THE EPOCH TIMES



Stars in the Darkness:

A Christmas Letter to My Grandchildren

JEFF MINICK

ate last December, I made some New Year's resolutions that included writing a letter every week to two of my grandchildren at a time and bringing treats once a month to our public librarians and the baristas of the coffee shop I frequent. Usually, my resolutions have the life span of a mayfly, but this time, I published these intentions in an article for The Epoch Times.

Failure was not an option.

At the time, my platoon of grandchildren numbered 20 boys and girls, not counting three who had returned to God at their birth, and they ranged in age from 14 to 1. A month ago, a newborn girl brought another addition to these ranks.

In ways large and small, you must stand your ground and defend liberty.

My grandchildren enjoyed these letters. For the little ones, I wrote far fewer words, but added plenty of stickers from the Dover books purchased at my local bookstore. One of the youngest carried her letter everywhere she went for a couple of days.

I'm unsure whether I will continue this project—I'm guessing I probably will but I decided to end the year with a bang. I'm sending out the letter below to all my grandchildren along with a personal note on a Christmas card, which should especially please that letter-loving kid.

Our young people need our encouragement, particularly now, and our country needs them if liberty is to survive. Maybe letters like this one will help give them the strength and courage to persevere:

Dear ones,

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you!

As I write these words, I see you in my mind's eye gearing up for the holidays, decorating your trees and homes, making homemade gifts for Mom and Dad, and I hope, pitching in to help your parents around the house.

This will be a different sort of letter than the ones you've gotten from me this past year. No jokes this time for you older kids, and sorry, little ones, no stickers of farm animals, penguins, and airplanes.

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Teen Delivers 'Notes' of Christmas Cheer to Veterans, Seniors

Franki Moscato from Oshkosh, Wisconsin, puts others first-and creates free digital concert this holiday season

Franki Moscato, 18, is a singer and student at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay.

MAUREEN MACKEY

Young Franki Moscato is on a mission. Several missions, actually.

First, the talented 18-year-old singer and performer from Oshkosh, Wisconsin, believes that veterans and members of law enforcement across the country deserve our robust and enduring thanks for all that they've done—and still do—to protect the vast freedoms we enjoy in America.

She goes out of her way to salute them. That includes singing the National Anthem for them, and for many other people, at every opportunity.

Second, Moscato rails against cy-

berbullying—something she herself has experienced in her life, she explains. Those experiences forced her to change schools several times as a young teen.

Because bullying of all types can lead tragically to suicide for too many individuals, Moscato started a foundation a year ago to bring greater awareness to the topic. No young person, she believes, should ever hurt himself or herself because of brutish treatment from others. Help is at hand, she shares with children and teens-and we all need to be kind toward each other.

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Stars in the Darkness:

A Christmas Letter to My Grandchildren

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This one addresses you and your future, and those of you too young to comprehend will perhaps read this letter with understanding in another 10 years or so.

As some of you older kids know, and as you little ones may have sensed through the tensions you've felt at home from your parents and older siblings, 2020 has been one tough old year. You've watched your schools and homeschooling co-ops closed down, your sports and music lessons canceled, your get-togethers with friends curtailed. Everywhere you go in public, you see people in masks, some of them genuinely frightened by this virus, others only wearing the face coverings because the law requires them to do so.

On top of the destruction, much of it selfinflicted, wrought by this pandemic, you live in a country savagely divided by partisan politics, as evidenced most recently in a presidential election seemingly shot through with fraud. Some power-hungry people cheated at the polls in a myriad of ways in an attempt to win the presidency. (If you don't know the meaning of myriad, look it up!) If successful at winning the election, they will do their best—or their worst—to change our government and its laws, with the intention of making the rest of us slaves of the state.

But there is good news.

As one of your mothers said to me in November, the divide between good and evil is clearer now than ever before in her lifetime, and she has a point. On one side are those sons and daughters of liberty who believe in the right to own property, to pursue happiness, and to go about their business with as little government interference as possible. Like your parents, these folks practice their faith, honor their flag and country, and believe in self-reliance and the American

On the other side are those who advocate communism and socialism. (If you don't know the meaning of these words, ask



Spend time outside-make yourselves tough physically as long as mentally.

your parents to explain them.) They believe America is evil, they regard many Americans as ignorant, and they want greater power and control over our lives.

So the line in the sand is drawn. We know where we stand. This is a good thing.

And there's more good news. A friend in the publishing business wrote me after I bemoaned (Look it up!) our current state of affairs, and I paraphrase her response here (Look up paraphrase, too!): "We are living in exciting times, and we should feel privileged to be the standard-bearers for freedom." This woman nailed it; we should feel blessed to find ourselves in the thick of such a fray, warriors for truth and for our

And you sprouts must take up that banner. Sooner than you think, you and your peers will step onto this battlefield. Some of them may run, some may seek refuge in silence, but your parents and I expect more of you. In ways large and small, you must stand your ground and defend liberty. Sometimes, the forces opposing you may seem overwhelming, but you possess one vital weapon the other side lacks: Truth.

To prepare yourself to defend Truth, you must learn as much as you can in school: literature, English composition, mathematics, science, crafts, and music. Absorb these things for the same reason you take your daily vitamins. By memorizing your multiplication tables or learning how to write an essay, you are readying yourselves to address deeper topics such as theology, philosophy, and physics.

Be sure, too, to read books that will someday act as your shield and buckler when you meet the dragon. Laura Ingalls Wilder's "Little House on the Prairie" stories teach self-reliance and independence; J.R.R. Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings" trilogy offers a lesson in persistence and courage; George Orwell's "Animal Farm" and "1984" run up red flags warning you of the dangers ahead. Such stories enrich the mind and strengthen the heart, and will serve as guides and companions for the rest of your days.

And please, gang, study history, not just in school but for the rest of your lives. So many Americans know little of our country's past, of the struggles and sacrifices that so many endured to build this wonderful land in which we live. Immerse yourselves in history—the story of our nation, of Western civilization, and of other countries. We are the living sum of all those men and women who have gone before us, and when we remain ignorant of their failures and accomplishments, we live as children rather than adults. Make yourselves tough. Play sports, spend

time outside, and run through the yard and climb trees as you did here at Thanksgiving. Become mentally and spiritually tough as well, able to take the punches of life. Face up to adversity when it comes your way,

and when you are in the right, stand fast and defend that right, but with logic, reason, and compassion for others rather than with hyperbole (another one to find in the dictionary) and prejudice.

Your country is going to need you. Your family and friends will require your defense. Even we who are dead by then will need you to remember our dreams for you and this wonderful country.

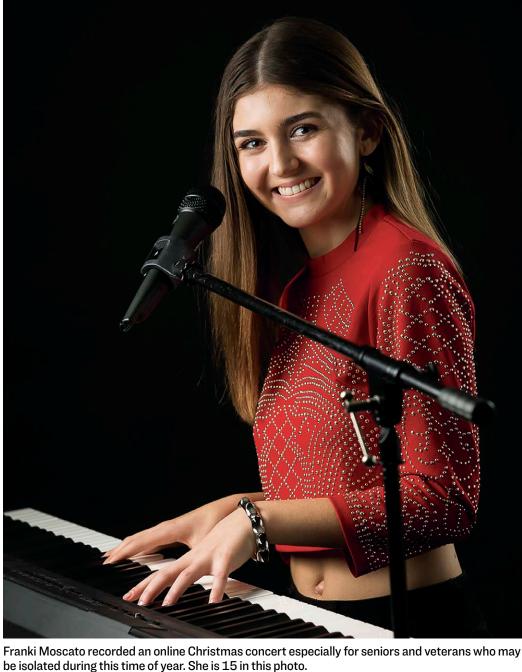
In the words of Winston Churchill, a great man whose story you should one day explore, "This is the lesson: never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never—in nothing, great or small, large or petty—never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of

Keep the faith, grandchildren. Keep your faith in God, your country, your family and friends, and the heritage of your civilization. One last piece of advice: Remember to look for joy in this world. Remember the power of beauty and goodness. Look for that beauty starting now—in a sunset, in a book, in your father's eyes—and practice goodness, even if it's just giving a smile to a stranger or a kind word to your mother.

Be stars in the darkness, sweet ones. Be burning candles for faith, hope, truth, and

With love and prayers for all of you this Christmas season.

Jeff Minick has four children and a growing platoon of grandchildren. For 20 years, he taught history, literature, and Latin to seminars of homeschooling students in Asheville, N.C. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust On Their Wings," and two works of nonfiction, "Learning As I Go" and "Movies Make The Man." Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See JeffMinick.com to follow his blog.



be isolated during this time of year. She is 15 in this photo.



Moscato speaks with kids about the importance of kindness.





Moscato, 11, with football player Aaron Rodgers, after singing the national anthem on Family Night at Lambeau Field in Green Bay, Wis., in 2013.

DEAR JUNE On Family and Relationships



Politics Strain Father-Daughter Relationship

→ Take a step back and focus on bonding

Dear June,

Your article in The Epoch Times, December 2–8, 2020, "When Politics Are Polarizing Your Marriage," and in our case, Your Father-Daughter Relationship ... was just the subject we have been addressing for the past several weeks.

We sent a one-year gift subscription of The Epoch Times to my husband's daughter and granddaughter. This was after weeks of knowing that trying to talk about our differences and even have a "healthy" debate was not going anywhere. My husband's daughter is highly intelligent but won't put a moment into having a peek into what the conservative truths are. He spent an hour on the phone trying to explain

to her why he is voting for Trump and the socialist direction that Biden will irreversibly take our country.

She told him that she underst she would vote for Trump. Perhaps she was just tired of being lectured to ... can't blame her at all ... but, now that he knows she did NOT vote for Trump he is extremely disappointed and can't seem to bring himself to even speak with her. It's very heartbreaking for all involved. I'm sure time will heal their wounds ... but my mission is to help his daughter to just give The Epoch Times 10 minutes for a week each morning over coffee. I'm just asking for 10 minutes ... I truly think her eyes could be opened if she would do this. Does that sound fair?

> Kindest regards, The Stepmonster

→ Dear Stepmonster,

It does seem curious that your stepdaughter won't agree to even peek at articles with a conservative point of view, yet after an hour of discussion (lecturing?) she agreed to vote for the conservative candidate. So indeed, perhaps she was agreeing only to end the discussion. So for your husband, instead of being hurt, I would take a step back and see it as a valuable learning experience about the effect he can have on his daughter.

I previously wrote a column about what to do when adult children turn away from you because of ideology, which you might also like reading. I recommend that if your relationship with older children is sour or at risk of becoming so, that you ignore your differences and focus on what bonds you.

It is really not at all simple to change a socialist mindset—it's not something a few facts will accomplish because it requires changing the framework from which a person understands many things, often including history, world and national events, and possibly even their fundamental values. Many people see socialism as a more fair and compassionate form of government, not as the necessary precursor to totalitarianism. I sometimes read articles from main-

stream publications that have this view because I want to understand what is being said there, and it is like stepping into a whole different realm of thought one built on fundamentally different assumptions. It is not easy to challenge these assumptions.

Regarding your gift to your stepdaughter, I would suggest this: First, consider what you know of her feelings and attitude, do you think she would be open and curious enough to read what might challenge them?

I do think we all crave and appreciate the truth and want to make up our own minds. I have gotten feedback from one reader that while they didn't necessarily agree with our op-eds, he subscribed because he appreciated the neutral, factual reporting, which was informative and allowed him to draw his own conclusions. As an intelligent person, your stepdaughter might appreciate this.

You could also tell her you much you like the paper, and suggest that she might like the lifestyle sections, such as Life and Tradition, Home, or Mind and Body.

And it might be good to preface this by saying that you value her friendship and don't want politics to come between you.

And by doing your best to accept, understand, and appreciate her for who she is now, I think you will go much further than if you try to change her. Maybe aim to make her feel as though you are actually her fairy godmother, someone who loves and blesses her, rather than an evil stepmother who adds hardship to her life.

Sincerely,

Dear June,

Each year two close friends send me a poinsettia through the local florist and they are so beautiful! This is the third year. I have three cats who should not sample poinsettia! I don't know how to tell them, and they know I have three cats! I place one plant on top of my fridge and the other on top of my china cabinet. I still enjoy them up

high. How do I tell my two good friends maybe to send a Christmas cactus instead?

→ Dear Kathy,

Since these are close friends, I think a simple, honest, direct approach is best. It is perfectly understandable that people who don't have cats would have no clue that some houseplants are dangerous for them.

Before you talk to them I would consider three things. First, how would you like to be approached if the roles were reversed? Second, is there anything unique to them that might make a certain approach better than others? And third, approaching this conversation with an emphasis on gratitude will make it easier for both of you, so I would take some time to consider how much you appreciate their friendship and their thoughtfulness in sending you a gift.

If you want a formal suggestion, I would do the following (assuming you are talking on the phone): first, ask how they are doing. If they are going through a hard time, spend some time listening to their concerns. Since you are able to enjoy the gifts and keep your cats safe, your conversation can wait.

If all seems well with them, let them know that you have something on your mind, then say sincerely how much you enjoy their gifts but that because poinsettias are not safe for cats, receiving them has brought you some anxiety. End by asking if it would be possible to send a different kind of plant next year.

Sincerely,

Do you have a family or relationship question for our advice columnist, Dear June? Send it to DearJune@EpochTimes. com or Attn: Dear June, The Epoch Times, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, *NY 10001.*

June Kellum is a married mother of two and longtime Epoch Times journalist covering family, relationships, and health topics.

Teen Delivers 'Notes' of Christmas Cheer to Veterans, Seniors

Franki Moscato from Oshkosh, Wisconsin, puts others first–and creates free digital concert this holiday season

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It's a simple but profound and desperately needed mental-health message, this year and every year.

And third, as she continues to hone her musical abilities and develop her acting chops as well, Moscato thanks God for her gifts—and fully credits her faith for keeping her strong and focused.

"I've been blessed with opportunities to honor my country and to inspire people through my music," she told The Epoch



My soul is meant for supporting my country.

Franki Moscato

Before this year, Moscato frequently performed across the Badger State for residents of senior living and care facilities. With personal appearances of that type curtailed in 2020, she has turned to technology to reach her audiences.

To this end, she recorded a Christmas concert for seniors and veterans who may be experiencing isolation and seclusion during this holiday season. Her nearly 40-minute video performance includes lovely one-woman renditions of such classic Christmas songs as "O Holy Night" and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." Anyone can watch Moscato's cheerful con-

cert by visiting FrankiJo.com/EpochXmas/. Moscato explains her motivation to reach others during a challenging time, "I know the usual family gatherings," and she especially wanted to do something special

for seniors who may find themselves alone. She has been amply blessed, she says, to have the friendship of local veterans and to be surrounded in her life by supportive, caring adults. It's why she chooses to spread positivity and patriotism through

"My soul is meant for supporting my country," says this gracious young woman.

Making Her Mark

Moscato attained national prominence in 2019 when she competed on "American Idol," beating out thousands of other hopefuls and winning a "gold ticket" to perform in Hollywood before celebrity judges Luke Bryan, Katy Perry, and Lionel Richie.

While her journey for the title came to an end at that time, she had the guts to try—and she impressed millions with her musical abilities.

Moscato credits American Legion Post 234 in Omro, Wisconsin, for acknowledging her as a singer early on and giving her many opportunities to perform. She says she is forever grateful to them—and to all veterans across the United States—for their service. Giving back, she says, is just the right thing to do.

"Our police, our firefighters—all of these people do so much for our communities and to protect us every day." It's why she says that she "will never accept payment for singing the National Anthem.

Many of Moscato's past performances can be found online. She sang "The StarSpangled Banner" twice for the Green Bay Packers before packed crowds at their that this Christmas is not going to bring games. The first time she did, she was a Franki

Age: 18 (born Jan. 26,

Moscato at

a Glance

Grew up in Oshkosh, Wisconsin

Started singing

publicly at age 11

Has one older sister Started her nonprofit organization, Franki Moscato Foundation,

in 2019

Original song: "Me, Myself, and I," which she wrote after experiencing bullying Motto: "Be kind" Website: FrankiJo.com slim little 11-year-old belting it out a cappella for the crowd (Watch the video at bit. ly/3reKMJh).

Flash forward six years—and she performed the National Anthem a second time for the Packers in 2019, also a cappella, as a polished and mature (but still very young!) 17-year-old (See that beautiful performance at bit.ly/34mFYYK).

Moscato also has sung the National Anthem for the Milwaukee Bucks and the Milwaukee Brewers, at the Miss Wisconsin pageant, and at local farmers markets even at a few presidential campaign events.

"Growing up [in Oshkosh], I would watch the news and it was always so negative," she says. "I decided I want to spread some simpler messages."

Moscato is a freshman this year at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. She's studying business and political science in an online program, which allows her the flexibility and the independence to continue with musical training and professional and charitable performances.

She notes that faith is a very big part of her life. "I'm a very spiritual person," she says, citing her upbringing and her parents' strong influence.

She prays before every performance. "It's God's work and not mine," she says of her abilities, adding that she "tries to follow Jesus" and hopes that "others follow my message, too.'

"It's my life's goal to make a positive impact on other people," she said.

At the age of 18, it's clear that Franki Moscato is already achieving this—and that it's her destiny to continue to reach wider and ever-enthusiastic audiences with her array of gifts and messages of uplift and inspiration.

"You are a true blessing to this world," an appreciative fan wrote to her online. "God created you because He knew you would be a very special person."

Maureen Mackey, a contributor to The Epoch Times, Parade Magazine, and other publications, is a digital content executive, writer, and editor based in the New York City area.

COURTESY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE-CHATTANOOGA

CATHERINE YANG

When the pandemic hit, everything came to a halt. About \$250,000 worth of contracts and work suddenly went up in smoke for musician Alex Boyé, and he was stuck with nothing he could do about it.

"Then I thought, OK, well what can I do right now, in this situation where all of my friends and family are going through a hard time, what can I do for my community with just whatever gifts that I have?" Boyé said. He is at his core a musician and entertainer, so he threw out the idea of quarantine concerts online. Boyé said anyone could nominate a friend or family member, and he would show up with his own sound system and give a concert six feet away from their doorstep. He wasn't sure who would take him up on the offer when he made it.

"But we got like 500 nominations, it was crazy," he said. Boyé started giving concerts, and then his son asked whether he could come along. The concerts became a family event and started growing. Both the reactions of the concert nominees and his own were unexpected.

"Some of them were really, really sick, they would watch through the bedroom window and I'd perform on the other side," Boyé said. "But there was just a really good feeling."

He became good friends with some of the families he performed for and they've kept in touch. In the first months of the pandemic, Boyé visited some 70 families, and a number of patients he had performed for died not long after they met. Days after a concert, someone sent him a photo; it was of a woman he had performed for, taken on the day before she passed away, and she was wearing the T-shirt Boyé had given her.

There was an outpouring of thanks, Boyé said, and that really moved him. He's given performances for health care workers and first responders and police officers as well. "It turned out to be musically one of the

most fulfilling experiences I've had," Boyé said. "It just made you forget a little bit about our problems and what we're going through."

"It was really good for us to just get out it," Boyé said. In a way, he was sticking to the mission that got him started in music in the first place, and once he did that, everything else fell into place. Boyé started getting referrals and news coverage and with that, paid opportunities to tide him through the losses.

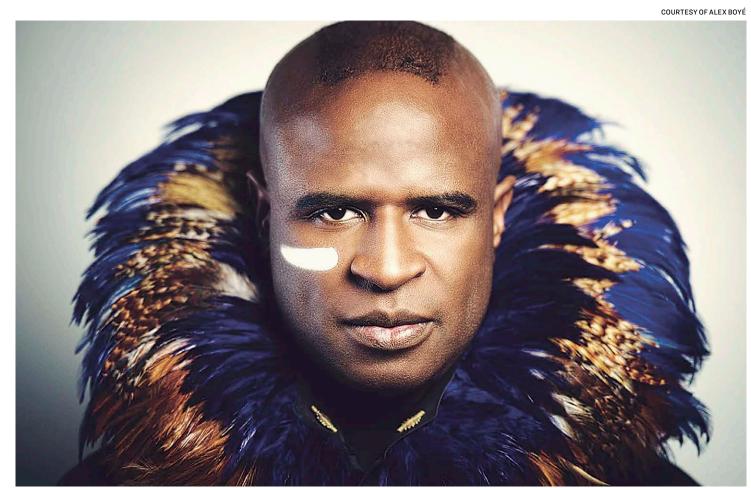
"And there have been messages saying, 'You've inspired me to do the same thing in my area or my community,' it's just been wonderful," Boyé said.

Music as a Mission

Boyé has accumulated a life philosophy that is relentlessly forward-looking, partly, as he sees, by necessity.

His parents are Nigerian, but Boyé never knew his father. As a child, his mother left to visit Nigeria and what was supposed to be a trip of some weeks turned into some years. Boyé ended up in foster homes, and was at one time homeless. At age 16, he was out on the streets in England, sometimes eating from trash cans; music became a way to survive, first as a street performer, then spiritually.

"When you get to that point, you can't get much lower than that," Boyé said. One of



The white marks on Boyé's face are a tribute to his mother and culture. His mother told him that during the slave trade, parents were often separated from their children. Mothers would put white marks on their children's faces that would represent a certain region, tribe, or even last name, in the hope that if they saw them years later, they would recognize them.

For five minutes, put a smile on someone's face, because that can mean the world.

Alex Boyé

(Below) Alex Boyé went from being homeless and suicidal at age 16 to becoming a professional musician and developing a relentlessly positive life philosophy. Now his goal is to make positive music that uplifts othersjust as music did for him.

(Below right) Alex Boyé speaks on behalf of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention during New York Fashion Week

the things that helped tide him over was clinging onto a dream: he would stand outside big, fancy venues, and picture himself one day performing in one of them. "To take my mind off what I was going through, I'd just go into this dream, and I'd start en-

It was escapism, but it had the undeniable effect of lifting his spirits. "Sometimes I still, whenever I can, I want to maintain that feeling of always dreaming, always looking forward to something," Boyé said. "Because I notice that the times when I'm down the most is when I have nothing to look forward to. So I just always try to pursue my passion in that way and look forward to something cool that can happen for me, and just working toward that."

During that low point of Boyé's life, he says he was even driven to suicidal thoughts. Sometimes his DJ friends would find a way to let him sneak into the nightclubs they were performing in and sleep in some corner so that he wouldn't be out sleeping in the streets. He remembers one night just bawling on the dance floor because he was so low, depressed, and adrift. Then a song came on, and Boyé says he can't for the life of him remember the name of it or what the lyrics were, but he remembers vividly

"It was just so inspiring," Boyé said. The words were something about how he could do this, keep going, and "that spoke to me."

"It changed everything for me. It felt [like] 10 years worth of therapy in 3:58. I just came alive. But before that, we're talking five minutes before that, I was suicidal," Boyé said. "How does that happen?"

"That was the day that I decided to be a professional musician," he said. "Because I thought, if that song, whatever it is, if that artist could do that for me, and have no idea who I was, if I could do the same thing, man, I could be like, 'I'm doing something right." Boyé has remained incredibly true to his mission, even eschewing a popular band career when he felt it was leading him off his original path.

His mission is about "music that brings you good vibes," he said. "That's what I'm about."

can Foundation for Suicide Prevention. About two years ago, Boyé was working on an album with producer Randy Jackson

of "American Idol." Around midnight, after the team had finished, Boyé took a break and was struck by sudden inspiration. "I just had this strong feeling that I needed to do another song-there was another

Years later, things came full circle, culmi-

nating into a partnership with the Ameri-

song out there that I needed to put on this album," Boyé said. He recalled that experience as a 16-year-old in the nightclub, and thought, "Do I have a song like that, could I be able to respond with a song that could make them feel better, feel inspired, decide not to do it, and just let them think, 'Let's just hold out for another day?"

He realized the album didn't have that song—yet.

"This was my chance," Boyé said. "This is what I've always said I wanted to do and now I could work with some of the best songwriters in the country. So I ran back in there and I was like, 'Guys, I know this is really strange'—and this was like 12 o'clock midnight—'but there's one more song that we need to do."

"They canceled their Ubers and we got back in the studio," Boyé said. The song they came out with an hour later was "Bend Not Break," and when ASFP executives heard it, they asked if they could use it in an upcoming campaign.

"I've probably done 30 or 40 events with them where I come and sing this song, and it's just so crazy, I've been getting these same messages as I felt when I was in that nightclub. They say, 'Thank you for writing this song, this is really what I needed," Boyé said. "Just completely amazing."

Authenticity

Life is full of ups and downs, especially working as an entertainer. So Boyé has determined that being positive is a choice, and it's one he hopes he can share with others.

"Being a musician is not the easiest thing, but this is what I know I'm supposed to do,"

Boyé says he's dealt with his share of failure, but part of what drives him is "if you stop, you never know what you'll be missing out." This means trial and error, and putting his heart and soul into whatever he does so that he has the chance to move the people who hear his music. Key to this is authenticity, he says.

Boyé's music is varied, from hymns to "Africanized" pop song covers, because the things that lend him spiritual strength manifest in his art. Faith is important to Boyé; prayer is part if his pre-performance regimen, as is a daily practice of gratitude. The media he seeks out is primarily that of inspirational stories and figures. Since he reconnected with his mother, he has sought out stories of his ancestry and history.

"Gospel music is pretty much part of my DNA," said Boyé, who was the first black soloist with the Tabernacle Choir and a principal singer for eight years. "Here is one that has special meaning to me: the

Then he got another, and another. In no time, all four judges had buzzed him down.

"Now, I'm a professional singer at that point," Boyé said. "The judges are like, 'You're not that good, you're not ready, maybe you should consider another career.' It just messed me up so hard."

Boyé cried the entire plane ride back home, and the depression wasn't shortlived. He realized that audition and subsequent dress down was going to be aired. "It was so humiliating," he said.

He felt wracked with anxiety every time he saw a stage from then on, thinking about those judges and the audience that chanted "Off, off, off the stage!" His self-esteem plummeted.

"I wanted to give up music, actually," he

He started watching music talent shows. He watched other people brave their fears, and decided he was going to audition again, for the same exact show.

"I'm a glutton for punishment," he said with a laugh. In truth, it was one of his best decisions. He knew he could run toward his fears or away from them, and because performing music was what he did for a living, that meant he would be running for the rest of his life. He had to face it.

"It was the scariest thing in my life," Boyé said. It was a panel of different judges this time, waiting as he stood backstage with his band and sweat running down his back. "And I got four yeses."

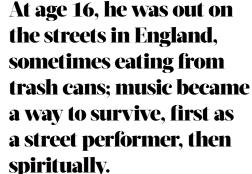
"I definitely grew a lot through that. It made me appreciate music and also appreciate the power of not letting your fears get the best of you, because it really did for me and I couldn't let it win," he said. "I knew I needed this final way to break through this barrier—and it could have gone either way, but I just thought, I'm going to take this no matter what happens. That way I have nothing to lose. I'm glad I did it!"

It's a lesson Boyé shares regularly with his kids.

"I just do all this cheesy stuff," he said. When Boyé puts his kids to bed, he tells them they're a winner, and he gets them to say it, too. "I'll be like, 'What are you?" Cue eye-rolling and groans, but they relent, because Boyé doesn't. "OK, yeah, I'm a winner, Dad."

They've come to appreciate it. His son had been struggling to accomplish something and one day decided, "I think I can do it now," even though he couldn't the day before. Boyé asked him what changed.

"Because I'm a winner!" his son an-



"And my daughter, she's 10, she's been through a lot for a year and a half. She's in gymnastics and was one of the top, but then she got to something that's called a back walkover, a back walkover on the beam, and she just could not do it and got really, really depressed," he said. "She was put down back another level, so now she's not where she was before, and she was just heartbroken, and distressed."

"But I just kept telling her, 'You know what? This is OK, this is good, because more than all the successes you'll have because success doesn't always make you grow—your failures do. The hard stuff," he said. Then one day, while on the road, he got a call from his wife who said, "She's finally got it."

"I talked to her and she was so excited, and I asked her what it was, how she did it," he said. "And she said, 'Dad, I just went in, and I had it on a piece of paper and I just wrote 'I'm a winner' and I put it in my locker and looked at it before I went on. I just felt this was the day I was going to do it."

Boyé often likens life to the English

"It can be really sunny one day, but bring your umbrella because it's going to rain. And then it could be raining, but just hold on because the sun is going to come out again soon," Boyé said. "Whatever you are going through is going to pass." He hopes his music is a reminder of that.

"For five minutes, I just want to put a smile on someone's face, because that can mean the world. That can mean the world to someone, like how it was for me," he said. "It was like a drink to a thirsty person, you know? Especially nowadays; we need to find ways of getting light, and sharing it."



Melody Ormond and her grandmother, Pat, at the graduation ceremony

Grandmother, 75, **Graduates From** College Alongside Granddaughter, 22

LOUISE BEVAN

A grandmother who sacrificed her college education to work and raise her kids has graduated with a bachelor's degree beside her 22-year-old granddaughter.

Melody Ormond convinced her grandmother Pat, 75, to enroll at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga (UTC) with her to give her life a new focus. Pat rose to the challenge, inspiring everyone that it's never too

"Nana has seen and experienced a lot of things, and I would like to be able to say that when I'm older," said Melody, according to a UTC news release.

Both women received their degrees at a socially distanced commencement ceremony on Nov. 20. An archeology enthusiast, Pat earned her bachelor's degree in anthropology with high honors; Melody earned her bachelor's in psychology.

In 1963, Pat enrolled at the Marietta/Cobb Area Vocational Technical School in Atlanta and took several computer courses for the next few years that followed. With her newfound knowledge, she set up various computer systems in accounting firms in both Atlanta and Chattanooga.

I thought she could go back to college and inspire all of us to know that we can do anything at any age.

Melody Ormond

In 1978, she took up an Accounting 1 class at Kennesaw State University in Atlanta, but left after one semester and moved to Chattanooga. As she was also raising a family and working 40–60 hours a week, she never got an opportunity to finish her degree.

"The money had to be used for classes only after living expenses and the children's expenses were taken care of," she explained. "This meant there was very little left for my education."

Pat's family encouraged her college dream after retirement, and Melody was her greatest champion. "I thought she could go back to college and inspire all of us to know that we



Pat Ormond with her granddaughter, Melody, as a baby.

can do anything at any age," Melody

"I was becoming a bit of a homebody and a pain," Pat reflected. "People, when they retire, they still need something to accomplish, a goal."

Decades after stepping into her first college class, Pat enrolled with Melody at UTC in 2017.

For Melody, having her grandmother on campus "definitely just made me want to push harder."

To ensure being able to graduate together, Pat sometimes undertook five courses per semester, along with labs. After three years, she graduated with a 3.79 grade point average, while Melody maintained a 3.4 GPA,

according to the UTC news release. Pat attributes her tenacity to her father. He told her she could achieve whatever she set her mind to, "and that was kind of odd for a man born in 1910," Pat said.

Melody is not the only person inspired by Pat's achievements. "[Students] would ask me, 'Well, do you think my mother could go back to college?" Melody told CBS News. "I'd say, 'Well, you know, if she can afford

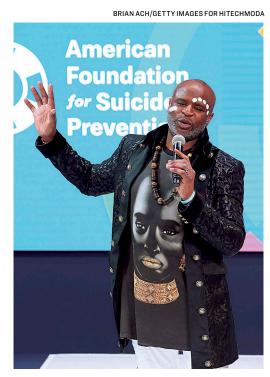
it, there's no reason for her not to." As for what the future holds for the duo, Melody is on a break and plans to pursue a master's degree, while her grandmother already has her sights set on a second bachelor's degree in history and plans to complete it by 2023.

Pat's best advice for others is to seize the day. "Don't waste this time you have while you're young to get an education," she said, "Go ahead

You can share them with us at emg. inspired@epochtimes.nyc.

We would love to hear your stories!







Success doesn't always make you grow-your failures do. The hard stuff.

THE EPOCH TIMES Week 52, 2020

Alex Boyé

BRIAN ACH/GETTY IMAGES FOR HITECHMODA $\bigcirc \bigcirc \bigcirc \bigcirc \bigcirc \bigcirc$

Alex Boyé in New York City on Feb. 8, 2020.

song is called 'I Want Jesus to Walk With Me.' After recording the song, the directors of the choir wanted to do something a little unique for the music video. I traveled to Ghana and shot my solos in a place called Cape Coast Castle, where 65 percent of slaves came from at the time. It was a powerful reminder of how far we've come; but also a tribute to many whose lives and future generations were changed forever."

Learning about African cultures has been meaningful to Boyé, because it wasn't something he always connected with.

"My mom used to always rib me, and say, 'Why don't you put some African music in?" he said. Boyé laughed. "I live in Utah!" But then a few years ago, The Piano Guys reached out to Boyé to do a collaboration, a classical cover of a Coldplay song, except they wanted Boyé to sing the lyrics in Swahili.

he tried to learn it anyway, and it was a bust. Boyé called his mother, who started teaching him Yoruba, her language.

"I'm from England!" he thought. But

"Just how natural it felt—it was like I always knew it, it was part of my roots," Boyé said. "And I felt so comfortable singing it." It sparked in Boyé an interest in his own heritage. It also sparked interest worldwide,

as the music video collaboration, sung in Swahili and Yoruba, went viral within two hours and messages flooded in, with countless media outlets wanting to publish

He called his mother, who promptly said, "I told you so."

"I just found that there was something in that, in trying to be as authentic as possible, in being yourself, because no one can be that for you, you can find a way to connect with people," Boyé said.

There was another story his mother shared that had a profound impact on Boyé. During the slave trades, fathers were often separated from their children and put on different ships heading toward different parts of the world, but mothers had an idea, he said.

"They were putting a mark on their kids' faces, so that if they saw them again 20 years later they would recognize them," he said. His mother shared the meanings of these different marks, and how she could recognize the region, tribe, or in some cases even the last name based on the marks alone. "It's powerful; that resonated with me so hard." In some of Boyé's videos, you can see him wearing a white mark under

"That was my tribute to my culture and my mother," he said.

Breaking Through Fears

Not all of Boyé's experiments have turned into successes. There have been many failures, and one of them even became widely televised and haunted him for some time.

"I've been on 'America's Got Talent' three times in the span of 10 years," Boyé said. The first time he didn't make it in, but the second time he made it to the point of a televised audition.

"I was so pumped, so excited," he said. Everyone had loved his pre-audition and he felt good about his chances. "And I get on stage ... within 10 seconds I got my first buzzer."

Zoom School Gets an F, But Some Online Learning Providers Excel

KERRY MCDONALD

tudents in 40 percent of school districts across the country haven't been inside a classroom since last spring, and others are now returning to virtual "Zoom school" as coronavirus cases rise. Remote public schooling as a response to school shutdowns has been a disaster for many children, with a record number of F grades issued this academic year. Both parents and kids are fed up with Zoom school, and teachers are frustrated with it as well. The Washington Post ran a headline this month saying we must finally admit that "remote education is a failure."

It's important to make a distinction here: Remote pandemic public schooling may be a failure, but remote education more generally is flourishing. Many private, online learning providers are seeing their enrollment numbers climb, as parents search for high-quality, virtual education options for their children and teens. Here are three remote education programs that are excelling during the pandemic:

My Tech High

My Tech High was launched 12 years ago by entrepreneur and educator, Matt Bowman, and it has experienced rapid growth. With the 2020 school shutdowns, My Tech High's popularity surged, growing 150 percent over 2019 to serve nearly 20,000 students in eight states. Most of the students attend tuition-free, accessing My Tech High through innovative partnerships with charter school networks and some school districts that allow for a more personalized, home-based education for young people ages 5 to 18. It's been a particularly big hit with military families who move around a lot and value the program's consistency and customization.

"We have seen that when it's done right (i.e. not Zoom-schooling all day), students can truly thrive in a personalized education program like My Tech High," says Bowman. Entrepreneurship is a cornerstone principle at My Tech High, and children of all ages are encouraged to be creative and inventive. "With our focus on tech and entrepreneurship," says Bowman, "we have students as knowledging that many parents were unyoung as 5 years old learning the basics of certain about the quality of their school coding and we've had 8-year-old students district's remote learning approach and start their own profitable businesses."

Arizona State University (ASU) **Prep Digital**

school network affiliated with Arizona State University that offers a particularly innovative program for high school students across the country. Fully online and self-paced, the ASU Prep Digital high school program is high-touch with regular, live, online check-ins with teachers and mentors. It is fully accredited and students choose. They can also enroll as a part-time

ASU Prep Digital is a K-12 virtual charter



A key benefit of ASU Prep Digital is that it allows enrolled students to attend concurrent online classes through Arizona State University, accumulating college credits while still in high school and dramatically reducing the cost of college when those credits are ultimately transferred to a fouryear university. Moreover, students who do well academically at ASU Prep Digital automatically meet the admission requirements to attend Arizona State University.

The best news? ASU Prep Digital is tuition-free for Arizona residents and, at just under \$7,000 a year, an affordable option for many out-of-state high school students as well. When parents consider that the tuition includes college credits during high school that ultimately defray university costs, it becomes even more appealing.

Sure enough, enrollment at ASU Prep Digital skyrocketed 700 percent this year over 2019, to 4,500 students. The school's CEO, Julie Young, led the Florida Virtual School from its inception in 1997 as the nation's first public, fully online school. She told Inside Higher Ed that school shutdowns and related remote learning plans are responsible for ASU Prep Digital's recent enrollment surge. "We are definitely hearing from families that the pandemic is a catalyst for our growth," she said, acvalued more well-established, reputable online learning options.

Galileo is an online, self-directed learning program for homeschoolers, unschoolers, worldschoolers, and other students who are seeking a bit of structure, access to more classes, and a lot of community. Daily, virtual check-ins with a teacher and small groups of students around the globe offer opportunities for consistent social connection, goal-setting, group presentations, can receive a high school diploma if they and accountability. Classes are offered throughout the week on a wide range of

allows them to cancel at any time. Launched in the summer of 2019 by a group of parents, educators, and software developers, Galileo has grown from 20 students in its inaugural group to 159 students this fall in 28 countries. Lizz Quain, a director at Galileo, says that while some of these students likely would have joined Galileo regardless of the pandemic, school shut-

> "Some former public and private school families who were disillusioned with the traditional school system and wanted a change anyway did enroll, are enjoying this new [to them] way of learning, and plan to stick around," Quain told me in a recent interview. "Some of those parents were so aghast at how their previous schools were handling distance learning, realized that their kids weren't getting a good education,

> decided to look for a better online learning

environment, and found Galileo."

downs and remote learning have boosted

topics, from history, math, and foreign languages to debate clubs, music clubs, book

groups, and entrepreneurship incubators.

Tuition plans start at \$2,000 per year, or

parents can choose a monthly option that

Quain believes that the trend toward remote learning was already emerging before 2020 and that parents will continue to seek enriching and effective virtual education models for their children. "The future of online learning was happening pre-pandemic. The pandemic just brought it to the forefront and to the masses," says Quain. "Unfortunately traditional schools don't know how to do online learning well. Future-focused and innovative edtech companies such as Galileo are being created to disrupt the traditional education model by truly engaging students, making learning fun again, and allowing for individualized learning, for students to pursue their passions and to create life-long, independent learners."

Pandemic Zoom school may be a shortlived failure, but online learning is set to soar. Families have grown more comfortable with virtual interactions this year, more parents will telework post-pandemic, and many students appreciate flexible, customizable education approaches—particularly when they offer an accelerated pathway to college or career goals.

Innovative, private online learning proriders will continue to emerge and expand offering more high-quality, low-cost, individualized education options for students and families. As Quain says: "Once students get a taste of the freedom to choose what they want to learn, it's not the easiest transition to return to a top-down, authoritarian, and institutional learning environment."

Kerry McDonald is a senior education fellow at FEE and author of "Unschooled: Raising Curious, Well-Educated Children Outside the Conventional Classroom" (Chicago Review Press, 2019). This article was originally published on FEE.org

(Above) The Baroque-style Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, Russia, is reflected in a puddle on Palace Square. (Below) Chandeliers hang from the vaulted ceiling in a corridor near Alexander Hall.

LARGER THAN LIFE: ART THAT INSPIRES US THROUGH THE AGES

St. Petersburg's Sumptuous Winter Palace

ussia's monumental pastelgreen Winter Palace in St. Petersburg was once home to some of the country's most notable emperors and empresses. The palace encompasses many types of art and architecture, including Baroque, Neoclassical, and Gothic styles, through to Rococo.

commissioned Italian architect Bartolomeo Francesco Rastrelli to build a Baroque win- architecture, and so the palace took on a of its world-renowned collection.

ter palace that would surpass the beauty of the best European palaces. Constructed over eight years, the pal-

ace contains more than 460 sumptuous rooms. But not all the rooms were decorated according to the original Baroque design. In 1762, just after her coronation, Empress Catherine II (Catherine the Great) In 1754, Empress Elizabeth Petrovna took up residence in the Winter Palace. She favored the new Neoclassical style of

more refined style.

After a fire ravaged the building in 1837, the style of the palace changed again. Russian architect Vasily Stasov restored the exterior, the Jordan Staircase, the Grand Church, and the main state suites to the original design and decoration. Some of the rooms he decorated were made even more opulent. For example, he gilded the Neoclassical columns in the Armorial Hall. And Russian artist Alexander Briullov redesigned and decorated some of the smaller rooms in 19th-century fashion, from Gothic to Rococo styles. One of the notable new rooms was the Malachite Drawing Room, which was the reception room for the empress's suite.

The 1903 Winter Palace Ball marked the last great gathering of the imperial family. Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich said it was "the last spectacular ball in the history of the empire."

Now the Winter Palace is part of the State Hermitage Museum, and Catherine the Great's art collections form the foundation





The Armorial Hall.







(From left to right) 1. A marble statue in an alcove on the Jordan Staircase. 2. A Russian throne in St. George Hall (the Large Throne Room), the main hall for all the Russian czars. 3. The Rococo-style Jordan Staircase. 4. The 1812 War Gallery.





The Malachite Drawing Room.

DEAR NEXT GENERATION:

'We need to keep the final destination in mind'

→ Advice from our readers to our young people

Grandma's Quotes:

- 1. If you're ever headed the wrong way in life, remember the road to Heaven allows U-turns.
- 2. The future should be very important to you. It's where you will spend the rest of your life.
- 3. It's a wasted day if you haven't laughed. 4. Of all the things you wear, your ex-
- pression is the most important. 5. If you're afraid you'll make a mistake,
- you won't make anything. 6. If you want to leave footprints in the sands of time, wear work boots.
- 7. It takes two people to start an argument, and only one to end it.
- 8. If you don't have anything nice to say don't say anything.
- 9. Be the job big or small, do it well or not at all.
- 10. Pink sky in morning, sailors take

- warning. Pink sky at night, sailors
- 11.30 days has September, April, June, and November, all the rest have 31 except for February has 28 (every four

My mom used to say these to us. Now I tell my grandkids.

—Arline Tobola

It takes two people to start an argument, and only one to end it.

Dear Next Generation,

When I was young, I heard an older person say, "Always remember, you are just passing through." At the time, I didn't think much about these words. There is a tendency when you are young to think that life will always be the way you see it around you. But now that I am much older, I see that there is wisdom in these words. We are just passing through, but it matters greatly how we pass through. We are all heading somewhere, and we need to keep the final destination in mind.

It affects the way we live life in the present,

Private online

providers are

expanding

low-cost,

eaucation

options.

and offering

high-quality,

individualized

learning

especially when we realize there are eternal consequences for the way we "pass through." Our lives are valuable and important in spite of the hard knocks we take and the problems that we ourselves cause. Our lives end up affecting others in ways we can't even imagine. We would probably be amazed and even horrified if we could somehow be given a visual picture of the impact our words and actions were having on others. With this in mind, we need to live respectfully, honor-

people as important as our own. Will we make mistakes? Absolutely, and some of them will be serious. Can we be forgiven? Yes, but we have to ask for it in sincerity and realize our great need for it. I believe there is a "happily ever after" to

life, but it's not in the here and now. It's in

the final destination. But we need to "pass

ing God and considering the lives of other

through" in the right way in order to get there. Since I've always loved fairy tales and now have grandchildren, I recently wrote a fairy tale for children. This gave me a chance to express these ideas in a creative way. It's called "The Kingdom of Fairwind" and was published last year. I do believe in —Phyllis Woods

What advice would you like to give to the younger generations?

We call on all of our readers to share the timeless values that define right and wrong, and pass the torch, if you will, through your wisdom and hard-earned experience. We feel that the passing down of this wisdom has diminished over time, and that only with a strong moral foundation can future generations thrive.

Send your advice, along with your full name, state, and contact information to Next-Generation@epochtimes.com or mail it to:

Next Generation, The Epoch Times, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, NY 10001

Homeschool Resolutions: 21 Ideas for 2021

BARBARA DANZA

As the holidays wind down and we pack away ornaments while enjoying the last remnants of homemade cookies, homeschool parents are looking ahead to the next segment of the homeschool year.

Veteran homeschoolers often report that the early months of the year, when daylight is scarce and temperatures are low, can be a challenging time to maintain motivation. Add to that a lingering pandemic and, well, it might be a good idea to have some homeschool resolutions in your back pocket. Here are 21 ideas to consider for 2021.

1. Be Present

When you're home, there are so many other things besides your homeschool responsibilities that beckon—the mess in the corner, laundry, screens, and incoming messages. However, the most important thing you can do is to be fully present with your kids as you work through your homeschool day.

Add an element of unexpected delight by sprinkling in some 'sudden' cancellations to the mix.

2. Upgrade the Soundtrack

Add new music to your playlists to create a lovely atmosphere that is conducive to focus and creativity. We find that focusing on one classical composer at a time has been a remarkably easy way to learn about the genre and periods of music through history, as well as to simply being able to recognize the composer of a piece by ear. **9. Documentary Nights**

Marketing guru Seth Godin once stated: "If it's work, we try to figure out how to do less. If it's art, we try to figure out how to do more." Turn your homeschool assignment into art projects and watch how much more fun they become.

see what's working and what's not. Sepa-your goals for the rest of the year.

rate the wheat from the chaff and keep your highest priorities front and center. From your schedule to the volume of materials you keep on hand, simplify, simplify,

5. Go Outside

Author Alfred Wainright famously wrote, "There's no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing." Don't let some sprinkles or chilly temperatures stop you and your family from lacing up those shoes, bundling up in those coats, and heading out the door each day.

6. Just Add Treats

Sometimes the work is a struggle. When the long division feels like a chore or the writing project has reached a stall, just add treats. It's amazing what a plate of freshly baked cookies, a bowl of warm popcorn, or a platter of sliced fruit can do to help push on through.

7. Plan to Cancel

Add an element of unexpected delight by sprinkling in some "sudden" cancellations to the mix. That Tuesday, when you canceled math and drove to the beach, or that Thursday, when you scrapped school for the day and headed to the zoo, will become the memories that your children will look back on with a giant smile.

8. Start a Project

Don't forget to offer your kids opportunities to take on longer-term projects, such as producing a research paper, a presentation, a website, or a movie. Put to work their creative interests on projects that teach values such as consistent effort, persistence, resourcefulness, and overcoming

Winter nights are especially conducive to movie nights. Make some of them educational by strategically sprinkling in documentaries that enhance the topics you're already studying or those that your kids have expressed particular interest in.

Just because you're homeschooling doesn't mean you need to do all the educating Now that you've got a few months of this yourself. Look ahead at the new year and homeschool year under your belt, you can decide how you can outsource some of

Gradually give your children more responsibility, whether that means taking charge of a new chore or getting involved

in your community.

11. Schedule a Makeup

Life happens, and that feeling of falling behind schedule can nag at a homeschooler. Pencil in a lifeline right on your calendar by scheduling makeup days or even a week where all you do is catch up.

12. Celebrate

When the big holidays are over, it doesn't mean you should stop celebrating. Think of fun things to do for holidays like Valentine's Day, Groundhog Day, Presidents' Day, Saint Patrick's Day, Spring Equinox, Easter, and any birthdays or anniversaries that your family may be marking.

13. Increase Responsibility

Now that your homeschool year has been running for a while, perhaps it's time to place more responsibility on the shoulders of your children. Whether that means taking charge of a new chore around the house, getting involved in the community, getting a job, or starting an independent venture, encourage age-appropriate incremental increases in the responsibilities vour children carry.

14. Start a Journal

An easy way to ensure that writing practice **21. Remember Gratitude** happens consistently is to incorporate the practice of journal writing into the mix. Give your kids attractive journals and fun homeschool your children. It's such a gift pens and stickers to encourage them to for them, for you, and for everyone they'll

15. Use the Library

Hopefully current circumstances haven't

snocked out the services of your local library. Use the request system to focus on specific authors or topics and regularly visit the library with your kids.

Don't be too serious. Tell silly jokes. Sing silly songs. Lighten up and laugh with your

17. Add Anticipation

After the year we just had, what family doesn't need something to look forward to. Put a fun excursion or celebration on the calendar. Even if you pencil it in for the end of the coming year, just knowing that you've got something to look forward to makes the day-to-day that much easier.

18. Notice Progress

It's easy to notice that your 6-year-old is struggling with reading or that your 12-year-old is just not getting algebra, but how often do you remember the areas in which your children are excelling? Don't forget to notice and cheer them on when they're knocking it out of the park—which might be a lot more often than you think.

19. Let Them Linger

Sometimes you'll hit on something that totally fascinates your kids, whether it's the Revolutionary War, the Great Barrier Reef, Chinese characters, oil painting, woodworking, or photography. When they're genuinely interested, back up and

20. Connection Over Completion

You've got a list with boxes that you just want to check off, but don't lose sight of the importance of connecting with your children during this period of their lives. Checking boxes is not nearly as important as connecting with your kids and walking with them along this homeschooling journey together.

Pause regularly to reflect on all that you're grateful for—including this opportunity to impact in their lives going forward. When the going gets tough, sit with gratitude for a while. The perspective it brings can be extraordinary.

SAMIRA BOUAOU/EPOCH TIMES

PARENTING

Family Staycation: How to Make the Most of Winter Break

BARBARA DANZA

As the kids begin their winter vacation, the last few weeks of the year present many opportunities for quality family time. Here are 10 ideas to make the most of your time together and have a fun winter staycation.

Play Tourist

If you were visiting from out of town, what would you do? Check out the local tour-things to do that you may have previously overlooked or taken for granted.

Plan a Game Night

Check the weather forecast and schedule a family game day, or game night, whenever the most unfavorable weather is predicted. Serve your favorite snacks and prepare dinner in the slow cooker to keep things easy. Turn off the digital devices and pull out your family's favorite board games. This is a great activity that compels everyone to remain present and focused on time together.

Visit Local Zoos, Museums,

Historical Sites Just as these are likely points of interest you'd seek out on vacation, don't overlook these destinations in your own backyard.

It may have been a while since you last vis-

ited, or there may be some you haven't gotten to yet. Enjoy these local attractions with your family and make a day of it! Make sure to call ahead and arrange reservations, as they may have limited capacity.

Go Out for Ice Cream

Because every good vacation needs ice cream, head to your favorite local spot or try out a new place!

Experiencing local cuisine is a key element of any good vacation. Get takeout from a restaurant you've been meaning to try and enjoy a meal with your family.

Go Ice Skating or Snow Tubing Celebrate the new winter season by partak-

ing in some good old-fashioned winter fun on your winter staycation.

Avoid the Temptation to Catch Up

A pitfall that parents may run into on "staycation" is giving in to the temptation to work. If at all possible, allow yourself to really enjoy the fruits of a vacation by not burdening yourself with work or chores. It may be tempting to want to get ahead, but allow your focus to remain on restoration and family. You'll be back at work soon enough.



Head outdoors to enjoy winter fun.

A pitfall that parents may run into on 'staycation' is giving in to the temptation to work.

Head Downtown

Venture out for a day of shopping and exploring your very own town or city. Great joy can be had in appreciating your own backyard. Don't forget to pick up a souvenir from your staycation!

Hit the Library

Stock up on books and enjoy actually having that time to read them. Encourage the kids to try new genres, or pick up books about a budding interest or your local area.

Review the Year With Gratitude

Tell your kids what you were most grateful for this year and encourage them to share the same. A staycation is a great opportunity to appreciate all the riches in your life.







depicting Gen. George Washington and his troops crossing the Delaware River on Christmas night, to Trenton, N.J., in 1776.



n the night of Dec. 25, 1776, Gen. George Washington and his army of cold, hungry soldiers boarded boats to cross the Delaware River and surprise the opposing Hessian forces in Trenton, New Jersey.

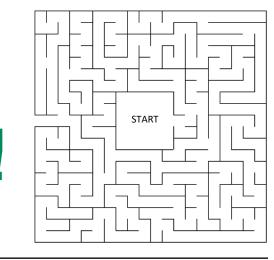
Washington's troops crossed in dangerous water conditions and in the midst of a storm of freezing rain, snow, and wind.

The strategy to catch the troops off-guard after a night of Christmas celebration proved wise and the patriots enjoyed a much needed, swift victory, marking a key turning point in the Revolutionary War.

By Aidan Danza, age 14

ALL ABOUT DIRT: HOW SOILS FORM Rocks weather in a few different ways. be. Roots will anchor soil, making it stable. permanently frozen, it can inhibit things Temperature change, wind, water flow, going in and out of the soil. A large amount Worms will leave their castings, fertilizing the soil; and decomposing organic material of water over an extended period of time gravity, chemical reactions, and living things can break rocks down into small will change soil, as will dry conditions. will make the soil only more fertile. oils form in many Temperature and wind also have an effect. particles. Oftentimes, the type of rock will Time plays an enormous factor in what different ways, causing influence the soil it forms. For example, The shape of land, or topography, stage a soil is in. Most of these impacts them to exhibit many soils made from granite are often coarse, take a very long time to occur. Climate impacts the formation of soil. If soil is sandy, and useless, while basalt soil is formed over a sloping area, its top layer isn't something that changes very often different characteristics usually very fertile clay. This process can and suddenly, just like topography, which may slide downhill over time. Loose take anywhere from a few dozen to tens of substances, such as leaf litter, will also slide usually stays constant. The weathering of as seen in my last article about the down a hill, taking away organic material thousands of years! rocks can take tens of thousands of years! types of soil. Fundamentally, though, Soil scientists refer to these factor all soil begins with the weathering of as CIORPT: climate, organisms, process, many factors come into play. Living things or organisms play an rock and impacts of other factors, enormous part in soil formation. The more Climate can be a very significant in relief (topography), parent material life there is in soil, the more fertile it will (disintegrating rocks), and time soil formation. For example, if soil is such as climate, the shape of the land, living things, and time. incorporate large amounts of organic matter

AMAZING ESCAPES



USE THE FOUR NUMBERS IN THE CORNERS, AND THE OPERANDS (+, - AND X) to build an equation to get the solution in the middle. There may be more than one "unique" solution but, there may also be "equivalent" solutions. For example: $6 + (7 \times 3) + 1 = 28$ and $1 + (7 \times 3) + 6 = 28$



Solution For Easy 1

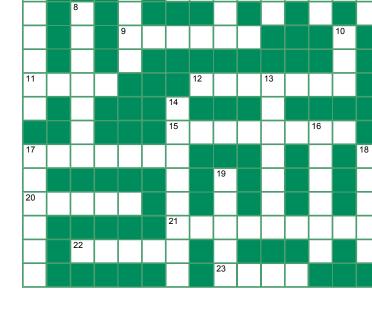
(2-1)×4×5



Solution for Medium 1 (11 + 5) × (3 + 11)



(23 - 19) × 13 - 12



Macy's holiday window (7) "The Nutcracker" dancer (9) Christmas decoration (6) Santa has a long one on Christmas

12 "___ begins at home" (7)

"Frosty" air? (4) **8** News (7)

10 "____ to the World" (3) **13** His nose glows! (7)

Dec. holiday, briefly (4)

14 Santa leaves these under the tree (8)

What we like to do to our tree (8)

2 What we decorate with outside (6)

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bought them a turkey) (5)

Christmas dinner (before Scrooge

____ giving is a holiday tradition (4)

16 Holiday drink (6)

17 Who we like to spend Christmas with (6)

18 Hot mulled holiday drink (5)

Many people display these during the holidays (5)

15 Dasher, Dancer, Prancer & Vixen, etc. (8)

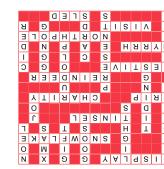
17 Celebratory (7)

20 A gift of the Magi (5)

21 Santa's spot (5,4)

22 Christmas tradition with family (5)

23 What Comet, Cupid, Donner, etc. pull (4)





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