

Who Needs Pockets?

Given my fear of frogs, no matter how illogical it is, this video terrified me to the very core. I couldn't even watch the whole thing, and what I did see was watched with my feet picked up off the floor – just too creepy. But I still hope none of the buggers were injured in the filming of this video from youtube called “Who Needs Pockets?”

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:

KidsSpeak

Kids say the darndest things, as we all know – they even made a tv show about it. Here is a list of some of the cute mispronunciations my kids have made and their ages when they said them.

“ah-cro-poose” said by Sammie, age 3. Translation: octopus

“Taylor lelled at me” said by Sammie, age 4. Translation: lelled = yelled

“Beeber” said by Disney, age 2. Translation: Christopher (her baby brother). This has actually led to Christopher having nicknames of Beeber and Beebs.

“Kipper” said by Disney, age 2. Translation: Christopher. She moved out of the Beeber phase and now calls him Kipper.

“may-sa-peer” said by Sammie, age 3. Translation: disappear

“tormado” said by Sammie, age 4. Translation: tornado. Look closely at how I typed the word – she replaces the “n” with an “m” sound.

“ith ith” said by Taylor, age 1. Translation: kitty.

“diaper call off!” said by Disney, age 2. Translation: Help! My diaper is falling off!

“gggg” said by Christopher, age 5 months. Translation: various. I just wanted to put his sounds in this list too.

Clap, Clap, Slap The Chest...

What IS this? It's something that is popular among tween girls lately. They walk around doing some kind of ritual that involves clapping and slapping their chests, among other things. I didn't really think much of it, until my daughter's 9th birthday party, and there were other kids here doing it. When my 2-year-old picked it up, it became annoying and I decided to take action by writing a blog post and looking it up on the internet. I asked my daughter if it's from a movie or a tv show or something, but she didn't seem to know where it came from. When I tried to look it up on the internet, I just got instructions for other games of this type and didn't see anything about any sort of fad that's sweeping our tweens. So is anyone reading this whose kids do the same thing, or is this a NW Ohio thing? I'd like to know where it came from so I can decide if it's a behavior I want all of my kids duplicating.

You Delivered My Pizza, But Please Don't Watch Me Eat It

We had a great weekend, even though the weather on Sunday was horrid – so cold my Christmas teddy bear got frozen to the window! Friday night was an all-night work session to finish up the planning and organization of our community theater's awards show, which is where we went Saturday night. But first on Saturday afternoon, it was a birthday celebration for our oldest who turned 9 on Sunday with a MUCH anticipated visit from family who live out of state. We had a great time catching up and watching the kids open their birthday and

Christmas presents, and the kids got to have a sleepover in the hotel with Grandma, Papa, and Uncle Bud while we went to the awards show. The awards show was lots of fun, as always, and I got to watch 2 very good friends win much-deserved achievement awards. Congratulations, guys!

It was lots of fun putting the show together, even if we didn't have much time to do so due to last minute notice from the theater. It was fun and also rewarding to watch the individual skits, shorts, songs, and awards presentations start as ideas on paper and then watch when they came together as a whole. It's also a fun excuse to get everyone together, and it's always nice to see long-lost busy friends who are unable to get together but for this one night. It might be fun to produce the awards show again next year, but then again, I'd love to have my best friend sitting beside me to watch them because I missed him this year – even though he did make an excellent host. If there are a few individuals in the theater community who have a hard time because they don't win awards, then let them have their hard time. There is talk of cancelling this awards show, and I would be very sad if that happened. It's definitely a whole ton of fun for most of us, and I really don't think we should let a few individuals ruin it for everyone. That's all I'm going to say on the subject for now, but expect to hear more from me once this very topic is discussed at the next production board meeting.

Sunday we had major Grandma-let-down, and because we didn't want our oldest daughter to be depressed on her actual birthday, we let her have a friend sleep over. During football season, we usually set aside Sundays for low-key stuff, like watching football, reading newspapers, and blogging, but we always end up with crazy kids so it's never exactly low-key. But I don't usually cook dinner on Sundays, and today we ordered pizza. Five minutes after the pizza was delivered, we noticed the delivery guy was still parked out front and that he was standing outside of his car. Turns out,

he had locked himself out of the car, and so we offered him a warm place to wait for his ride. Since the temperature outside has been hovering around 0° all day, with wind chills near -20°, he gratefully accepted. And he stood in our front hall for almost 30 minutes! If he were outside, he would have frozen to death. But it did feel a little awkward eating the pizza he delivered while he stood there. We offered him a seat in the living room, but he opted to stand in the entryway, and I'm kind of glad because at least we were then eating out of his view. Our 2-year-old kept asking about "the pizza guy", and then he became scary to her – "I scared pizza guy" – probably cuz he was just standing there, doing nothing, and she's never seen anyone do that in our front hall before. But finally his ride came, thank goodness, and he left. I wonder if he gets paid for the time he was standing in our house? I wonder who pays for the gas that was used in his running car while he was waiting for his ride? Should we have offered him some pizza? It was kind of a weird situation, but it does make for interesting blog fodder. Of course it had to happen on the coldest day of the year – that guy has a new story to tell!

Toy Culling

A few weeks ago, our kids were chronically misbehaving. Our oldest, a tween, was sassing back and saying "no" too much, her younger sister (the "spirited" one) was throwing lots of tantrums and trying to cause trouble with her sisters, and our youngest daughter was constantly upset and insecure about the continuous chaos in the house. Desperate times call for desperate measures, so one day while the oldest kids were at school and the younger ones were sleeping, my husband took off work for an afternoon of "toy culling". This is a drastic

discipline measure we only use in emergency situations. It is time-consuming and intensive labor for the parents, but well worth it, at least in our house.

Toy culling consists of us going into the girls' room (the three oldest girls share one big room, and our baby boy isn't yet old enough to cause trouble) and taking out every toy. We leave the tv, computer with educational games, books, and the clothes and board games in the closet. Everything else goes – dressup clothes, doll clothes, dolls, stuffed animals, all the little miscellaneous toys that can really junk up a child's room quickly, etc. If you have lots of time, you can sort it all by what you want to keep and organize the rest, but we are very busy people and so we just took all their junk and put it in our son's room for now. He's a baby who wakes in the night so he's still in our room. When it's time to move him into his room, we'll have to clean it out obviously, but for now it was a means to an end of the horrible behavior of the girls. We leave the board games, and they know that they take one out and put it away when they're done, just like the books that are left. If the rules aren't followed, anything that's left on the floor in subsequent days gets culled. You need to check their room everyday, and it's **imperitive** that you follow through with rule-enforcing. And for some reason, this process really works. I don't know what it is... Perhaps a feng shui effect where the much more pleasant ambience of the room and the *mucho* extra space is what leads to the kids being in better moods and hence, less trouble and more obedient. It could be the fact that there are less toys over which to fight. Maybe they're happier not having it constantly hanging over their heads that they're going to have to clean their room. But I don't care what the reason is, the toy culling has worked wonderfully the 3-5 times we've had to set aside a chunk of time to do it. My kids are now putting their dirty laundry in the hampers that are provided, and their trash is going into garbage cans. Also, their room is staying clean, and I don't have to worry about it staying that way because

they don't have anything with which to mess it up! And, as the behavior improves, they can earn their toys back – you don't have to spend money to get them any special reward PLUS the kids feel senses of accomplishment = WIN/WIN. Toy culling proves that less is more, and it helps put a damper on the sense of entitlement that can cloud the good attitude of even a generally well-behaved child.

I think I first read about the method in a parenting column in the newspaper. I'm not sure which expert gets the credit, but I do know that I highly recommend toy culling! And oh yes, early December is a perfect time to do this – makes room for the burst of new things they might receive for the holidays!

My New Pet

I've wanted a new pet for awhile, mostly since my cat passed away almost a year ago now. What I want most is another cat – I love cats, and it would be the perfect type of pet for our household. But unfortunately, I'm allergic to cats. When I had my cat, it was a constant struggle to decide if I should pet her or not. I always wanted to of course, but then I would itch for hours, my eyes would water, and sometimes I'd get hives. And, my allergy symptoms were worse during my 4 pregnancies. I just don't want to go through that again – so no cat for us. We have a Jack Russell Terrier mix, so any type of animal she'll want to chase and bark at is out also – which means no rats, ferrets, small birds, etc. So that leaves me with reptiles or bugs, I guess. And the only reptile I'm interested in owning is a tortoise. Those can be kind of costly and I'm not entirely sure that my Jerk Russell Terrier mix won't want to hunt it, so I'm going to hold off on the tortoise for a little bit. Also complicating the

situation is that I really don't have any extra time to spend with a pet, so that limits my options even further. So lately I've been in limbo, trying to decide what to get. But the other day, a new pet sort of fell into my lap.

It's a ladybug I found in the house – normally I'd let any bugs go outside that I find in the house, but it's way too cold out for a ladybug, and I don't want him to suffer while he froze to death. So I looked up what ladybugs eat, and I found out that their favorite food is aphids, which are an even smaller group of insects. Knowing I couldn't get any of those easily, I put a drop of honey in a little container with the ladybug. He went over to it and started eating it! So I put a little drop of water in there too, and he must have smelled that or something, because he left the honey and went over to the water – it was really interesting to watch. He's survived in captivity about a week now, and I have to say I'm getting a little attached to him as a pet. It started out as just a fun little project, and I didn't expect it to live more than a few days. But he did, and I've named him Francis (like the ladybug from *A Bug's Life*), and he is my secret pet – the kids don't know about him. If they did, he'd be dead already because my 4-year-old adores bugs and often smothers them with love – literally. I think today I'll go out and get Francis some grass for his container, because earlier when I fed him, he REFUSED to go back into his container! I'm not kidding; he was sticking to my finger and just doing everything possible to not get locked back in there. Finally, I put him on a Q-tip and cut it to fit in the container and locked him in. I feel a little badly that I've kidnapped this ladybug, but I think I'm his only chance at life. Outside, he'd freeze, and if I let him go into my house, I don't think he'd be able to find food and water and he'd either die or go into hibernation until a kid or a dog got him.

So anyway, I guess I have my new pet. I still don't expect him to last very long, but for now it's fun just taking care

of an animal, especially since he's my little secret. If he's still around in another week or so, I'll take his picture and post it. Say hi to Francis!

Indiana Jones-ette

Remember that CNN.com article I wrote about the unusual names? The article spotlighted a little girl named Indiana Elizabeth Jones and her brother, Dow. Well, this post is not going to be about them.

Rather, it's an excuse to post a cute photo of my 4-year-old daughter wearing an Indiana Jones-like costume. For the real buffs out there, I know it's not exact, but it's still cute...



Technology And Santa

Due to the many technological advances that have been made in the world since we were kids, I think today's youth have somewhat of a different perspective on Santa.

First of all, on Christmas Eve, they can track Santa's travels on the internet. When we were young, it was "get to bed, and if you're not sleeping by the time Santa gets here, he's going to skip our house!" And in 2008, you can forget about needing the zip code for the North Pole so that your kids can use the post office to snail-mail their lists to Santa. In today's world, kids communicate with Santa via email. Also, the lines "He sees you when you're sleeping; he knows when you're awake... etc." have a whole new meaning with the modern-day concept of Big Brother. I reminded my 4-year-old daughter the other day that Santa is always watching her and can see when she's not behaving. Her reply is what led me to wonder about the perception kids in 2008 have of Santa: "Mom, do you have blue lights on the Christmas tree cuz they have cameras and Santa can see." So somewhere my daughter had gotten the idea that Santa uses cameras to watch kids, and the cameras are inside the blue Christmas lights! I wonder, if I invest in some blue Christmas lights, will that make her behavior improve any?

Number Quest

One thing I was excited about doing in my blog was writing board game reviews. Since my husband and I have a game collecting hobby and thereby an extensive amassment of games, we can find a new game to play on any given night. But the kids keep us really busy, and so I forgot all about reviewing board games on my blog, not to mention that it's difficult for us to find the time to play them. But last night amidst the chaos of our house, we found time to haul out a new game and learn it. It was such a fun game that it inspired me to write a review – anyone heard of the game *Number Quest* (or sometimes known as *Nubble*) by DK Publishing Inc.?

The game board consists of a color-coded grid with numbers on it. The game is simple to learn, yet complex to play. *Number Quest* combines chance (dice), strategy, and traditional board game elements such as paper money and tokens. To begin, a player rolls 4 dice which each display the numbers 1-6. The player then uses these numbers to create any whole number 1-100 with any combination of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. The player then places their color chip on the corresponding number on the game board. The color of the number's space on the board determines how much money a player receives for creating that number. There are also Nubble Bonuses and Double-Nubbles, but if you want to find out what those are you should play the game. Even with the Nubbles (double-nubbles involve prime numbers – but don't worry, you don't have to know anything about prime numbers), it's a very easy game to learn. Also, you don't have to be great at math since there are 'cheat charts' provided.

Number Quest is like a two-player strategy game combined with favorite elements of other types of board games, except the best thing is, you can have up to four players.

Here is a picture of the game board; evidently the game used to be called Nubble.



And another fun thing about Number Quest is how the game ends:

it is over when there are tokens on numbers connecting the 1 and the 100 all the way across the board, and the player with the most money at that time wins. Also, there are LOTS of variations to the game; there's a kid-friendly version, you can try playing with a timer, or you can even try ending the game based upon a previously agreed upon time limit or money amount instead of when the tokens stretch across the board. The game is educational for kids, and a great way for adults to exercise their brains, especially if you don't use the cheat chart. Upon first playing, I would give it a 9/10, but keep in mind that we didn't even get in a full game due to time constraints. But it seems like a really fun game and I'm looking forward to trying it with 4 players!