

RAW News

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Crashed, But Not Burned	1
Help us write April's Newsletter	1
Healthy Parents, Healthy Kids	2
Healthy Recipe to Make with Kids	3
Crashed, But Not Burned cont.	3
Upcoming Events	4
Contact Us	4



Crashed, But Not Burned

How My Family Turned Tragedy Into Triumph By: Gena Coston (Mom of 3)

Babies are so cute, toddlers become demanding, and school age is fun but louder and more demanding. I now have a 12, 4 and 3 year old, and about three years ago I didn't make time for them. I wanted them but I also wanted more time to myself to do things I wanted to do. I went to school full time and worked, so you can imagine that finding time to be with them was difficult. Don't get me wrong, I did take care of my responsibilities like bathing them and feeding them, and my husband helped dress them for day-care and school, but we didn't play with them as much we should. The bottom line is, I guess I wanted a family but wasn't putting in the work to keep a loving family. I was too busy on the fast track.

And then three years ago, I got sidelined - stopped dead in my tracks. My husband got hit by a drunk driver and was hospitalized for 8 weeks. And where was I? 7 months pregnant, I was also in the hospital on bed rest because of pre term labor. To top things off, we were at different hospitals! My then 8 year and 1 year old were with relatives for six weeks without us. My family was separated and as I lay for weeks in a hospital bed, all I could think about was how much time I didn't spend with them. When we were blessed by GOD and brought back together as a tighter unit, (continued on page 3)

Will You Help Us Write Our April Newsletter?

April is National Autism Awareness Month, and to acknowledge that, our April Issue will be all about Autism! According to Autism Speaks Data, autism affects 1 in 110 children, and 1 in 70 boys! With those statistics, many of us know a family facing this issue. For our April issue, we're asking you to share your experiences and insights. You can do that by answering the questions below (1, a couple, or all), writing about your experience in your own words, sharing poetry, inspirational stories, artwork from persons with autism, or whatever you want. Email your input to RAWNews@contactraw.com, and let us know how you want to be cited or if you wish to remain anonymous. We look forward to hearing from you!

- 1) When it comes to autism, I wish people knew....
- 2) The most helpful thing for families with autism is...
- 3) It really doesn't help a family with autism when people...
- 4) The hardest part about having autism/having a child/friend/student/family member etc. with autism is...
- 5) The best part about having autism/ having a child/friend/student/family member etc. with autism is...
- 6) The biggest misconception people have about autism is...
- 7) Sometimes, families with autism define successes differently than other families. Tell us about some of your successes.

Healthy Parents, Healthy Kids

Amy Woods, RD

Jerry Seinfeld's wife teaches us how to disguise vegetables so kids will eat them; Fruit Loops and Lucky Charms now contain "whole grains"; McDonald's is now substituting apple slices for French fries. But are our kids any healthier? The first step in answering that question for your own family is evaluating your own nutrition. Teaching children good nutrition requires us, parents, to demonstrate healthy eating habits at home.

Many of us expect our kids to eat well while we eat junk or are constantly "dieting". Parents who fuss about what they eat will pass their fussiness along to their children. We expect our kids to sit properly at the dinner table and to eat slowly while we eat standing up, while multi-tasking, in a hurry. Here are some suggestions to get your kid(s) and yourself to eat....the right foods:

- As parents, we are responsible for what, when and where to eat. Our kids are responsible for how much and if any at all. Nagging, threatening or bribing a child to eat contributes to finicky eating. Forcing them to "clean their plate" or rewarding them with dessert may lead to weight issues.
- Sit down and eat together as a family. Serve everyone the same food (except for allowing kids to choose side dishes or drinks—see below). There is no reason a child needs "special" food like chicken strips, grilled cheese or hamburgers at every meal.
- Schedule meal and snack times. "Grazing" throughout the day may lead to meal refusal when the family sits down to eat together.
- Give your kids limited choices of healthy foods. For example, always include a vegetable at lunch and dinner but let them choose which one to eat.
- Make healthy food appealing by serving it with a dip, or serving it up on a decorated plastic zip bag. (I found Disney Princess baggies and you'll never believe what my daughter will eat, as long as they are in a Princess bag).

Make mealtimes pleasant and show your child how to behave at mealtime. Remember, model the behavior you want your child to adopt. It may take a while, but eventually your child will eat and enjoy a healthy, variety of food.

Based on Ellyn Satter's *Nutrition and Feeding for Infants and Children, 2002.*

-Amy Woods is a Registered Dietician and Positive Discipline Parent Educator. She lives in the San Diego area with her husband and two girls



March is National Nutrition Month

In honor of National Nutrition Month, here is a nutritious snack you can make with your children!
Disappearing Zucchini Muffins!

What you need:

- 1½ c. shredded zucchini (about 2 small)
- 2 c. whole-grain pancake or biscuit mix
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon allspice
- 2 eggs
- ¾ c. brown sugar
- ¼ c. unsweetened applesauce
- 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- powdered sugar (enough to dust the muffins)

Equipment and supplies:

- oven
- bowls — one large, one medium
- grater — a plastic grater is safest for kids
- measuring cups and spoons
- muffin tin and paper liners

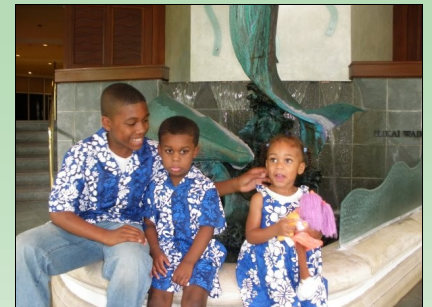
Will yield about 12 muffins - 30 minute prep
 (This recipe and other healthy recipes found on www.kidshealth.org)

What to do:

- Wash zucchini and remove ends.
- Shred zucchini using largest holes on grater.
- Wrap grated zucchini in a couple of paper towels and squeeze to remove water.
- Measure 1½ cups of squeezed-dry zucchini.
- Preheat oven to 375° Fahrenheit.
- Line a 12-cup muffin tin with paper liners.
- In a large bowl, mix whole-grain pancake mix (or biscuit mix) with spices.
- In a separate bowl, whisk together eggs, brown sugar, applesauce, and lemon juice.
- Fold the egg-sugar mixture and shredded zucchini into the pancake-spice mixture; do not overmix.
- Fill each muffin cup 2/3 full with batter.
- Bake 10-15 minutes or until golden.
- Remove muffins from tin and cool on a wire rack.

Crashed But Not Burned - continued from page 1

I made a promise that things would be different. I didn't go too many places without my family. Even if I wanted to I couldn't. I had a husband at home in a hospital bed, a premie baby, a one year old, and an 8 year old. I think that if I could, I would have gone out for me time a little more but that didn't happen. I actually started enjoying us being together 24 hours a day. I realized it wasn't so bad spending time with the ones I love and knowing that they needed me.



(Gena's 3 kids on vacation)

A year later, we'd moved to another state, and I got another rude awakening, or should I say a second chance to reflect. I was admitted to the hospital, wondering if I was going to see my children and husband ever again. I was diagnosed with a brain tumor and they needed to operate at that moment, because the tumor was bleeding in my brain. I started reflecting about the time that I had spent with my children in the last year. This time was different though, because I thought about all the times the two young ones would call me to come up the stairs 5 times after putting them to bed, and I went; I thought about how each one of them would take turns coming to our bed in the middle of the night; I thought about the times that we walked together at the park; this time when I was in the hospital, I could really smile because I really could say that we truly were a family that laughed, played, and had great times. In the past year, I had gained true wealth, my family. And now, every minute is a precious moment for us.

Upcoming Events

Family Education Centers are up and running!! The Solana Beach location at Santa Fe Montessori School will be meeting the first Saturday of the month, March 6, 2010 from 10am-12pm. The San Diego location will be meeting on the third Tuesday of the month, March 16, 2010 from 6pm-8pm at Innovations Academy. For more information or to register, go to www.FamilyEducationCenters.com or call Aisha at 619.737.7721.

Parenting With Positive Discipline: Join Certified Positive Discipline Associate Lois Ingber, LCSW for one or both of these Positive Discipline Workshops! WED, March 3rd, 6 - 8 p.m.: “Why Does My Child Do That: The Hidden Messages in Misbehavior” and WED, March 10th, 6 -8 p.m. “Raising a Cooperative Child: Building Your Child’s Skills.” For more information or to register online visit www.AdlerianConsulting.com or call Lois at 760.729.0828

Southern California Positive Discipline Mentor Group: Meets the second Saturday of each month from 10am-12pm. (This month March 13 - location TBA). For more information, email aisha@contactraw.com, or loisingber@aol.com.

National Foundation For Autism Research Walk: March 27, 2010, at 8am in Balboa Park (corner of 6th and Laurel). Visit our booth and pick up your autographed copy of *My Brother—Autism - And Me*, by Aisha Pope, LCSW. Or, order a copy today at www.MyBrother-Autism-AndMe.com! (More on this in our April Autism Awareness issue!) To register for the walk or donate to NFAR, go to <http://www.kintera.org/faf/home/default.asp?ievent=326995>.



www.RootsAndWingsConsulting.com
www.FamilyEducationCenters.com

Aisha@contactRAW.com
Talin@contactRAW.com
RAWNews@contactRAW.com

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Phone: 619.737.7721
Fax: 619.741.3150

