

Awesome Anthem Of Moms Everywhere

Apparently while people are on Christmas break – off work or just home with their kids – they like to send email forwards. I've gotten a burst of them lately, and 2 caught my eye so I will share them. The first is another personality quiz, but it had some different questions than ones in the past, so I'm posting it. Second is a really cute youtube video of a lady doing a marvellous job singing a song with which every parent will identify. She is very talented, and it's a good performance. Not only do the lyrics ring true, but the woman has a nice voice, and she just performs the song very well. It's amazing to me that she was able to memorize all those words – they come awfully fast!

Here's a copy of the personality quiz email with the answers I wrote:

A little fun thing to do.

44 ODD Things about you! If you opened this, FILL IT OUT! Learn 44 things About your friends, and let them learn 44 things about you! Send back to Me and to several more friends !!

1. Do you like blue cheese? yes
2. Have you ever smoked? yes
3. Do you own a gun? NO!
4. What flavor of Kool Aid was your favorite? mountain berry
5. Do you get nervous before doctor appointments? yes
6. What do you think of hot dogs ? like em – especially Vienna Beef or Nathans
7. Favorite Christmas movie? Elf
8. Favorite thing to drink in the morning:water
9. Can you do push ups? barely
10. Favorite piece of jewelry? my wedding and engagement rings

12. Do you have A.D.D.? I just might
13. What is one trait you hate about yourself? that I can be high strung
14. Middle name ? Marie
15. Name 3 thoughts at this exact moment. My Grandma's Christmas village is cooler than the one they're showing on the news – I can't wait until Christmas – I can't wait until Chris gets off work
17. Current worry? money
18. Current hate right now? arrogant, self-absorbed people
19. Favorite place to be? home
20. How did you bring in the New Year? with friends
22. Name three people who might complete this. Jamy, Megan, Mary Beth
23. Do you own slippers? no – I wear imitation Crocs around the house
24. What shirt are you wearing? a red sweatshirt with snowflakes on it
25. Do you like sleeping on satin sheets? yes – but only in the summer
26. Can you whistle? yes
27. Favorite color? green
28. Would you be a pirate? I've got a parrot... but I don't really know what this question means. I would not hijack ships and steal from people, so I guess not
29. What songs do you sing in the AM. Country
30. Favorite girl's name? Taylor
31. Favorite boy's name? Christopher
32. What's in your pocket right now? a piece of Barbie fake dog poop – don't ask
33. Last thing that made you laugh? My girls seeing their baby brother jumping in his bouncy
34. What vehicle do you drive? minivan
35. Worst injury you have ever had? emergency cesarean with a blood transfusion
36. Favorite Season? Spring
37. How many TV's do you have in your house? 6

38. Who is your loudest friend? Lisa H. I guess
39. Do you have any pets? 2 dogs, a parrot, and one hibernating ladybug
40. Does someone have a crush on you? does marriage count as a crush?
41. What is your favorite book? Monkeys on the Interstate by Jack Hanna
42. Do you collect anything? board games, Legos, Cubs stuff, local historical memorabilia and books
43. Favorite sports team? Chicago Cubs / Bears
44. What song do you want played at your funeral? Whatever other people want to listen to, I guess... it's not like I'll be enjoying it!

And here is the Mom's Anthem video:

Fun in South Bend Indiana

Of all the places to find fun, who would have thought that middle of nowhere, IN would be such a sight? Every summer, we meet my mom there about 4 times to swap the kids. She'll take them for a week, twice a summer, so because South Bend just happens to be about as close to halfway for each of us to drive, that is where we meet. We used to meet at a Wendy's just off the expressway, but our horizons have broadened, and my husband and I have been venturing off the beaten path to discover new things to see and do in the area. We found a good restaurant called Eleni's with amazing gyros and saganaki, two of our favorite dishes. We also found an authentic Greek restaurant called Elia's right down the street, but oddly enough, they are almost never open. They have more exotic Greek food like stuffed grape leaves, moussaka, and baklava, YUM! Their food is excellent, though we've only been able to eat there once because of their strange hours and seemingly constant family vacations. After eating and getting the kids back from my mom, we headed to the [Potawatomi Zoo](#). The zoo is a really cool size, perfect for our family of 3 small children and a now VERY pregnant woman. Not much walking to do at all, yet it has a good amount of animals, native and exotic, all types and sizes from lions, tigers, and bears, to monkeys, bison, alligators, parrots, and red pandas. I will have to mention that the Potawatomi Zoo did not seem very well-kept. A gardener in that place could have done wonders as there were many overgrown weeds, trees, and shrubbery, some even blocking what could have been better views of the animals! One tree was so untrimmed it was blocking a drinking fountain! But as I said, it's a very cute little zoo, and they reciprocate with our home zoo, the Toledo Zoo, so our admission price was free and they don't charge for

parking. I was surprised to see that the zoo wasn't very crowded seeing as how it was a Saturday in June under 90°... That zoo could really use a Jack Hanna to fix it up and get the publicity rolling – I see a lot of potential for it, but it does need some work.

After the zoo, we had kids begging for 'one more fun thing' (remember, they had been used to the fun of Grandma's for just short of a week!), my husband whips out Mr. GPS, and apparently he has a phone book feature on him, so from your car, you can find gas stations, restaurants, and most importantly, fun places and attractions to visit!

So KUDOS belong to Mr. GPS this time! Instead of getting us lost and chuckling at us electronically, he led us right to this strip mall that was like a step back in time, it was really strange. It looked like it was right out of 1983. I don't know how to explain it – we should have taken pictures. It would have been a great place to film a movie set in the early '80's, took me right back to my childhood. Anyway, in this strip mall was a place called Mega Play. From the outside, it looked closed down – they really need to get themselves a big bright 'open' sign. But once inside, it was a huge space where they had tons of video games, pinball machines, indoor minigolf, bouncy castles and tunnels for the kids, lots of ride-ons for toddlers, and right out of 1983 – a ball pit! The ball pit had a pyramid in the middle of it that the kids climb up with ropes and once they got the hang of it, they had a ball – cheesy pun intended. That pyramid gave me a flashback of playing on the same thing when I was little. I think they used to have them in KMarts, and my husband agreed. It was neat to see vintage video games and pinball machines also. The arcade ATARI games they had in one bouncy castle area were free to play – they had Kangaroo, Pole Position, Asteroids, and some shooting game I hadn't heard of. I walked over to the pinball machine area because days earlier, we visited this cool pinball shop in a suburb of

Toledo. The guy started it as a hobby, but it grew into a store, and he had all kinds of pinball machines, new and mostly vintage. He had titles on display like Demolition Man, Star Wars, The Shadow, and Hercules (an older game – it was HUGE!). He even had this Looney Tunes racing game (not pinball) that was really vintage and one-of-a-kind... it was cool to see. I wonder if the pinball guy outside of Toledo is familiar with Mega Play? But anyway, back to Mega Play... it was a huge, wide-open strip mall space that had tons of games, ride-ons, and bouncy castles packed into it – lots of fun there, but still spacey so you didn't feel closed in. It was the exact concept my husband and I had in mind for our own business of the same type we started a few years ago. We ended up having to sell the business because it was too labor intensive for the time and staff we had however. Too bad Mega Play is all the way in South Bend, or we could challenge our putt-putt-ing friends to the mini-golf course ☐

After Mega Play, it was time to find something to eat, and before we knew it, we were out of South Bend and into the country. The kids started getting crazier and crazier, and we vowed to stop at the very next restaurant we found before someone passed out or went insane – and some of us were close to either condition! So, we stopped at a restaurant called Dakota's in Elkhart IN, and I highly recommend it if you're ever out that way. They had the best cornbread, and their steak and cheese sandwich was simply AWESOME! They also have barbecue items, and they happened to have karaoke the night we went... it wasn't too intrusive though. They were in another room and we didn't even know it was karaoke at first until the audience began applauding. The DJ hosting the karaoke was singing a few songs also, and he was pretty good, so he actually sounded like a recording with a live quality. I don't how often they have karaoke there, but their food is great, prices reasonable, nice atmosphere, and the staff is amazingly friendly. Keep in mind I say this coming from a super-friendly town myself, so we're used to the usual chit-

chat when we go out to eat – but people in Elkhart were *exceptionally* friendly.

Overall, not a bad place to spend a day – fun and very inexpensive to boot. Too bad with gas prices the way they are we can't consider South Bend for a normal day trip for our family – there is plenty to do! Maybe we'll wander around some more the next time we meet Grandma there in July...

I Never Thought About the Crate Being Square and the Turnstile Being Round...

In case you've missed my previous posts about animals and Jack Hanna, let me explain that Jack Hanna is my favorite celebrity and how much I really enjoy following his adventures through zoo life. In case you don't know who Jack is, he is the man who gave Columbus, Ohio a zoo. They did have one before, even though many residents weren't even aware of it, but with Jack's brilliance in zoo management and marketing, the [Columbus Zoo](#) has become one of the most renowned zoos in the world today. These days, Jack spends his time filming tv shows of his own, and also bringing animals around the country for appearances in theaters and on other tv shows, such as David Letterman, Maury Povich, and Good Morning America in order to educate people about respecting animals. Whenever animals are involved, situations can easily become unpredictable. Throw Jack into the mix, and these situations now become hilariously entertaining *and* unpredictable. Things seem to happen to Jack, and if you'd like an example of what I mean, check out the following article detailing an animal

mishap Jack encountered at the airport last September:

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) – Animal expert Jack Hanna and an 11-month-old flamingo became trapped while trying to squeeze through an airport security turnstile. It took firefighters to finally get the flamingo out. Animal expert Jack Hanna had a close encounter with a flamingo Sunday. Hanna, the director emeritus of the Columbus Zoo and a frequent guest on nationally televised talk shows, was returning from a zoo fundraiser with a mongoose, a small leopard and the flamingo. Three other people were with them. The entourage arrived at the Ohio State University Airport just after midnight Sunday to find the terminal closed. The only way to leave the tarmac was through a 10-foot-tall metal turnstile with several horizontal bars – not the easiest exit to squeeze through when you’re traveling with boxed-up animals, Hanna said. **“I never thought about the crate being square and the turnstile being round,”** he said. Hanna, 60, pushed the flamingo’s 2-foot-by-3-foot compartment into the turnstile, then continued pushing while straddling the crate. “I was stuck like a worm. My eyes were as big as grapefruits,” he said. “I can’t describe the feeling in my stomach. I can’t move up or down. The bars are on your face.” Hanna said he eventually squirmed free, leaving the flamingo still wedged inside and everyone else trapped on the tarmac. He then walked to a nearby fire station for help. It took three firefighters to hoist the flamingo’s crate up and out of the turnstile, he said. Columbus fire department logs show the firefighters arrived at the airport at 12:30 a.m. for a “flamingo rescue,” spokeswoman Kelly McGuire said. Hanna joked that the next time he flies through the airport, the biggest animal he’ll bring is a gerbil.

If you were entertained by the preceding article, I highly recommend Jack’s book [Monkeys on the Interstate](#) which details his life before and during his days at the Columbus Zoo – it’s a VERY entertaining and funny read, especially for animal

lovers and zoo enthusiasts. I really hope I can schedule some time to catch Jack at one of his appearances soon, but until then, I will keep checking for him on Letterman and will probably check out the book for a fourth time!

Lions and Tigers and Bears Oh My

I am greatly anticipating our scheduled visit to the Toledo Zoo next week. My daughter needs a specialty dentist in the big city, so we've decided to throw some fun in there as well with a trip to the zoo. It will probably be my last one until after I have the baby, unless they have a wagon available for rental that's big enough for very pregnant me AND the 3 kids. Since it's only March and I'm not due until July, I think I can still handle the large amount of walking it takes to get around the zoo – we'll see anyway. I naively thought that pregnancies would get easier with experience, but it seems that I forgot to factor in my increasing age – I am almost 10 years older than I was the first time I was with child – and I feel it!

Toledo Zoo is very large. It's a very nice zoo, but there is lots of walking. It remains one of my favorite zoos in the country however, and I've visited at least 20. Toledo has lots of animals, but they are pretty spread out. Also, because the zoo straddles a major road, you have to trek up and down a ramp and across a long pedestrian bridge; all of which is not so much fun if pregnant or in the heat of the summer. But overall, it is one of my favorite zoos. Even though the gorilla's indoor exhibit is pretty small, I really enjoy how close you can see them, and they don't seem unhappy

being in a small exhibit... unlike a gorilla at the Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, Nebraska. He had a really small indoor enclosure, and we witnessed him charge at a little boy – it was very scary and thank goodness that glass was thick! This was years ago, and I think Henry Doorly has since re-built their gorilla exhibit. Another zoo with a lot of walking is the Brookfield Zoo near Chicago, Illinois. Brookfield has lots of walking, but unlike Toledo, the animals are spaced further apart, so much of the walking is without seeing animals. It's been a few years since I've been there, so maybe they've changed this, but it's not one of my favorite zoos, unless we're talking about sentimental reasons – it was the site of my husband's and my first "unofficial" date. One zoo that sticks out in my memory as one of my favorites is the Folsom Children's Zoo in Lincoln, Nebraska. The name is misleading, they had quite an array of animals there; including red pandas, camels, reindeer, leopards, monkeys, a variety of reptiles, seals, sloths, emus that like to be pet, and there are still many more I haven't named. All in only 19 acres, nestled right in the city. Which sounds large, but once you get in there, it was really the perfect size. Not much walking at all, lots of animals who all had lots of room in their environments, and it was very nicely landscaped with mature trees and such so that you forgot you were in the middle of the city. We used to live close enough to walk there, but the only problem with this great little zoo is that it was only open from April – October. If you are ever in Nebraska, the Folsom Children's Zoo is a must-see. Being a native Chicagoan, it's strange that I've never visited the Lincoln Park Zoo, which is also in the middle of a city, albeit a much larger one than Lincoln. But I've heard good things about it, and maybe one of these days, during one of our bi-yearly visits to the area, we will give Lincoln Park a whirl so I can add it to my zoo resume.

Before our trips to the zoo, I like to visit a really cool website to brush up on my animal facts. It really makes zoo

trips more interesting if you know a little more about what you're looking at. Check out this online database that is maintained by the University of Michigan:
<https://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/index.html>

And finally, if you are still reading this, you must be an animal lover like me. If you also like to read, I highly recommend my favorite book written by my favorite celebrity: Jack Hanna, called "Monkeys on the Interstate". If you ever watch The Late Show with David Letterman, you know that poor Jack often comes across as a bumbling fool when he's on the show. He is an animal expert however, and he is much more entertaining to watch than most animal experts. He and Letterman tease each other mercilessly, and there is almost always some sort of animal mishap that occurs when Jack is involved, always with hilarious results. His book is a narrative of the same sort of episodes, all taken from his life as he was growing up and also from when he went on to become the director of the Columbus Zoo. By the way, being an Ohioan, I've had the opportunity to visit the Columbus Zoo, and I will say that it did not disappoint. If you read Jack's book, you will read about how he brought the zoo from anonymity (he notes in his book that when he first arrived in Ohio, people would always ask him, "there's a zoo in Columbus?!?") to one of the most renowned facilities in the world. There was a lot of trial and error involved in achieving this, and again, many hilarious hijinks, all of which are detailed in the book – it is really entertaining reading. And it's not just a clever title – there really were Monkeys on the Interstate, thanks to Jack and one of his hare-brained ideas! Maybe I will take another look at it on the long ride to Toledo next week...