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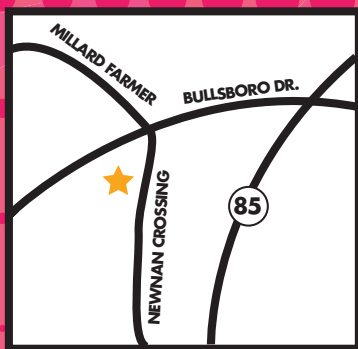
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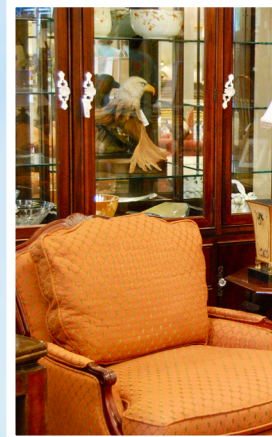
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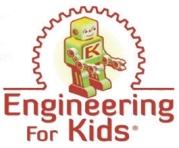
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welcome

BACK TO SCHOOL

By Debbie Smelley

After 10 months of academic pursuits, homework, projects, tests, and sitting up straight at their desks for hours each day, nothing thrills students more than summer break. They earned the right to swap mathematical equations, dangling participles, important dates in history, multiplication tables, and scientific formulas for about 10 weeks of care-free fluid days filled with sun, sand, water parks, games, picnics, video games, travel, and adventure, all without the discordant sounds of alarm clocks or bells. Their minds and bodies need time to relax and refresh and ponder the universe while sleeping until noon. But alas, parents know that all good things must come to an end as they pick the umpteenth wet towel off the floor or load the dishwasher for

the third time that day. Although parents may be gleefully counting down the days to that date in August circled in black on the calendar, mention the words “back to school” and their kids will look at them with expressions of horror and possibly hold up a strand of garlic.

Whether your kids admit it or not, their weeks of freedom, which tended to blur the lines between day and night, left them feeling a bit bored. They’re beginning to miss the comfort of a daily routine that includes seeing hundreds of their closest friends. Going back to school is a state of mind as much as it is a process, and this process begins two weeks before school starts and continues on for the next four weeks. Let’s call it the settling-in period. Just as

with many other events in their children's lives, parents can make this time period less traumatic by following a few simple steps.

Two weeks before That First Day After weeks of turning off alarm clocks coupled with late, late nights watching movies, playing video games or chatting with friends online, kids need to start easing back into an "academic" routine. To lessen the shock to their systems, try setting slightly earlier bedtimes each night, and on the other end, don't let them sleep in quite as late. This applies to students of all ages. You want them alert and ready on Day 1. Once school begins, keep this in mind: According to the National Sleep Foundation, school-aged children 6-13 need between 9 and 11 hours of sleep each night. Teens aged 14-17 should get 8-10 hours, and 18- to 25-year-olds require 7 to 9 hours. One foundation study found that only 15 percent of teens said they regularly slept 8 ½ hours on a school night. Your children may fight back, begging to spend every last second of vacation as they please, so just explain to them that it takes 66 days to form new habits,



according to Phillipa Lally, a health and psychology researcher at the University of College London. Her findings, published in the European Journal of Social Psychology, debunk the idea that it takes only 21 days, an idea held almost as gospel since the 1950s. Use these last two weeks to shop for school clothes, online or in stores. What fit at the beginning of summer may not by summer's end. The longer you wait, the slimmer the pickings. You may also want to check your school's website and read the dress code policy before you buy anything. The dress codes are pretty explicit about what attire is acceptable and what's not. This is an area that can potentially be a headache for students and parents alike, but it's also one that can be easily avoided. For the fashion conscious, try to find clothing that's stylish and comfortable but also says "I'm dressed for success, not to impress." New shoes? Great idea. It's an even better idea to

break them in first. Blisters on toes and heels are a bummer, and they distract a student from learning.

When it comes to school supplies, it's best to stick with the basics. Most schools publish supply lists by grade level on their websites, and many send these lists to big box stores like Wal-Mart and Target and other retailers. At the high school level, check if individual teachers have links to their preferred supply lists. Generally speaking, however, you can't miss with a sturdy backpack that isn't ripped or "wholly." If you can re-use the one from last year, do it, and then load it with pencils, pens, erasers, folders, a 3-ring binder with some ruled paper, tissues, glue sticks, and maybe some alcohol wipes. High school students may need multiple notebooks and binders, depending on the classes they're taking. While you're shopping, think about picking up a few supplies for your child's teacher if you can. Teachers often have wish lists, and they will be forever grateful. No wish list? You can't go wrong with tissues, hand sanitizer, Clorox wipes, and dry erase markers.

This might also be a good time for a road trip. Walk, bike, drive or golf cart to the school if your family just moved to the area or it's your wee one's first day of kindergarten. Most

schools will be open and you can probably pop in for a quick look around to ease tensions and get a feel for the lay of the land, so to speak. Sometimes front office personnel are available to give you a mini tour. If you are new to a school district, this is a great time to round up all of your child's essential paperwork from his or her previous school and bring it to the new school. It's understandable if your elementary schoolers are a little nervous or apprehensive, but you can get them excited about going back with how enthusiastically you talk about it. Tell them about all the new friends they'll make or about the wonderful teachers they'll meet who decorated their classrooms with all sorts of cool learning stations just for them so they can learn about rocks, butterflies, dinosaurs, plants, bugs, and the solar system. If that doesn't work, maybe the idea of riding the big yellow school bus will seal the deal. That worked with my youngest child. Don't assume your middle school or high school student isn't feeling some of the same. Changing schools in the upper grades can be just as daunting. They just might not tell you how they're feeling.

Make sure they eat a nutritious breakfast, not cold, leftover pizza or a bag of potato chips with a cookie chaser. Yes, yes, of course you know that,

but breakfast may be the one meal that gets short shrift during the summer months. In short, your kids get out of the habit, especially at o-dark-thirty. Eating a bowl of cereal or some yogurt, toast, or oatmeal at 10 a.m. at a leisurely pace won't cut it on a school morning when everyone in the house is under the gun to get out of the blocks by as early as 6:30 or 7 a.m. Believe it or not, your kids may need to get used to eating that early again. Think of these two weeks as a series of dry runs so you and your family can turn what could potentially be chaos into a harmonious morning ritual, and you still get your morning cup of coffee.

While going back to school is a big event for your children, it's big for parents too. It's a team effort. One of the most important steps you can take is to join your school's PTSO. For years studies have shown that schools with good parental involvement

have better student achievement scores. Of course, not all parents can volunteer their time during the school day, but if you can, check out the possibilities: volunteer as a room mom (or dad), sign up to accompany teachers on field trips, work in the Media Center, join the landscape or grounds committee, or lend a hand with school plays and seasonal events like Field Days or Donuts with Dad. Just as important is attending the Open House or Meet the Teacher Night, which are either held a couple of days before school begins or within the first two weeks of school. Teachers would love to meet you and put a face with a name. You also get to check out where your babies will spend a significant part of his or her day. You can even sit where your kids will sit – although those elementary school desks might present a challenge best not taken. In middle school, you'll learn about the team

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teaching approach and also find out how changing classes works. In high school, you often get to follow your child's schedule as you navigate the halls going from room to room. Most teachers take 10-15 minutes to introduce themselves and to talk a little about their classes and their expectations. The sound of the bell sends you off to your next class.

Elementary and middle school parents, along with 9th grade parents and a fair amount of 10th grade parents, flock to these events. That's the great news. The not-so-great news is that it drops off dramatically after that. Teachers and education professionals know that students reap countless benefits when their parents get involved in the day-to-day happenings. One more thing. Don't forget to bring your checkbook and a pen. Many schools bundle PTO dues and fees for lockers, agendas, and the clinic into a lump-sum payment. If you have more than one child attending the school, you'll get discounts!

The first four weeks During that first week, prepare for a paper explosion. Make yourself a nice hot cup of tea or coffee after dinner and settle in at the kitchen table for a form-filling marathon. Your student will bring home a plethora of papers from school

administrators, teachers, PTO, counselors, club sponsors, coaches, the media specialist, and the school nurse requesting all sorts of information. It's extremely important that you can be reached during the day and into the early evening. Make sure your home phone and/or cell numbers are up to date along with your home and work email addresses. If anything changes, please remember to notify the school. If your student has a medical condition or needs to take certain medicines during the day, you must fill out a special medical form and bring the medicines in person to the school nurse. When you finish, tuck these papers neatly into a folder and place it in your student's book bag. You might also want to check it again the next day to make sure they aren't still there.

Remember that it takes 66 days to form new habits? If you and your student start right away, everyone and everything will be running like a well-oiled machine by mid-October, which is the perfect time to assess how your student is really doing.

* Your well-oiled machine is going to need fuel, so make planning breakfasts, lunches, and snacks a priority. Do as much as you can the night before and involve your child in the prep work. If your child is going to buy school lunches, please set up

a financial account and deposit enough money for a week or a month or whatever your family budget allows. This can be done online. Remember all those papers your child brought home? One of them was instructions on how to do this.

* Have “the talk” as often as needed: school is important. Paying attention, behaving in class, taking notes (as age appropriate), and studying a little bit every day are skills that must be developed.

* There’s been quite a bit of debate over the necessity of homework over the last several years, but it is worth doing. Teachers have a finite amount of time each day with their students and they can’t always accomplish everything in class. Sometimes large class sizes prevent them from working with each student as much as they would like.

The purpose of homework is to reinforce the material and the skills the students are learning in class. If the teacher-student-parent team works together, the student will thrive. High school parents, if your student consistently tells you he or she doesn’t have any homework, double check with their teachers. While it is possible, it’s not likely.

* Check their grades online. All students get a log-in code, so they can see their grades any time they – or you – wish. You can

request a parent log-in code if you wish. Best advice: view your student’s grades often. If you see zeroes accumulating or something doesn’t look right, ask your student first. If the answer isn’t satisfactory, contact the teacher next. Teachers, especially at the high school level, key in hundreds of grades, and it’s easy to accidentally enter a 59 instead of a 95. Address these discrepancies when they happen, not weeks or months down the road. Memories fade and there’s a good chance the grade will stay as is.

* Check their book bags. Elementary and middle school teachers often send work home for parents to view and sign and return. Also, refrigerator art looks better before it’s spent two or three days crumpled up in the bottom of the bag. While you’re digging around in there, it’s a good time to fish out half-eaten apples, smashed bananas, or remnants of sandwiches.

* No matter how old your student is, have them read to you out loud. Too many high school students still have difficulty reading, so they don’t want to do it in front of their peers. If they can’t read what’s on the page, they can’t fully understand the material either. Don’t wait for the teacher to contact you. Call or send an email expressing your concerns and request a conference. It is best to catch

any issues earlier than later. Parents should also read any books their kids are so they can discuss them. It keeps you in the loop and you can determine if they are understanding it or not.

* Establish a “homework haven” somewhere in the home. The student’s bedroom may not be the ideal place. Too many distractions there. Lying on the bed signals the body that it’s time to sleep, not read five chapters of *The Scarlet Letter*, and teens already have enough trouble with their sleep cycles. Join your child at the table and do some work – balance the checkbook, plan meals for the week, jot down a grocery list, copy recipes, or write a letter the old-fashioned way. Just stay off the computer and the cell phone. Distractions, remember? Enjoy this “quiet time” together.

* Last, but not least, we live in a technological world. Most

students have smartphones or other electronic devices. Teach them what is appropriate use of these devices and what is not. Remind them that bullying --- cyber, physical or otherwise – is still bullying, and they can get in a lot of trouble. Check their apps too. Make sure you know what they’re using and how they’re using it. Your child’s friend pool grows bigger and deeper every year.

That wasn’t so hard, right? At the four-week mark, your student will be settled in and forming good habits. And you? You just earned a gold star. Put it on the refrigerator.



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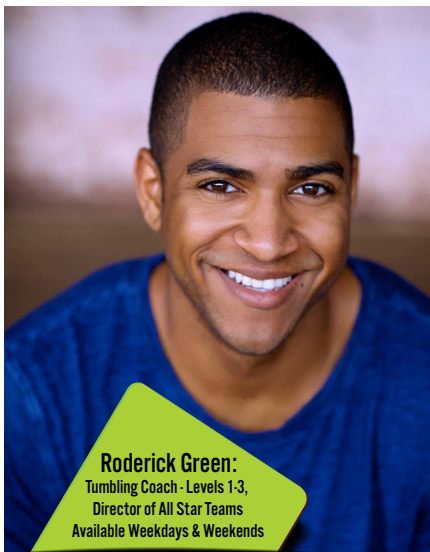
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July 7 - Aug 6

Step into the enchanted world of Broadway's modern classic, Disney's Beauty and the Beast, based on the Academy Award-winning animated feature film! The stage version includes all your favorite songs, along with some new ones. This "tale as old as time" will delight the whole family!

1175 Senoia Rd, Tyrone, GA 30290

(404) 895-1473

www.thelegacytheatre.org

Monday Movies in the Park at The Avenue in PTC

July 10 8:50 PM

Movie: Moana

Join The Avenue Peachtree City for fun and movies under the stars! Fun begins 2 hours prior to showtime, movies begin at sundown.

Bounce House, Face Painting, Popcorn & Giveaways

www.avenuepeachtrecity.com

Peachtree City Library Performers

July 11th

Ken Scott (Magician) 10am & 11:15am

July 15th

The Big Bad Bullysauros (A Musical) by A Company of Friends Theatre 10:30am

July 18th

Cochran Mill Nature Center (Reptiles) 10:30am

July 25th

Scott Douglas "Music Tells a Story" (Musician) 10:30 am

All programs are FREE but do require ONE TICKET PER

PERSON. Tickets are available online beginning at 9 am on the Friday prior to the Tuesday performance (Saturday tickets available on the prior Saturday). There are a limited number of tickets available for each performance. In order to accommodate as many children as possible, we limit adult tickets to one per

July Events

family and no strollers or baby carriers will be allowed in the programs. We try to schedule a variety of programs that appeal to various ages; parents are the best judges of what would be appropriate and appealing to their children.

See Information for registration website and more details.

201 Willowbend Road
Peachtree City, GA 30269
Ph: 770.631.2520

www.peachtree-city.org

Fayette County Public Library

Comedic Juggler Todd Keys
July 13 7:00 PM

Todd Key is a one man club throwing, ball spinning, ladder balancing, torch manipulating, comedy

EXTRAVAGANZAPALOOZA!
Fayette County Public Library
1821 Heritage Park Way
770.305.5426

www.fayettecountyga.gov/public_library

Brian McKnight

July 15 8 PM

Frederick Brown Jr. Amphitheater (The Fred) has established itself as one of the leading outdoor entertainment venues in the metro Atlanta area and has hosted hometown favorites, national and touring acts for more than thirty years.

THE FRED Amphitheater
201 McIntosh Trail
Peachtree City

www.amphitheater.org

Game Day at the Park

Chattahoochee Bend State Park
July 15 10 AM - 12 PM

Games for Camping 10 am - 12 pm. Come and play some cool games with the staff at Chatt Bend. We will have a list of materials for you to make some games yourself! Meet at the field near Campground 1.

Flashlight Tag 8:30 pm. Bring your flashlight and meet us on the open field near Campground 1. Ages 8 and up. Cost: \$2 per person

Chattahoochee Bend State Park
425 Bobwhite Way
Newnan, Georgia 30263

www.georgiastateparks.org or call 770-254-7271

Fayette Market Day

July 15 at 10 AM to 2 PM

Fayette MarketPlace is held once a month in Downtown Fayetteville on the Courthouse Lawn from June - September. Fayetteville Main Street welcomes everyone to browse through a variety of vendors showcasing their homemade and homegrown products.

www.fayetteville-ga.gov

Animal Adventures:

Performing Pony Painting Party

July 19 10:30am - 11:30am

Animal Adventures' adorable 32 inch mini pony offers a unique opportunity for program attendees of all ages to get creative and have fun! The party begins with an educational introduction to Clover, our sweet and safe mini pony! Participants can interact with Clover, paint authentic horseshoes and those under 50 pounds are invited to ride Clover!

Registration is required. For registration, call the Senoia Branch at (770) 599-3537.

Library Senoia Branch
148 Pylant Street in Senoia
www.cowt.ent.sirsi.net

Little River Band

July 22 Gates 8 PM

Late 70's/early 80's soft-rock group from Australia known for their smooth vocal harmonies and catchy tunes. Hits include: "Lonesome Loser", "Reminiscing", and "Cool Change".

301 Lafayette Ave., Fayetteville, GA
770-719-4173

www.southerngroundamp.com

Water Gun Fun

Chattahoochee Bend State Park

July 22 1 PM

Shoot at targets and spray each other with water. Bring a friend and join a team!

Chattahoochee Bend State Park

425 Bobwhite Way
Newnan, Georgia 30263

www.georgiastateparks.org or call 770-254-7271

Monday Movies in the Park at The Avenue in PTC

July 24 8:41 PM

Movie: Storks

Join The Avenue Peachtree City for fun and movies under the stars! Fun begins 2 hours prior to showtime, movies begin at sundown.

Bounce House, Face Painting, Popcorn & Giveaways

www.avenuepeachtreecity.com

Don McLean

July 29 8 PM

American singer-songwriter best known for the 1971 album American Pie. Hits include "American Pie", "Vincent (Starry Starry Night)", and "Cryin".

301 Lafayette Ave., Fayetteville, GA
770-719-4173

www.southerngroundamp.com

Screen on the Square in Downtown Newnan

Aug 04 8 PM - 10 PM

Movie: SING

www.mainstreetnewnan.com

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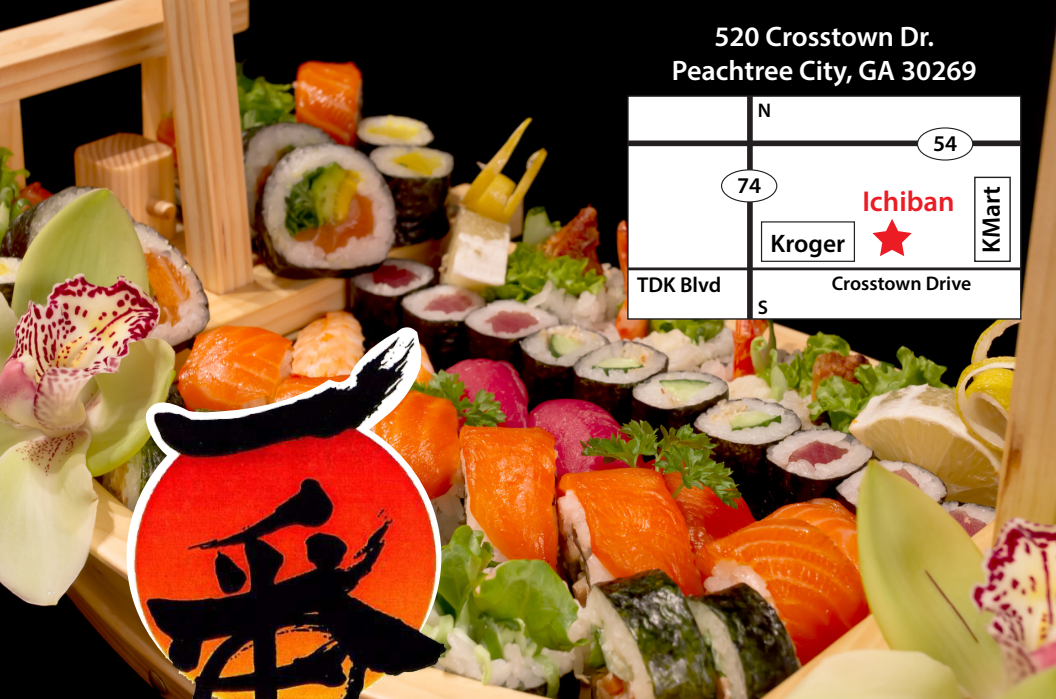
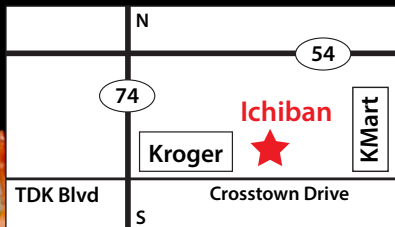
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