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Family Spotlight

A LOS ALTOS TOWN CRIER PUBLICATION • WINTER 2022

MAGAZINE



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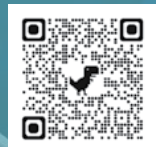


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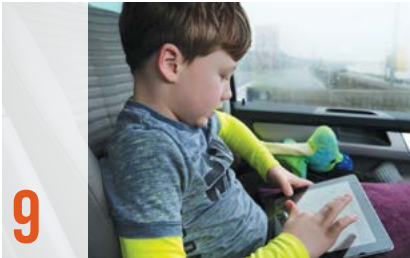
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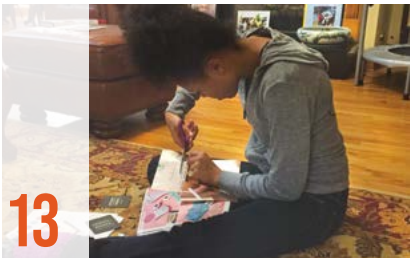
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Los Altos Town Crier

138 Main Street | Los Altos, CA | 94022
650.948.9000 | losaltosonline.com

EDITOR

Bruce Barton

MAGAZINE EDITOR

Pete Borello

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Michel Y. Echeverría

WRITERS

Dr. Danielle Kamis

Kelly Yang

Kanesha Baynard

COPY EDITORS

Mary Larsen

Colleen Schick

MULTIMEDIA ADVERTISING SALES

Janice Fabella

Kathy Lera

Alo Mano

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Melissa Rodriguez

PRODUCTION STAFF

Michel Y. Echeverría

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, CO-PUBLISHER

Dennis Young

PRESIDENT, CO-PUBLISHER

Howard Bischoff

VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES AND MARKETING

Kathy Lera

Circulation: 16,000. Mailed directly to households in Los Altos, Los Altos Hills and select areas of Mountain View.

Hundreds of subscribers receive the Town Crier in neighboring communities as well as out of state. The Town Crier can be purchased at newsstands in Los Altos, Mountain View and Palo Alto.

ON THE COVER:

PHOTO COURTESY OF SHANE YACOM

Zander Yocum throws a pass for Blach Intermediate School's seventh-grade flag football team, which won the league championship last fall.

LEVELING THE PLAYING FIELD



HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE PARENT OF A student-athlete

BY DR. DANIELLE KAMIS
SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

Parents play a major role in empowering their children to achieve athletic success.

Interestingly, research published in the *Journal of Sport Sciences* shows that family members impact an athlete's achievement as much as their coaches. This influence obliges parents to be mindful of the extent to which their behavior affects the student-athlete.

Additionally, it is important that parents practice responsible behavior, as their actions are frequently mirrored by their children. When student-athletes observe their parents involved in their sport in a positive way, their chances of having an enjoyable sports experience dramatically increase, as do their levels of athletic performance, according to a study published in *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*.

Responsible parental behavior

A child's athletic success is strongly influenced by parents expressing encouragement. Not only is athletic competence increased by parental praise, but the child's enjoyment and motivation to stay with the sport is

enhanced. In sports, encouragement is a powerful gift parents can give their child.

While encouragement enhances athletic success, parents also can assist their children in coping with inevitable athletic adversity. Starting with themselves, parents should be mindful of how they react to frustration stemming from an athletic loss. Expressions of disappointment are reasonable, but succumbing to emotions that produce excessive verbal outbursts denouncing the referee or criticizing the coach is not productive. Such an excessive reaction signals to the child that this behavior is acceptable. Parents are role models and must keep in mind that responsible and irresponsible behavior affect their children's relationship to the sport.

In fact, a conscientious parent will attempt to promote a positive interaction with coaches. If a parent's interaction with coaches is respectful, so likely will be the actions of the child.

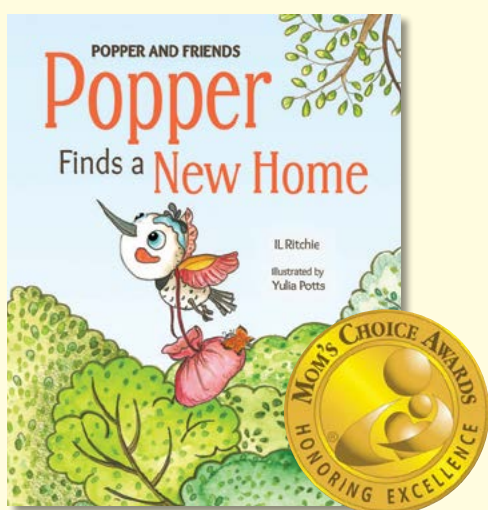
Another valuable lesson is communicating with the child not to lose heart in the face of a painful loss. When

confronted with a heartbreaking defeat, the best reaction a parent can have is to acknowledge and praise the child's effort following the loss. A parent supports his or her child with advice not to lose heart in the face of a painful loss. The effort exerted before and during the competition and the lessons learned in victory and defeat can be skillfully applied in the future and define the true character of an athlete.

In addition to offering encouragement and constructive behavior, it is helpful for parents to create an opportunity for their children to participate in a healthy athletic group environment. This provides the basis for children to experience the benefits of working together to achieve a common goal. The child's joy is intensified as the group develops and demonstrates heightened athletic proficiency.

Ensuring that children have the opportunity to work closely with others to achieve a mutual goal is a special gift a parent can share.

A child's athletic competition has a payoff for parents, too. Time spent ➤



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watching their child compete is thrilling. Cheering loudly is exhilarating. The social aspect of interacting with other parents is a positive.

But maybe the biggest benefit a parent can have with their child is the chance to interact on a subject of intense mutual interest. Frequently, interactions between parents and children center on parental authority. But with athletic activity, the playing field is nearly leveled. When the conversation turns to athletic competition, the child may be even more knowledgeable.

Behavior parents should avoid

It is important not to be an unrealistic, lofty appraiser of your children's athletic ability and to be aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Be tactful; refrain from giving inappropriate critical observations. Such callousness may damage relationships and can diminish a child's enthusiasm for the sport and result in excessive levels of anxiety in the child. In some cases, student-athletes may actually quit the sport completely.

In fact, lowering parental pressure may result in increased enjoyment from the sport, reports the Journal of Sports Sciences.

Additionally, coaches report that parents who crudely interject themselves in the athletic lives of their children create tension for coaches and poor sportsmanship skills in the child, according to a study published in The Journal of Psychology.



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R. ALAN HWANG | SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER.
Mountain View High School girls basketball player Toki Morimoto drives to the hoop in a game against Gunn High.

Being a role model

In athletics, it is crucial that parents are mindful of the formidable role they assume. Young athletes look to their parents as role models and mirror their parents' behavior, especially in a sports environment.

Responsible parents offer heartfelt encouragement, as it pays large dividends in performance and other aspects of their children's well-being.

A role-model parent refrains from excessive emotional outbursts when disappointment strikes, as this destructive behavior likely may be copied and result in poor outcome and performance for the student-athlete.

Accountable parents allows coaches to do their jobs without interfering, demonstrating to their children a respect for knowledgeable authority.

Reliable parents know they played a part in providing their children the opportunity to experience self-growth through group participation and the joy of being part of a high-achieving team.

Parents also benefit from positive behavior and healthy support of their children. Through these recommendations, parents can provide their children an opportunity to experience joy and accomplishment through sports. 🌸

Danielle Kamis, M.D., is a lifestyle psychiatrist who treats patients in her private practice in Los Altos. She specializes in the treatment of sleep problems, women's wellness and athletes, as well as practices cognitive behavioral therapy.

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SCREEN TIME

HEALTHY SCREEN ROUTINES

LOCAL PEDIATRICIAN OFFERS ADVICE ON LIMITING KIDS' COMPUTER TIME

BY KELLY YANG
TOWN CRIER EDITORIAL INTERN

We've all seen them – those iPad kids hunched over their grimy screens in awkward positions, ignoring their parents and surroundings while mesmerized by a mindless YouTube video.

Such sightings became more commonplace amid the pandemic, as most adolescents' screen time ramped up due to an increase in online learning. Now more than

ever, parents are wrestling with the question: How much screen time is too much?

According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, there are certain limits that should be set within each age group. Infants ages 18-24 months should be limited to educational programs overseen by a caregiver. Toddlers 2-5 years old can be allowed one hour on weekdays and three on weekend days. Children 6 and older should be taught healthy habits with governed screen-time activity. ➤



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Dr. Manisha Panchal, a pediatrician at Palo Alto Medical Foundation, said “there needs to be more of a shift of looking at the quality versus the quantity” of time children spend staring at screens.

“There is a lot of high-quality content which is now delivered online, and if done correctly, kids can increase their learning, curiosity and imagination through the use of new media,” she said.

Some content also may be an aid in helping kids blow off steam or bond with their friends and family.

However, as school learning moved online during the first year of the pandemic – all while people were isolated from friends and some family members – it may have seemed virtually impossible to limit kids’ screen time.

“During the pandemic, technology allowed society to stick together in a way that would not have been possible had it occurred mere decades ago. Activities like



PHOTO COURTESY OF PIXABAY
Due to remote learning amid the pandemic, kids have spent more time on screens than in the past.

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video calls, video games and creative forums allowed people to grow closer despite being physically separated,” Panchal said. “Human nature is that we’re social people, and we need connection.”

But the amount of time spent on screens does still matter, she added.

The American Academy of Pediatrics states that on average, children are spending seven hours on screens. As large media companies begin to see children as another consumer audience, certain features are developed to target the lack of self-restraint often seen in young adolescents. For instance: the infinite scroll on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok.

“When kids are online looking at social media or other things, they are just sucked into it,” Panchal said. “They are just fed information nonstop with no end to it, so unless the kids have self-regulation, they can just be on it for hours,”

In addition to the addictive presentation of social media, there are

also mental and emotional concerns that arise from content put out by social media influencers.

“We are seeing higher rates of anxiety and depression because kids are just constantly comparing themselves to other people,” Panchal said. “They think that these influencers are the ideal, and this negative content forces them to compare themselves, which is consistent to what I see in my practice – especially in teenage girls.”

Developing digital responsibility

Aside from emotional manifestations, such as reduced self-confidence or the inability to discern what’s right or wrong, Panchal said increased screen time can lead to physical manifestations that include visual disturbances, headaches and interruptions in circadian rhythm and sleep patterns. That’s why it’s still important to spend time outdoors

and to remain physically active. Like everything else in life, it’s all about balance and moderation.

Although there may be no easy solutions, Panchal offered several suggestions to achieve a healthier digital balance. For eye strains, there is the rule of 20s, or the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away for 20 seconds. Ensuring that children are receiving enough natural sunlight is also important. Kids are encouraged to spend two hours off-screen before sleeping, but for high ➤



PHOTO COURTESY OF PIXABAY
A study shows kids are spending an average of seven hours a day staring at screens.

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schoolers with lots of school work, even 30 minutes can make a big difference.

Rather than place specific restrictions on actual use – which is often difficult to enforce during the school week – Panchal suggested establishing designated device-free times and spaces. These rules could include no screens in the bedrooms, no screens at dinner and only allowing open-password screens. She also urged parents to have transparent conversations with their kids about the content of media being consumed.

While there is no magic age children should receive their first device, Panchal suggested 12. Of course, parents should ultimately make their own decisions depending on their child's level of responsibility and maturity. For younger children like elementary schoolers, it is recommended that content be regulated through parental controls or screen-time limits.

Only through transparent conversations and meaningful balance can children learn to take control and navigate their own digital lives, the doctor noted.

"There are pros and cons to everything we do, including screen time," Panchal said. "As long as parents are well informed, then I think we can raise kids to be digitally savvy. It's important for them to understand how to use it well so that they can be productive in this world. Screen time is not going away; it's going to be more and more prevalent in their daily lives, so how to use it well and be digitally responsible is what we should be teaching our kids." 🌟

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5 ways to support college-aged children with PIVOT Blueprint

BY KANESHA BAYNARD
SPECIAL TO THE TOWN CRIER

Starting the new year with goals and resolutions has been a tradition many of us have participated in over the years. In lots of families, this tradition trickles down to college-aged children preparing for college, attending college or about to graduate from college.

Often these goals and resolutions generate excitement and anticipation about growing, experiencing new things, forging new friendships and earning a degree.

But what about this year?

The start of 2022 had a different feeling.

There was a bit of relief that restrictions enacted amid the pandemic were lifting. Socializing was becoming a bit easier. Making plans that could be completed without disruption was within our grasp. Things were feeling more relaxed.

But then a new variant arrived and many families, especially those with college-aged children, were forced to pivot yet again. ➤



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PHOTO COURTESY OF KANESHA BAYNARD
Bella Baynard works on her quarterly vision board at home in Los Altos.

This pivot wasn't just about social distancing, mask wearing or keeping gatherings small. The 2022 pivot provided a whiplash of notifications that the winter/spring semester would return to remote learning for many college students. This set off an intense energy filled with burnout, exhaustion and mental weariness.

In supporting my parent and caregiving clients with developing their productivity strategies and staying individually connected with their teens and college-aged children, we've spent a lot of time developing their PIVOT Blueprint.

The PIVOT Blueprint is a mindset and mapping system that helps families respond to external factors that change or derail their master plans. It incorporates the eight dimensions of wellness into goal setting, resource mining and open communication. It provides a soft place to land when family members are overwhelmed and are struggling to find solutions during difficult times and situations.

The five key components of the PIVOT Blueprint follow.

P: PRIORITIES

When there are changes and detours in plans, it's important to redefine priorities. An effective visual tool to use is a decision-making matrix. You can make this electronically or get creative with (large) paper and a variety of creativity tools (for example, markers, washi tape, sticky notes, stickers, etc.). On the paper, create four squares (quadrants) and label them:

- Important and urgent
- Important and not urgent
- Not important but urgent
- Not important and not urgent

As you start to look at the ways you will respond to short- and long-term changes, you can reassess your priorities based on which quadrant your thoughts and ideas are listed in. This decision-making matrix can be updated as needed.

I: IDENTITY SHIFT

When we are forced to make sudden changes or shifts, it can disrupt certain aspects of our identity. This can show up in the form of self-doubt or imposter syndrome. When your identity feels uncertain and not how you envisioned yourself at a certain time in your life, it's important to create and solidify daily routines that keep you focused on your core values and overall wellness.

V: VISION BOARDS

Vision boards can be created anytime throughout the calendar year, and they are an excellent way to tap into everyone's creativity. A vision board is a visual tool to help you stay focused on the goals you've set individually and as a family. This year, I encouraged my clients to focus on creating quarterly vision boards. This was a gentle way to set goals

with some wiggle room for any abrupt changes or detours that may arise due to the current state of things.

O: OPEN COMMUNICATION

The ways families communicate become increasingly important as we are spending more time together and more time at home. Having clear and open communication is critical, because overwhelm and burnout are on the rise. During my workshop sessions, participants practice SAFE Chat to help cultivate an environment of open communication.

- **S:** Say exactly what you're feeling – not what you're thinking.
- **A:** Answer any questions that come up after you've said what you're feeling.
- **F:** Forget your ego and let go of being right. Remember your connection to your family members/loved ones.
- **E:** Exhale. Start fresh. Review your priorities list and vision board.

T: TIMEOUTS

Sometimes we become overwhelmed before we can adjust, and this is when we need a timeout. I encourage my clients to create a "timeout corner" that's relaxed and cozy. Having this dedicated space is a great self-care and communication tool that invites family members to push the pause button, unplug, rest and make mental space for your next pivot. 🌸

Kanesha Baynard is a Los Altos resident, author, productivity strategist and creator of the Creativity Summit, which provides tools and materials for families to learn, play, create and connect. For more information, visit boldlivingtoday.com.

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