known as disease-modifying therapies, can help ease the frequency of relapses and slow the progression of the disease. However, in addition to these treatments, many patients also take a number of other medications to treat the symptoms associated with MS. This is where careful attention to nutrition, exercise, sleep and stress can play an important role. If we can address symptoms such as constipation, constant fatigue and depression by integrating lifestyle changes, why not do that instead of depending on medication? In fact, a surprising amount of medical literature supports the profound impact of lifestyle habits on MS—much more than might be expected.

We know that when somebody who has MS undergoes a stressful emotional, physical, or psychological experience—from having a urinary tract infection to being let go from a job to an argument with a spouse—they are likely to have a relapse within a few days. When my MS patients have a relapse, I look for signs of infection or physical illness, and ask what has been happening in their lives recently. I review their sleep habits, eating schedules, stress levels and stress management techniques, caffeine intake, and so on. Whether someone is skipping meals, drinking too much coffee, not getting adequate sleep or having personal problems, all of these translate to the nervous system as stress, consequently causing a pro-inflammatory cascade in the body and creating a perfect setup for MS exacerbation.

The goal, then, is to begin decreasing the amount of stress input. I try to help patients to use their eating, sleeping and exercise habits to take advantage of their own physiological rhythms to combat the symptoms associated with MS. I use this analogy: If you had \$100 to invest in the stock market and you knew exactly when the best times were to invest, you would make money effortlessly. The same is true of your health—if you can learn when your body has the best capacity for digestion and when you get the deepest quality of sleep, it will be easier to maintain overall good health.

Another area we are just starting to study is the impact of meditation in MS. Meditation has been shown to have a strongly beneficial effect on cardiac disease. The Center for Neurological Study (CNS) is sponsoring a study that will evaluate whether meditation improves depression, fatigue, sleep, and quality of life in individuals with MS. We are also investigating if meditation changes genetic markers in MS. For more information about this upcoming study, contact Lucy Barbie at CNS (858) 455-5463.

Kulreet Chaudhary, M.D., is a neurologist at Scripps Memorial Hospital La Jolla. For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call 1-800-SCRIPPS. "To Your Health" is brought to you by the physicians and staff at Scripps Memorial Hospital La Jolla.

Delicias owner to begin construction on Villa del Palmar Loreto

Owen Perry, owner of Delicias Restaurant in Rancho Santa Fe, and a partner in the highly successful "Villa Group," has announced that his group has broken ground for Villa del Palmar Loreto, the new 5-star resort to be built as part of a spectacular 1,800-acre resort development in Loreto, Baja Sur, Mexico. Loreto is located on the east coast of the Baja California Peninsula, facing the Sea of Cortez in the largest protected sea park in the world.

Villa del Palmar Loreto will feature 161 one-, two-, and three-bedroom villas, all with views of the Sea of Cortez and the five islands. The first phase is slated to open in January 2010, with a complete investment of \$60 million. According to Owen Perry, the master development eventually is projected to have 2,200 rooms, divided into seven projects, with a variety of real estate products covering the spectrum of affordability and lifestyles. A high-end hotel, to be named shortly, is also on the books. An 18-hole golf course, designed by Rees Jones, will be part of the development, scheduled to start construction in 2010.

Loreto, a one-hour flight from San Diego and an hour and a half from Los Angeles, is one of five beach resort areas that was slated for development as a tourism destination by Mexico's national trust for the promotion of tourism (FONATUR) 20 years ago. Alaska Airlines has reaffirmed its commitment to Loreto by adding more flights to the destination starting in November.

Loreto has a rich history dating back to the first mission of the California's in 1697. But it is the beauty, weather and beaches that is making this location the next popular destination of the Baja peninsula. Guests and owners will have access to a wide selection of amenities, including a state of the art 40,000 sq ft spa and gym.

The Villa Group, founded in 1984, is one of Mexico's leading privately owned real estate development companies. Its portfolio features beachfront timeshare resorts, with over 60,000 members, located in Puerto Vallarta, Nuevo Vallarta, and Los Cabos, as well as fractional, full-ownership luxury real estate developments, and hotels. Another new resort is planned to open in Cancun in 2010.

County Pet of the Week

Jenna is a female 3-year-old Lab mix waiting for her forever home. She arrived at the shelter with her sister and at first they both huddled in the corner of their kennel scared and timid. Jenna's sister has already been adopted and after working with the staff and kind-hearted volunteers, Jenna has really warmed up to people. She will blossom into a loyal, gentle dog in a home willing to give her the extra love she deserves. Easy to walk on a leash, Jenna likes to go on adventures with her human pals and also enjoys the company of other dogs. If you have the room in your house and heart for this beautiful girl, come meet Jenna today — just ask for ID#A1230032 Tag#C377.



Jenna is at the Central County Shelter, 5480 Gaines Street, San Diego. We have wonderful cats, dogs, rabbits and more waiting for new homes, so please come visit the Shelter during our hours of 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday or visit www.sddac.com for more information.