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Annual Report

News and Notes from the Workshop
 Posted by Jordan Brown

SESAME FAMILY NEWSLETTER---Happy Holidays!
 December 10, 2003

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 ***A SCARY STRANGER IN RED?

Every December since my son Finn was born, I've wondered, "Is THIS the year that I get to dress up as Santa?" As I mentioned in the recent Halloween newsletter, I enjoy wearing costumes. I also look for any chance to inspire my son's priceless belly laugh.

For Finn's first two Christmases, I knew that any Santa shenanigans would go right over his head. During those years, Finn had no idea what a holiday was, let alone some big, jolly guy with a white beard and a red suit. Oh, sure, he got a big kick out of ripping the paper off presents, but that was about it.

Now that Finn is almost three, I'm on the fence about whether I should spring the magic of Santa on my son. My wife Ellen and I have pointed out images of Santa in store window displays, and in books. If we ask, "Who's that?" Finn will sometimes say "Santa Claus." I think the idea of Christmas is starting to gel in his mind. For example, just the other day, we passed some Christmas decorations in a store window. Finn leaned in to whisper, "Santa bring trains to Finn."

If I open our front door wearing Santa gear, how will Finn react? (We don't have a fireplace, so the part about Santa sliding down the chimney is not an option.) Will my son freak out? Or will my alert little boy see through my disguise instantly, and in Scrooge-like voice say, "No Daddy wearing Santa suit now!"

To find out more about young children's views about Santa, take a look at these resources from the experts at Sesame Workshop.

SANTA SOLUTIONS

Tips to help your child continue to believe.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=79940>

BELIEVING IS SEEING

Believing in miracles makes life miraculous.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=928>

***'TIS THE SEASON! OY VEY!

The December holidays are overwhelming because we celebrate both Christmas and Hanukkah. Ellen is Christian and I'm Jewish. (What? A Jewish Santa!) Both sets of grandparents have done an incredible job helping us introduce Finn to the traditions of both of these holidays. Given how stressful and hectic this time of year can be, Ellen and I are grateful for their help and enthusiasm.

Last year, Ellen's parents let Finn help decorate their Christmas tree. He had a lot of fun searching for the various tree decorations for shapes and colors he recognized. Another sweet Christmas memory from last year was when Ellen's parents drove us around their neighborhood at night to look at the eye-catching decorations on the houses. When we stopped the car in front of one house, Finn dashed through the snow for a close-up look at large lit-up versions of Elmo and Big Bird.

Last December, my parents gave Finn eight Hanukkah presents, one for each night. One of his favorites was a picture book of the "Dreidel Dreidel Dreidel" song. Finn loved that the book played the melody when he pressed a button. Even at the beach the following July, the dreidel book was still a hit.

Given our recent success with introducing Finn to Halloween traditions, we're excited about doing the same for Christmas and Hanukkah. We want to encourage him to learn some Christmas carols. And, with our supervision, he'll help us light the candles on our Hanukkah menorah. While it may be too early for him to sing the prayers, I know he'll love counting the colorful candles each night.

For ideas on how to make the holidays meaningful for Finn, we looked on the Sesame Workshop Web site.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Learn more about the holidays in the "Elmo's World: Happy Holidays" video.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=6022262>

HANUKKAH HIGHLIGHTS

Fun games for holiday celebrations.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=108580>

CHRISTMAS GIVING FUN

Help your children create festive gifts for the holidays.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=108601>

A KWANZAA CELEBRATION

Giving and sharing the harvest with this new tradition.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=108600>

MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS

It's not the big toys they'll remember when they think of the holidays; it's the little traditions.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=20601>

CATCH THE SPIRIT!

Readers tell how they make the holidays meaningful in their homes.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=20660>

***HOMEMADE SNOWFLAKES AND MORE

This week, all the kids in Finn's nursery school class made homemade snowflakes. My son squeezed big blobs of Elmer's glue onto wax paper, scattered Q-tips on the glue, and then sprinkled glitter over everything. Finn also helped paint an evergreen tree. His teacher put green paint and glue on the kids' hands, pressed them on a large piece of white paper, and then of course the fun part...sprinkling glitter on everything. (It seems glitter is the key ingredient of every school art project.) All the handprints actually looked like branches of an evergreen tree. Amazing.

Next week, the families are invited to Finn's school for a holiday party. At this "Winter Solstice and Nature Art Show," parents and grandparents will have a chance to see the children's holiday art projects. There will also be holiday songs, family activities, and finger food galore. It should be a wonderful time.

Over the next couple of weeks, Finn's class will be making picture frames out of paper, paint, and, you guessed it, glitter. Since I was a child, homemade holiday presents have always been the ones I treasure the most. While the joy of giving doesn't come naturally to most toddlers, I think that the activities in Finn's school are a perfect start.

For more ideas about homemade gifts and holiday projects, don't miss these resources.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Activity ideas to help young children learn the joy of giving.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=20360>

GLITTERING GIFT BOXES

Decorate gift boxes with holiday sparkles.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=20221>

HOMEMADE WRAPPING PAPER

Make every gift special with kid-made wrapping paper.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=18999>

HOMEMADE SNOWFLAKES

Let it snow with make-your-own snowflakes.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=78820>

COOKIE COTTAGE

Build a house out of graham crackers. Have your home and eat it too!
<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=20220>

***SESAME STREET MUSIC WORKS

Finn's class has been learning holiday songs. So far, they've sung "This Little Light of Mine," "Let it Snow" and "Jingle Bells." While my son enjoys listening to recorded music, he is less than enthusiastic when Ellen and I try to belt out holiday songs live. Interestingly, when we sing "Jingle Bells," he comments, "Elmo do that!" I was puzzled at first. Then I realized that the Elmo's World segment on Sesame Street always concludes with Elmo singing about the theme of the day to the tune of "Jingle Bells." In addition to the many wonderful Christmas songs, I will make a point of teaching Finn a few of my favorite Hanukkah songs too--the classics as well as Tom Lehrer's humorous "I'm Spending Hanukkah in Santa Monica."

To help your children warm up their vocal cords for holiday singing, invite them to sing-along with the Muppets on Sesame Street Radio.

SESAME STREET RADIO

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=105602>

***A HOLIDAY WISH

Whether or not I dress up in the Santa suit this year, I look forward to seeing the holiday season through Finn's 3-year-old eyes. As part of our Hanukkah celebration, Ellen, Finn and I will have fun making latkes (potato pancakes). There's nothing as funny or as touching as the sight of Finn cracking open a dozen eggs by himself. We'll also make colorful Christmas cards and cookies as gifts for friends and family. When the first snowflakes fall, we'll share Finn's joy as he builds his first snowman, and he throws his first snowballs at our dog Mo.

I wish you all a safe, joyous holiday season! See you in 2004.

***SESAME STREET BEAT

In an upcoming episode of Sesame Street, Elmo is going to a baseball game with Gordon, but before he can leave, he needs to find someone to care for his fish, Dorothy, while he's gone. Both Telly and Baby Bear volunteer to fish-sit, but once Elmo starts explaining all the responsibilities involved, he gets nervous about leaving his beloved fish.

Will Elmo go to the game or stay home with Dorothy? Check your local PBS station to find out when this episode is airing where you live. Then join your Sesame pals for some online fun.

PBS KIDS: WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=9697605>

THE LETTER OF THE DAY IS K

K is for kite and Kingston in this printable.

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=3035>

THE LAUNDRY GAME

Help Elmo sort the laundry in this shape-matching game!

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=111824>

MAKE A HAT

Use your imagination to make Elmo a hat in this interactive game!

<http://www.sesameworkshop.org/gwr?s=nl&t=111260>

Did you know Sesame Street goes by lots of different names around the world? It's true! In Spain, it's called Barrio Sesamo, in France it's Les Amis de Sesame, in Canada, it's Sesame Park, and in China it's Zhma Jie!

Jordan Brown
Sesame Workshop

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