

# THE EPOCH TIMES

# LIFE &

# TRADITION

EVAN NING/EPOCH TIMES



Shen Yun Performing Arts' curtain call at the Providence Performing Arts Center in Providence, R.I., on Feb. 6, 2016.

## MUSIC

## An Age-Old Therapy That's Finding New Audiences

How Shen Yun soothes troubled minds, hearts, and bodies

CATHERINE YANG

The entire secret is to be found in music, from which we want to construct a completely different therapeutic system.

—Nicolaus Lenau, an Austrian poet and advocate of music therapy in the 1800s

Many years ago, Vincent Cavarra was fighting cancer when he bought himself a ticket to a Shen Yun Performing Arts performance. Partway through the classical Chinese dance and music production, the emcees said that in ancient China, music was considered medicine, and the two Chinese characters even resemble each other.

“**Music can lift us out of depression or move us to tears.**”

Dr. Oliver Sacks,  
professor of neurology  
and best-selling author

That idea struck Cavarra, who immediately wrote a note for himself, “music is for healing.”

“I was very sick, I was fighting cancer. And when I heard that, I wrote it down, and from that point, I listened, more and more and more,” Cavarra said. He felt a change in himself, and that night when he went home, he sought out music online that was similar to what he had heard performed by New York-based Shen Yun’s orchestra. It was the start of his healing journey, he said.

Five years later, he attended another Shen Yun performance and told his story to a reporter. It’s not magic, he said, it’s this music. “It helps me sleep, I have gotten strong,

and I can stand, and I can walk, I could run,” he said. “No more cancer, no more bad heart.”

Cavarra had brought friends to share in his fortune that night.

“I brought two [friends] today. ... I said, ‘Come, let me show you what I see.’ He has Parkinson’s disease, he’s learning now also, now I’m trying to bring him out and let him see,” he said.

Normally, his friend wouldn’t have been able to sit through a two-hour performance, he said. But that night, “his eyes were wide open, very alert, just keen on what he was seeing.”

Continued on Page 2

JEFF MINICK

### Success: What It Means and Why It Matters

Now that 2022 is upon us, some people are doubtless trying to uphold those resolutions they made on New Year’s Day: losing weight, working out, spending less time on social media, and other exercises in self-discipline aimed at creating better habits.

In addition to desire, willpower, and stamina, veterans of the resolution wars know that one key to victory is to make their vows as specific as possible. Instead of the vague injunction “lose weight,” for example, they aim to “lose one pound a

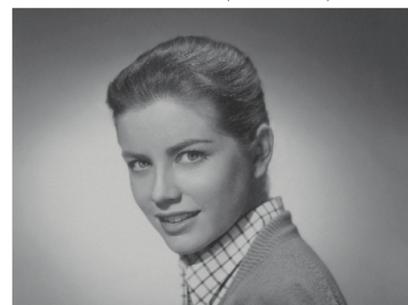
week for 20 weeks.” If they want to get into shape, they leave aside the hazy “exercise more” and join a gym with the intention of exercising there every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning.

All well and good.

But the advent of a new year also provides the perfect opportunity to pause and look at our lives writ large. Losing 20 pounds is a worthy endeavor, but a big picture examination of ourselves can also bring benefits. This inquiry might find us standing in front of a mirror asking such questions as these:

Continued on Page 3

PICTORIAL PARADE/ARCHIVE PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES



Actress Dolores Hart was expected to be the next Grace Kelly. She left Hollywood and took an altogether different path.

## MUSIC

# An Age-Old Therapy That's Finding New Audiences

How Shen Yun soothes troubled minds, hearts, and bodies

Continued from Page 1

This music “brings health, absolutely. No question, no doubt in my mind,” he said. “It brings you to a whole other place, a better place.”

## An Age-Old Therapy

Music therapy is an idea as old as time, present in cultures from the East to the West and everywhere in between. The human body was considered a work of sacred creation, as was the natural world. Balance of the internal and external through music was an exercise in better understanding the Creator’s grand design.

Ancient Greece and, later, medieval medical theory taught that the four temperaments of melancholic, sanguine, choleric, and phlegmatic corresponded respectively to the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water, and governed the health of an individual. Enlightenment-era Baroque composers and doctors believed they could, through musical figurations, balance the humors toward health.

Ancient Chinese music and medical theory were even more direct. Chinese music is based on a pentatonic scale, with five main notes, and each of these corresponds to the five elements—fire, earth, metal, water, and wood—corresponding respectively to the five major internal organs—the heart, spleen, lungs, kidneys, and liver. These five tones further correspond to five emotions. For example, the “jue” tone, which corresponds to wood and the liver, incites or soothes fury in the listener, depending on how the music is written and performed.

Music is in harmony with heaven and earth. ... Virtuous, elegant music is in alignment with the motion of matter and with the principles of human health. It possesses a pure energy.

—Records of the Grand Historian, written during the Han Dynasty around 94 B.C.

Shen Yun’s composers and musicians are aware of this theory, and the company often explains the philosophy behind its music.

As it explains on its website, “In ancient China, music was not only a form of entertainment but also a way of spiritual elevation. Refining one’s character and seeking harmony with heaven was a natural part of the artistic process.”

The company’s artists today seek to do the same, “reviving this tradition of self-refinement and cultivation in the arts.” The artists are all meditators, spiritual seekers, and live by the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance.

I should be sorry if I only entertained them; I wished to make them better.

—George Frederic Handel, perhaps the most successful of Baroque composers

## Music, Water, Life

In 2004, Japanese businessman Masaru Emoto published “The Hidden Messages



COURTESY OF SHEN YUN

▲ The music of Shen Yun Symphony Orchestra soothes the soul.

**In ancient China, music was considered medicine, and the two Chinese characters even resemble each other.**

Shen Yun Performing Arts’ curtain call at the Paramount Theatre in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on Oct. 24, 2021.

in Water,” and his book quickly became a bestseller. You may have heard of his experiment: Emoto exposed distilled water to various sounds, including classical music and heavy metal. The water that had experienced the vibrations of Mozart’s “Jupiter” symphony produced ornate, geometrically perfect crystals. By contrast, water that experienced heavy metal crystallized in distorted shapes. Emoto concluded that the hexagonal crystals he saw represented the life force of Mother Nature.

Human beings, being largely composed of water, must similarly react to different types of sound, Emoto thought, and so went on to treat clinically ill patients with water that he had treated with vibrational information.

“I believe that music was created to bring our vibration back to its intrinsic state. It’s human nature to create music that readjusts the vibrations distorted by history. That’s why I’m so certain that music is a form of healing before it is an art,” Emoto said.

Hope is an elevation of the soul or spirits; but despair is a depression of this: all of which are things which can very naturally be represented with sound, especially when the other circumstances (tempo in particular) contribute their part. And in this way one can form a sensitive concept of all the emotions and compose accordingly.

—Johann Mattheson, Baroque composer and music theorist, diplomat, and advocate of music therapy

## ‘They Touched My Soul’

Music can raze out the written troubles of the brain.

—William Shakespeare

The Epoch Times has covered Shen Yun since its inception, as it believes the company’s undertaking to be culturally historic. Year after year, audiences report the experience as a rejuvenating one, refreshing and even healing of the body, mind, and spirit.

In 2016, Dennis Langevin, a reverend and veteran, saw a performance in Waterbury, Connecticut, mostly to sate his curiosity about this show he had seen advertised ubiquitously.

“I’m retired military and I’m 100 percent disabled, so I spend a lot of time in pain. So while I’m sitting in the seats, all of a sudden I have a realization—I wasn’t feeling any more pain!” said Langevin, offering his thanks to each and every one of the performers, with a special thank you to the orchestra members. “Two hours that they’re performing, my pain is gone.”

“I’m a Marine, and we’re known for being tough guys, Marines. Well, it brought a tear to my eye here. How do you say thank you for someone who can do that for you? So once again, thank you very much,” he said.

“I fought in Vietnam, and a lot of memories came rushing back for me,” he said, most notably when one of the storytelling dances showed a believer standing up for his faith in modern-day China, in defiance of the atheist Chinese Communist Party. Shen Yun’s conviction toward justice and faith impressed Langevin as much as their skill and professionalism.

“That just kind of touched my soul. No matter what, he didn’t change his belief. ... More people should be like that. That’s just a wonderful, wonderful thing that they do, and again a wonderful thing they did for me. Thank you so much.

“They touched my heart and they touched my soul, and few people ever do that.”

Music can lift us out of depression or move us to tears—it is a remedy, a tonic, orange juice for the ear. But for many of my neurological patients, music is even more—it can provide access, even when no medication can, to movement, to speech, to life. For them, music is not a luxury, but a necessity.

—Dr. Oliver Sacks, professor of neurology, physician, and best-selling author

The Epoch Times is a proud sponsor of Shen Yun Performing Arts. For more information, please visit [ShenYunPerformingArts.org](http://ShenYunPerformingArts.org)

## Shen Yun’s Upcoming Performances

San Francisco	Calif.	Jan. 2–9, 2022
Greensboro	N.C.	Jan. 4–5, 2022
Miami	Fla.	Jan. 4–9, 2022
Savannah	Ga.	Jan. 5–6, 2022
Baltimore	Md.	Jan. 7–8, 2022
Atlanta	Ga.	Jan. 7–8, 2022
Austin	Texas	Jan. 7–9, 2022
Charlotte	N.C.	Jan. 8–9, 2022

For additional performance dates, please visit [ShenYun.com/tickets](http://ShenYun.com/tickets)

# It’s Time for Solutions

We know the symptoms, we need solutions for our country

## DAVE MEYER

Commentary

We hear a lot of criticism and concern about how anti-American ideas and socialist principles have entered the mainstream political conversation. These are merely symptoms of a deeper problem. Our citizens have lost connection with this nation’s founding principles—who we were before we became a nation, why we fought for independence, how our founding documents paved the way for righting wrongs, and what we need to do to maintain freedom and opportunity.

The United States is a highly educated nation, although most are ignorant of our history and the principles that shaped our growth. American students went from ranking first in education to 30th in math, 8th in reading, and 11th in science, according to a recent report from the Program for International Student Assessment. In a way, many of our citizens are like those in Germany in the 1930s—well-schooled, but lacking true understanding.

## My Lack of Knowledge

Like most people of my generation in the United States, I was grateful for the privilege of living here, but didn’t understand much about history. As a result, I didn’t realize the price that had been paid for the freedoms we enjoy, and I didn’t know about my responsibilities as a citizen.

As a young man, I joined the Army, between the time of the Korean War and the Vietnam War. But my decision was more pragmatic than patriotic. During that time, in the early 1960s, if you didn’t sign up, you’d almost certainly be drafted. My intention was to gain some practical career skills in the engineering field—specifically in the HVAC industry (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning)—and use what I learned to help my career.

Sports were a big part of my life, so I tried out for and made the basketball and baseball teams. Our games were considered very important for the morale of the troops, and they certainly boosted my morale. I was stationed in France and then Germany, and counted myself blessed to serve the United States in those developed nations. Although I appreciated my country, and served overseas, I took it for granted in many ways.

That’s not to say I took the men and women in our military for granted. I’ve always had the highest respect for those who serve our nation, and especially those who’ve sacrificed life and limb. If you’re a veteran, active

service military, a family member of someone serving, or a member of law enforcement, thank you for your service!

After my service, through my professional career, and into the ministry that God called my wife, Joyce, and me to, I had the same basic view of the United States—until a friend sent me a gift that opened my eyes and changed my heart. It was a book on American history. I had no idea why anyone would send me a book on the subject, but once I began to read, I couldn’t put the book down. My heart was overwhelmed as I began to realize all the ways God shed his grace on our people, all the sacrifices our founders and leaders made, and how the sacrifices so many men and women made had been forgotten—or in most cases, never taught and never known.

But the effect of this new knowledge was more than intellectual; with every story I read, something stirred deep in my heart. As my eyes were opened to our past, I began to see where America was headed—and why. I realized that all the blessings of liberty could disappear in a heartbeat—and were already in the process of vanishing.

In writings from the 1700s, “The Decline and Fall of the Athenian Republic,” Sir Alexander Fraser Tytler, a history professor at The University of Edinburgh, is known to have listed the “Cycle of Nations.” If you know anything about America’s history, you’ll recognize the progression and regression of our nation in this sequence. You may also recognize what stage America presently occupies. The average age of the world’s greatest civilizations is 200 years, and they have all passed through the following sequence:

“From bondage to spiritual faith.  
From spiritual faith to great courage.  
From great courage to liberty.  
From liberty to abundance.”  
Now, notice the transition:  
“From abundance to selfishness.  
From selfishness to complacency.  
From complacency to apathy.  
From apathy to dependency.  
From dependency back into bondage.”

Our nation is one step from bondage as our dependency is shifting to government from God and self-reliance. How have we found ourselves in this condition? The answer is found in what happened between “abundance” and “selfishness.” We began to take our blessings for granted and were no longer thankful—and when we aren’t thankful, we stop being responsible.

The lack of remembrance of how our nation

# Success: What It Means and Why It Matters

Continued from Page 1

Am I on the right path? Am I fulfilling my vocation or my calling in regard to my talents? Am I making progress or failing in my quest to be the best I can be? And what exactly does that mean?

In short, how do we measure success on a large scale?

## Winning Big Time

Our culture judges levels of accomplishment by criteria such as wealth and talent. Billionaires like Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates, and Elon Musk are declared successful for the fortunes they’ve made and for having the talents required to rake in the bucks. This is nothing new. Since the days of Andrew Carnegie and Cornelius Vanderbilt, Americans have regarded the accumulation of vast sums of money as a sign of accomplishment.

We bestow this same garland of compliments on our celebrities—actors, sports stars, writers, and other artists. Clint Eastwood, Meg Ryan, Serena Williams, Brett Favre, Stephen King, Anne Tyler—all these men and women, who are still walking among us, are counted as enormous successes in their professions.

Ignoring their personal flaws, most of us would agree with that evaluation. These are definitely people of skill and great achievements.

But what about the victories and triumphs of the human spirit that go unnoticed by the public at large and by many in our media, that don’t necessarily deliver broad fame and fortune?

## Success Is All Around

If we open our eyes, we can see that accomplishment is almost commonplace in our world.

On Dec. 18, 2021, for instance, I visited the Old Opera House Theater in Charles Town,

West Virginia, to watch a performance of “The Nutcracker.” I attended that ballet because my 5-year-old granddaughter—as cute as cute can be, of course—was making a brief appearance on stage as a lady bug, a role added for the youngest members of the dance company.

And I left that evening agog over the talent I’d seen that evening. The choreography, the dancers, the incredible costuming, and the special effects all knocked me for a loop. As I later remarked to my son and his wife, I was in part stunned that so lovely a performance had taken place in a moderately sized town that most Americans don’t even know exists. Moreover, I said, what is just as remarkable is that all across our country are people with their own burgeoning talents on display—not just dancers, but musicians, painters, writers, builders, nurses, teachers, mothers, and fathers—whose accomplishments may be unsung except by those who know them, but which are nonetheless real, noble, and worthy of commendation.

That ballet, for instance, was an incredible success, a grand performance achieved by talent, drive, and hard work, put together by what we might otherwise deem ordinary Americans. Clearly, ordinary Americans can do extraordinary things.

Which brings us to a less tangible form of success, but one that is real and commendable in its own right.

## Lives Well Lived

Though often attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson, there is no evidence that he wrote the poem “What Is Success?” In 1904, Bessie Anderson Stanley created a similar poem, and we must assume that some anonymous writer took her verse and reshaped it into the piece that I shall use here for its brevity and application:

## ‘What Is Success?’

To laugh often and mch;



“Destruction” from “The Course of Empire” series (1836) by Thomas Cole.



Alexander Fraser Tytler, the author of “The Decline and Fall of the Athenian Republic.”

progressed from bondage to abundance can only be found in our true and accurate history. Without a thankful heart and a responsible attitude, neither America nor any other nation has the ability to remain great. And without knowledge of its history, no nation has the ability to be thankful and responsible.

This is how America is in the process of being destroyed. But it doesn’t don’t have to stay that way, if we will educate ourselves about our rights and responsibilities. Each right represents a portion of our freedom—for example, the right to freely worship, speak, and congregate, along with the right to a fair trial in a court of law, to name just a few. When even one God-given right is not maintained in our country, that portion of our freedom disappears.

**Without a thankful heart and a responsible attitude, neither America nor any other nation has the ability to remain great.**

Whose responsibility is it to maintain our rights? We the People of the United States of America.

But we can’t maintain our rights if we don’t know them, or are ignorant of what principles they’re based upon. Do you value your freedom? The proof is in how you take care of it.

History is our textbook, our compass, our guide. History defines our rights and reveals our responsibilities. History is a treasure of wisdom. History reveals the consequences of good and bad choices, which provides valuable wisdom.

Generally speaking, people under the age of 60 in the United States know little or nothing about their nation’s extraordinary godly heritage. Consequently, they are untrained, unequipped, and unqualified to fulfill their

civic responsibility. As a result, they are unknowingly forfeiting their rights and authority—and therefore their freedom.

What can we do to be a part of the solution today? First and foremost, educate yourself and your family on our nation’s true history. Don’t skip this crucial component. What you think you remember from school won’t make the grade. Not sure where to start? I address this in my new book, and I’ve created a vast array of resources, including dozens of free ones, at [JoyceMeyer.org/america](http://JoyceMeyer.org/america).

Second, as you study our history and founding principles, pay attention to what areas interest you most. In some cases, this can mean discovering or reaffirming topics you’re passionate about. It might be education, local government, elections, or how your church can be a more positive presence in your community.

Finally, get involved in some small way. This might mean simply attending a school board meeting or emailing an elected official. But without a simple first step of action, nothing will change.

There are many local government officials who try to abide by our founding principles. The same goes for teachers and administrators who work hard to educate our children with truth and godly principles. But these people need our vocal support and actual service. As for those who are directly opposed to your stand on issues, most will respect informed and polite debate on matters of interest.

There is time to make a course correction. We must be patient, persistent, and bold—and operate with love toward all our fellow citizens.

*Dave Meyer is the vice president of Joyce Meyer Ministries, and author of the new book “Freedom Is Costly, But Priceless.” A veteran of the U.S. Army, he is passionate about America’s heritage. He has been married to Joyce for over 50 years. They have four grown children, 12 grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.*

To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children;

To earn the approbation of honest critics and endure

the betrayal of false friends;

To appreciate beauty;

To find the best in others;

To give of one’s self;

To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child,

a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition;

To have played and laughed with enthusiasm and

sung with exultation;

To know even one life has breathed easier because you

have lived—

This is to have succeeded.

Some readers of this poem might regard such sentiments as maudlin, worthy of a Hallmark card but not a philosophy for living, but I am not one of them. “To find the best in others,” “to give of one’s self,” and “to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived”—these measures of accomplishment run wonderfully counter to our age of egoism and self-centeredness, and, I believe, deserve our applause.

And “to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition” is a wonderful reminder to us to brighten the corner where we are. So many of our politicians, pundits, and powerful people seek to change or control large groups of human beings, often with unexpected and devastating consequences, whereas the mother who tends to her own backyard, connects with her neighbors, and laughs “often and much” succeeds more often than she fails.

## Big-Picture Priorities

As we can see from the above, there are all sorts of yardsticks we may use to measure

success in ourselves and in others. Money, fame, goodness, talent, virtue, the love and kindness we show to others—all serve as the framework for our accomplishments.

And sometimes, the goals for which we strive may baffle those watching us.

Born in 1938, Dolores Hart became a big-name actress by the late 1950s. In five years, she appeared in 10 films, including the hit movie “Where the Boys Are,” worked with leading men like Marlon Brando and Montgomery Clift, and was the first actress to kiss Elvis Presley on screen. She was engaged to be married, and her career in Hollywood seemed assured.

But in 1962, to the shock of Hollywood and the nation, Hart gave up her film career and her pending marriage; discarded her jewelry, fine clothing, and other worldly possessions; and entered the Abbey of Regina Laudis, a Benedictine monastery in Connecticut. There, Hart, now Mother Dolores Hart, has served the abbey and her God for more than 50 years.

How, we might ask, does such a woman, a rising Hollywood star turned nun, measure success and accomplishment? In a recent interview with Fox News, she said, “To find God is to find love.”

Kissing Presley on film has its claim to fame, but what Hart did for her beliefs strikes me as her greatest accomplishment.

Like Hart, how we measure our successes—and for that matter, our failures—is how we measure ourselves.

*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 non-fiction, “Learning as I Go” and “Movies Make the Man.” Today, he lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. See [JeffMinick.com](http://JeffMinick.com) to follow his blog.*



HU CHEN/THE EPOCH TIMES

# ‘Bonus Grandma’

## 4 kids’ friendship with retired nurse, 93, inspires new children’s book

LOUISE BEVAN

When a nurse who befriended an elderly care home resident decided to introduce the woman to her four grandkids, the children thought they “wouldn’t be able to talk to her.” Yet in opening their hearts and minds to a different kind of friendship, they found their “Bonus Grandma.”

The now-retired nurse, Vickie Rodgers of southern Illinois, was so touched by her grandkids’ relationship with 93-year-old Ruby Foster, a U.S. cadet nurse during World War II, that she wrote a children’s book, titled “Ms. Ruby and The Gigi Squad: Friendship Comes in All Ages.”

“I met Ms. Ruby at a local long-term care center while doing clinical [rounds] with nursing students,” Rodgers told The Epoch Times. “We discovered a lot in common.”

Foster served during World War II as part of a 125,000-strong accelerated nursing program. Her husband, a radiologist, had died several years prior she met Rodgers in 2018. She received few visitors, besides an elderly brother, and has no children.

Rodgers says she and Foster became firm friends.

“She calls me her BFF,” Rodgers said. “[She] told me how much she loved children. I knew that she would love my grandchildren and that they would adore her spunky personality,” said Rodgers.

“I had been talking to them about her, and explaining that she was lonely and would love to meet them.”

### Ruby Foster served during World War II as part of a 125,000-strong accelerated nursing program.

The kids—Avery, 15, Will, 10, Caroline 12, and Cole, 10—decided that they wanted to decorate Foster’s first tree in decades for Christmas 2018 and had no idea what to expect before visiting the care home.

All four were equally surprised. Caroline said: “I was kind of nervous to go to the nursing home, but once I was there, it was so fun to spend time with Ms. Ruby.”

Avery added: “The stereotype of nursing homes was not accurate to me. I found meeting Ms. Ruby to be a fun and rewarding experience. I thought that most of the residents wouldn’t be able to talk or carry on conversations, but this was not true at all.”

Encouraged by how fun it was to visit Foster, and how happy it made Foster to see them, Rodgers and the kids started visiting twice



(L–R) Avery, Luke, Vickie, Cole, and Caroline with Ruby Foster.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF VICKIE RODGERS



Ruby Foster, 93, served as a U.S. cadet nurse during World War II.

a month. Foster always asked them about school; she took an interest in Avery’s theater and choir classes, Caroline’s grades and volleyball, and Cole and Will’s hockey games.

With visits waylaid by the pandemic in 2020, the fivesome stayed in touch by writing letters. The children even delivered a balloon bouquet, cake, and cards on Foster’s 92nd birthday. When they were finally able

to reunite, they decided to commemorate their relationship by presenting her with a special necklace.

“They wanted her to have something to wear proudly,” Rodgers said. “The necklace is made out of circles of different types and colors of metal that each child stamped their name on, and then a heart shape of metal with the words ‘Bonus Grandma’ stamped on it. Ruby wears this necklace very frequently and has been so very proud of her new title.”

Watching such a beautiful relationship develop between Foster and her grandkids, whom she calls “The Gigi Squad,” Rodgers felt compelled to write a book. She calls it her “bucket list labor of love.”

“Ms. Ruby and The Gigi Squad: Friendship Comes in All Ages,” with original artwork by illustrator Vidya Vasudevan, was self-published in November 2021. Beyond its moving, educational story, the book includes a letter from the Gigi Squad and the concept of a “Sunshine Bag” to fill with fun, appropriate gifts for an elderly friend.

“I had looked for a book, without success, to explain to children what to expect when visiting a nursing home,” Rodgers told The Epoch Times. “I was sadly disappointed by how few books there were about multigenerational friendships.”

“After discussing with Ms. Ruby my idea for a children’s book that would encourage other

children, with parental support, to befriend older adults who may be lonely, I undertook the project in March of this year,” she said.

Foster was instrumental in providing her opinions for the book and adores her character, said Rodgers. The grandmother of four recently retired from a local community college as a professor of nursing after a 33-year career. She now works part-time as a clinical educator in a large retirement community. When she first met Foster in 2018, she was a volunteer nurse with the Greater St. Louis Honor Flight and applied for Foster to attend.

On another excursion, to see the St. Louis Blues, the arena projected a video of Ruby’s cadet nursing experience, and Vickie, her husband Bill, and grandson Cole stood by as Ruby was presented with the game puck. Without hesitation, Ruby turned and gave the puck to hockey-loving Cole.

On Sept. 4, 2021, all four grandchildren would show their appreciation for Foster on her 93rd birthday with a socially-distant party complete with balloons, gluten-free cupcakes, decorations, gifts, and Culver’s hamburgers and French fries.

“We all sang ‘Happy Birthday’ to her and she was beaming!” Rodgers recalled. “Her face radiated sheer joy and happiness to be honored by the kids on her birthday. It really is the little things in life that mean the most to older adults.”

mously got his face kicked in the fifth act.

### The Villain Turned Antihero

Lawrence (William Zabka) is not a likely protagonist. If there was a Mount Rushmore of ‘80s pop villains, Johnny Lawrence would be on it, wedged somewhere between Ed Rooney, Judge Smalls, and Biff Tannen.

In the original “Karate Kid,” Johnny was the seemingly privileged bully who tormented the working-class new kid from Jersey, propelling Daniel Larusso’s transformation from punching bag to karate student to All Valley Champion. (Larusso takes the title from Johnny, the defending champion.)

In “Cobra Kai,” things have changed. Johnny is a down-on-his-luck, beer-swilling handyman who watches “American Eagle” alone in his grimy apartment. From his red Firebird, he sees billboards of his old enemy’s car dealerships, Larusso Motors, popping up like acne across the valley. He’s divorced, estranged from his son, and gets arrested in the very first episode. His life changes, however, when a young man in his building named Miguel asks for help to deal with some school bullies. (Sound familiar?)

Eventually Johnny agrees to train Miguel, yet Johnny is no Mr. Miyagi. He’s rude, a walking embodiment of “toxic masculinity,” and kind of a bigot. He calls Miguel “Mendo” and makes a crack about “more immigrants,” genderizes, and occasionally uses a derogatory word that refers to a female body part. At one point, he’s asked why he won’t let females into Cobra Kai.

“Same reason there aren’t women in the Army. Doesn’t make sense,” Johnny says. “Don’t give me this sexist [expletive].” “I’m just saying women aren’t meant to fight. They have tiny hollow bones.”

Johnny quickly relents about letting girls into Cobra Kai, however, and it’s just one step on his path to growth. And it’s this

# Couple Married for 75 Years Share Their Secret to Long-Lasting Marriage

DAKSHA DEVNANI

A nonagenarian couple who first laid eyes on each other as teens in a rural high school in Kentucky never imagined they would one day celebrate 75 years of marriage together. As they’ve stepped into their golden years together, the high school sweethearts’ love for each other has only grown deeper.

Bobbie Creasey, 91, who was born in Providence, Kentucky, first saw Douglas Creasey, now 93, when she was a freshman at Dalton High School in 1944.

“I thought, ‘Golly, he’s really good looking,’” Bobbie told The Epoch Times. She then solicited the help of her friends in order to make Douglas aware that she was interested in him.

“I had to get somebody to help me meet him.” Meanwhile, Douglas, who was a junior, had noticed Bobbie too and wanted to get to know her as well.

“But I was bashful, so I didn’t make contact. And I didn’t have a car,” said Douglas. “The war was going on, and gas and tires were rationed.”

However, when he learned of Bobbie’s interest in him, he decided to “find a way” to transport them on a date. A friend of Douglas’s borrowed his older sister’s car, and Douglas and Bobbie went on a double date with the friend and his girlfriend.

Gradually, their relationship blossomed as they got to know each other more. “He was interesting, and when he set his mind to do something, he always followed through. There was no one else like him,” Bobbie said.

Douglas, who was born on his family’s farm in Caldwell County, said of Bobbie, “She was pretty and had a good personality.”

After Douglas graduated from high school, he joined the Army Air Corps and was stationed at Scott Field near St. Louis. Almost every day, the couple wrote letters to each other and kept in touch. Whenever Douglas had more time, he would hitchhike home in order to see Bobbie. During one of his leaves, he proposed to her.

In November 1946, Douglas received orders to report within the next 10 days to California in order to board a ship to Japan. Instead of heading straight to California, Douglas took a detour and visited Kentucky to marry the love of his life.

“He just pulled up in a taxi completely unexpected,” Bobbie said. “We didn’t have a telephone, so he couldn’t let me know he was coming. We had planned on getting married, but I didn’t know exactly when it would happen.”

Bobbie wasn’t prepared, but it didn’t take

her long to get everything together.

The couple went to Morganfield, the nearest town that allowed a blood test and marriage on the same day, and they received the necessary license. They even found a parsonage next to a church, and the preacher married them on the spot, on Nov. 23, 1946.

“I had no doubts she was the girl for me. She was my first steady girlfriend, and I was delighted she wanted to be my wife,” Douglas said.

A few days later, Douglas left for California and then Japan. It was one whole year before the couple could reunite. Meanwhile, Bobbie went back to school and kept her marriage a secret, as she feared she wouldn’t be allowed to graduate.

After Douglas was discharged from the Army Air Corps, the couple spent some time in Chicago so Douglas could graduate from electrical school. The couple welcomed their first child in December 1950 amid a snowstorm.

“I wasn’t sure I was going to make it to the hospital in time. Having that new little baby was something I’ll never forget,” Bobbie said.

The couple then went to Lexington so Douglas could earn his degree at the University of Kentucky. Douglas took up a job with Indiana Bell and worked there as a toll testman until he retired. Over the years, they lived in different cities, and Bobbie went to nursing school and became a licensed practical nurse.

Bobbie and Douglas went on to have four children: Mike, Gary, Gwen, and Janica. As they raised their children together, they shared a passion to explore and thus traveled a lot.

“One year, we took all four children on a three-week camping trip out west.... We saw so many national parks and sites. That was quite an experience,” Bobbie said. “Life has been an adventure.”

“It’s been a wonderful adventure,” Douglas said.

Reflecting on the best part of their journey together, Douglas said it was the birth of each child and seeing their children become Christians. “That was really special,” Douglas said.

However, it wasn’t always smooth; the couple not only had different upbringings, but also really different personalities.

“That was a challenge,” Douglas said. “We had to learn to give a little and take a little. But we were determined to make it work.”

After Douglas’s retirement, the couple returned to rural Kentucky and built an energy-efficient earth-sheltered house.

Douglas said their secret to a long-lasting marriage is “trusting in God and being ac-



The Creaseys both say that life has been an adventure.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF GWEN HICOK

“I had no doubts she was the girl for me. She was my first steady girlfriend, and I was delighted she wanted to be my wife.”

Douglas Creasey, 93



Bobbie and Douglas Creasey first met in high school; Douglas joined the Army Air Corps after graduation.

tive in church.”

Bobbie agreed, saying: “The Lord has blessed us. He’s brought us through some tough times. We relied on him.”

Additionally, Douglas believes that no matter what the circumstances, “loving your spouse” is another key to achieving wedded bliss.

Witnessing them together, the couple’s oldest daughter, Gwen, 67, a retired assistant news editor, said: “They have a great deal of respect for each other. It’s been awesome to watch their love grow deeper as they enter their golden years.”

As Douglas and Bobbie—who have nine grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren, and numerous great-great-grandchildren—celebrated their 75th anniversary last year with their friends and family at a well-loved local restaurant, they glowed. Douglas said he’s more in love with Bobbie now than when they first got married.

Sharing their relationship advice with the younger generation on how to maintain a healthy and happy marriage, Douglas said: “Marriage is a give and take. It can’t be all your way.”

Bobbie added: “Just hang in there. Don’t give up. Don’t be set in your ways. You have to give a little.”

Share your stories with us at [emg.inspired@epochtimes.com](mailto:emg.inspired@epochtimes.com), and get your daily dose of inspiration by signing up for the Epoch Inspired newsletter at [TheEpochTimes.com/newsletter](http://TheEpochTimes.com/newsletter)

# What ‘Cobra Kai’ Can Teach a Generation Marinated in Victimhood and ‘Safetyism’

It might be the best show on TV—and much of it has to do with its radical message of individualism and self-reliance



(Above and below) “Cobra Kai” takes place some 30 years after the events in the 1984 movie “The Karate Kid.”



JONATHAN MILTIMORE

“Cobra Kai” is back. Season 4 began on Dec. 31, 2021, and my family is watching what is perhaps the most surprising hit in a decade—and our personal favorite.

The “Karate Kid” spinoff had “flop” written all over it. After several sequels and reboots, the franchise felt spent. Moreover, it was launched as part of YouTube’s ill-fated plan to compete with Amazon and Netflix in original content production.

Nevertheless, “Cobra Kai” has proven a smash. After being acquired by Netflix in June 2020, the show dominated the Nielsen streaming charts, quickly racking up more than 2 billion streaming minutes. The acquisition, as Forbes put it, turned Cobra Kai from an obscure hit into the #1 show in America.

The show works for several reasons and has struck a chord with young people (my kids can’t get enough of it), largely by running against postmodern sacred cows and embracing some radical ideas: self-ownership, personal responsibility, and individualism.

“Cobra Kai” does all this with humor and a twist. The themes of individualism and self-improvement are channeled not through a wise Miyagi-like sensei—but through “ace degenerate” Johnny Lawrence, the villain of “Karate Kid” who fa-

growth that makes the show so interesting. Johnny’s foibles would be horrifying to modern audiences if they were not balanced against the larger arc of the story: Johnny’s transformation from degenerate into a true sensei.

### Building Strength, Learning Discipline

Viewers see that Cobra Kai—the dojo that tormented Daniel Larusso in “Karate Kid”—isn’t all bad. Under Johnny’s tutelage, a crop of misfit students learn something important: they don’t have to be victims.

“I’m going to teach you the style of karate that was taught to me. A method of fighting your [ahem] generation desperately needs,” Johnny says. “You’ll build strength. You’ll learn discipline. And when the time is right, you’ll strike back.”

This message is a bit controversial, but the writers effectively show it’s not just physical strength being taught. Johnny teaches his students they have power and agency. One student, Eli, is mercilessly mocked at school for having a cleft palate. Even Johnny mocks Eli, calling him “Lip.” (He refers to other students as Crater Face and Nose Ring.)

If the storyline ended there, we’d see Johnny as little more than a cruel bully who hasn’t changed at all since Daniel Larusso kicked his face in at the All Valley 30-plus years earlier. Instead, however, after briefly quitting Cobra Kai under Johnny’s abuse, Eli comes back changed (in ways that are both good and bad).

This is just one of many examples of Johnny showing his students they have the power to shape their own destinies if they can find their inner strength, courage, and identity. Just as importantly, we see how this philosophy is transformational in Johnny’s own growth.

**The Moral: Take Control of Your Life** Undoubtedly, some will find Johnny’s an-



Daniel LaRusso (Ralph Macchio) faces his previous adversary, down-and-out Johnny Lawrence (William Zabka), who seeks redemption by reopening the infamous Cobra Kai karate dojo.

“Cobra Kai” is essentially offering a Jordan Peterson philosophy for living—use your power and agency as an individual to take control of your life.

tics appalling; others will find them funny. What’s important is that “Cobra Kai” is essentially offering a Jordan Peterson philosophy for living—use your power and agency as an individual to take control of your life.

Johnny does not stay a down-on-his-luck, Coors-swilling fix-it man who watches “American Eagle” alone and is mistaken for a homeless dude. After getting fired, he cleans up his life. He starts a dojo. He takes on Miguel as a student. He drinks less. He learns to teach his students valuable lessons, and not demean them. He cleans his apartment.

This last item might sound meaningless. It’s not. It fits right into Peterson’s philosophy of self-ownership as a path to personal growth.

“If you can’t even clean up your own room, who the hell are you to give advice to the

world?” Peterson says: “My sense is that if you want to change the world, you start with yourself and work outward because you build your competence that way.”

In essence, Johnny decides it’s time to take responsibility for his life—Peterson’s most important rule for living—and this is just one example of “Cobra’s Kai”’s broader exploration of individualism and self-empowerment, themes that are explored through the first three seasons.

### Self-Reliance: An American Credo

Self-reliance was once an American credo. Considered the key to a fulfilling life—the great essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson noted that “Nothing can bring you peace but yourself”—the philosophy has fallen out of fashion. But it’s a theme that runs throughout “Cobra Kai.”

Through the first three seasons of the show, we see Miguel and his friends overcome life challenges not by tattling to teachers or running from threats, but by learning to face their fears and confront the externalities that face them. They make mistakes along the way. Friendships are broken. People get hurt. But they grow stronger in body, soul, and mind, and learn their newly discovered power must be balanced with other virtues, including mercy.

For generations who’ve grown up in what Jonathan Haidt and Greg Lukianoff call a culture of “safetyism” and victimhood, “Cobra Kai” may be the tonic they need to show that true strength and growth is achieved not by “fixing” society or appealing to authority to resolve conflict.

It’s realized by changing yourself.

Jonathan Miltimore is the managing editor of the Foundation for Economic Education. This article was originally published on FEE.org

## DEAR NEXT GENERATION:

## ‘My Baker’s Dozen’: Advice to My Grandchildren

## → Advice from our readers to our young people

I spent 22 years in the U.S. Army and another 20 years in the Pentagon as a contractor. Based on my personal experience and my reading of history, this is what I am trying to pass on to my grandsons:

1. As Winston Churchill said, “Never, never, never quit.” A saying we had in Ranger School—“A winner never quits and a quitter never wins.”
2. You will make mistakes, you will hurt people, sometimes you will fail, but try to limit these things. And always take personal responsibility.
3. Be proud, but not too proud to ask for forgiveness. And forgive those who have wronged you if they ask for forgiveness.
4. Learn from your mistakes and never stop learning. Read. Read all types of books. You should always have a book at your bedside table.
5. Always remember that whatever is asked of you, others have had to face far worse.
6. Never lie to yourself.
7. Try to have a sense of humor. Maybe you won’t have one, but you can certainly be pleasant and fair to others. It’s important that others don’t mind working beside you.
8. Take care of your family, financially and with love. And please take care of yourself. Do this and then think of saving the world.
9. Be good at your job, whatever that job is. Reread number No. 4 above. Accept that there will be some who are simply smarter than you, but you can outwork them.
10. You don’t have to love everyone, but treat everyone with respect and demand to be treated with respect.
11. Be self-disciplined. Live by your personal code. It’s a cliché, but there’s something to be said for having grit.
12. Accept that much of life is out of our control. Randomness can sucker punch us, but strive to make good choices. There are no guarantees in life, but making good choices increases the probability of good things happening to you.
13. Start saving money early. Only someone very rich or a fool says money isn’t important. Therefore, understand the fundamentals of investing for the long term. You don’t want to be a financial burden to others when you are a grandpa. Also, wouldn’t it be nice to be able



MARIO DEMOYA F/SHUTTERSTOCK

“Read all types of books. You should always have a book at your bedside table,” advises Craig Jones.

“Be proud, but not too proud to ask for forgiveness.”

Craig Jones

to travel and to have your car fixed if it breaks down?

—Craig Jones, North Carolina

I grew up in Southern California in the ‘50s as an only child. So yes, no cellphone, no internet, no computers, not even much of a TV. But my friends and I always had fun. But sometimes we got into trouble for doing dumb stuff. Stuff that later I felt sorry for doing. So here’s my advice. It’s good to have friends you can hang with, but be careful what you do with them and who you follow. Also, be careful when your friends give you advice. They’re growing and learning just like you, and sometimes they aren’t making really good decisions.

Also, I know it’s hard at a young age, but try to have a sense of direction. It doesn’t even have to be a real big deal, like what you want to be when you grow up. But try to set some small and medium goals. It’s dangerous to just kind of float and follow the crowd.

Lastly, try to help others wherever you can, and whenever you can. You’ll feel better about yourself for doing it. And, limit screen time, i.e., phone, TV, computer. Try to talk to people face-to-face.

That’s all for now. Take care.

—Joe Simmons, Arizona

I wrote this advice shortly after my wife passed away. She was the heart of the fam-

ily. We have three kids, eight grandkids, and two great-grandkids.

## 5 Rules for Our Kids, Grandkids, and Great Grandkids

I love my family so much and have never stopped trying to leave you with something of value. It sure didn’t turn out to be money or property. There are some thoughts from a lifetime of striving I want to share.

1. You have a duty to know God and the laws of God that made this country different—why you have smartphones, video games, and a car to move your butt around ... and the toilet paper to wipe it when needed. [There are] so many ways to be driven from your faith walk. Rise above it.
2. I hope you enjoyed growing up! You have a duty to learn what you are good at and your gifts and talents to serve others and support a family one day. The elder three have done quite well and made me proud. Nana sure was proud of you. As new opportunities arise, you learn you have more gifts and talents than you originally thought.
3. You have a duty to your parents and family. Nana and I were blessed with dedicated kids, and we gave what we had to build them. There is great satisfaction in serving others.
4. You have a duty to be kind and generous. Create things of beauty and worth. Don’t ruin or destroy the dreams and work of others.
5. Always be true to yourself—not what the mob thinks (it usually doesn’t think!).

Love,

Poppy

—Aka Gerald V. (Jerry) Todd, California

## 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 NextGeneration@epochtimes.com or mail it to:

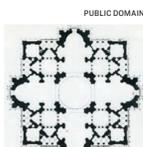
Next Generation, The Epoch Times, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, NY 10001



ALEXEYART/SHUTTERSTOCK



Michelangelo elongated the dome. The shape projected further into the sky and also better transferred the dome’s weight with a more vertical path to the pillars below. The lantern crowns the dome, glowing at night and letting light in during the day.



Bramante’s design of a Greek cross, with four identical arms within a square. A dome is situated above the center with four smaller domes above each arm of the cross. These elements are centered around the focal point: St. Peter’s tomb.



J.H.SMITH/CARTO

Looking from the top of the Basilica, we see in the distance St. Angelo Bridge, which provides passage from Rome proper to St. Peter’s Basilica. St. Peter’s square is defined by two large fountains, an obelisk marking the location of St. Peter’s martyrdom, and two colonnades that welcome guests like open arms.



J.H.SMITH/CARTO

The Baldacchino stands at the center of the basilica and is one of two altars where the pope may deliver Mass. The eight-story bronze canopy humanizes the giant scale of the space beneath the dome and draws focus to the location of St. Peter’s tomb.

## LARGER THAN LIFE: ART THAT INSPIRES US THROUGH THE AGES

## St. Peter’s Basilica: The Most Magnificent Church in All of Christendom

JAMES HOWARD SMITH

Peter, the first pope and bishop of Rome, appointed by Jesus himself, took the lead to establish Christianity in Rome. He was later martyred; however,

his legacy was set. One and a half millennia passed, and the inspired Pope Julius II sought to honor St. Peter and the origins of the papacy. He turned to Renaissance architect and painter Donato Bramante and requested him to “make ... the most magnificent, biggest church in Christendom.”

For over 100 years, some of the greatest minds of the Renaissance and Baroque periods contributed to the magnificent creation of St. Peter’s Basilica that offered its patrons an experience of the divine.

Although his design was not entirely realized, Bramante embarked on the journey that embraced the Renaissance ideals of truth and beauty, honoring St. Peter and the divine principles the saint embodied, and set the course for creating this great Basilica.



J.H.SMITH/CARTO

At the center of the second floor is the loggia, which serves as a stage to present incoming popes who, as representatives of God, stand with the 12 apostles seen here lining the top of the façade. The apostles, Jesus’s closest disciples, stand upon 12 giant Corinthian columns, perhaps intended as pillars upon which the Roman Catholic Church was built.

Bramante aimed to transport visitors to a divine realm through the perfect proportions and geometry. After Bramante’s passing, the direction of the design varied in Raphael’s and others’ hands before Michelangelo rose to the

occasion and took the lead to expand upon the earlier vision. He elongated the main nave to allow greater attendance and developed the majestic dome we see today.

The Baroque period began under the direction of the Roman Catholic Church to reach out, stimulate, and engage people to inspire their relation to the divine. Architect Carlo Maderno completed the building with an expressive façade of the era.

Then, Gian Lorenzo Bernini, in Baroque fashion, thoroughly engaged visitors with his design of The Baldacchino, a large bronze canopy marking the location of St. Peter’s tomb. He also created a theatrical experience of the Holy Spirit with his awe-inspiring Cathedra of Petri (Throne of St. Peter). Finally he completed the Basilica with the large welcoming arms of St. Peter’s Square, to embrace pilgrims, visitors, and guests alike who came from far and wide to see the pope, experience the divine, and to witness the legacy of St. Peter.

In 1626, when St. Peter’s Basilica was completed, all roads led to Rome and, in Rome, all roads led to St. Peter’s Basilica. In front of the Basilica, St. Peter’s Square welcomes and embraces pilgrims and guests and offers them a gathering place. On significant occasions, the square holds some 300,000 people.



J.H.SMITH/CARTO

Michelangelo’s dome projects upwards as if reaching for the heavens and letting divine light in through the lantern into the heart of the basilica.

COURTESY OF TOGETHER ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE. @MANCUB\_AND\_FERN



Leon and his dog, Fern.

## A Boy and His Dog

How a new furry friend changed a child’s life for the better

EPOCH INSPIRED STAFF

A 5-year-old boy from the UK who was born with autism never showed any emotion nor spoke a single word until his parents, by happenstance, found him a four-legged best friend for life.

Parents Hayley and Karsten Kirby-Bulner, from Andover, Hampshire, never intended for Fern the cocker spaniel to be their son Leon’s dog; it just worked out that way. The couple owns a falconry business, and the new puppy was supposed to do flushing work with hawks.

That is, until Fern met Leon, then 2, for the first time, in 2018. Thanks to the furry friend, the boy’s reclusive state suddenly changed.

“The first time the duo met, we saw Leon’s little face light up, he smiled and engaged with the tiny Fern,” Hayley told The Epoch Times. “As parents, we were amazed, as Leon didn’t interact, speak, or show any emotion at this point.”

Seeing the remarkable effect Fern had on their son, the parents knew right then and there they’d lost their falconry dog; Fern would belong to Leon.

In order to foster this special bond, and this seemingly miraculous change in their son, the parents set about finding a trainer for Fern—to help the spaniel help Leon. “She takes his clothes off, brings nappies, puts items in the bin, loads the washing machine, tidies up toys,” Hayley said. “And she has been trained to find him if he runs off.” Moreover, Leon, who once was totally nonverbal, started to speak—and not just a little bit.



“Before Fern, Leon didn’t speak or interact. The first time the duo met, we saw Leon’s little face light up, he smiled and engaged with the tiny Fern,” Hayley told The Epoch Times. “As parents, we were amazed, as Leon didn’t interact, speak, or show any emotion at this point.”

Leon was also born with a rare brain condition called a Chiari malformation, which causes his lower brain to push down on his spinal canal, causing chronic headaches that he has difficulty dealing with.

“When he suffers from a Chiari headache, he becomes very upset and angry and will self-harm, headbutting and hitting his head,” Hayley said.

“A simple shopping trip to a supermarket can be very troublesome, and when overloaded, Leon will start banging his head on floors. Fern will block his attempts and lay beneath his head until he has calmed down.

“Fern was never taught to stop Leon’s

headbanging, but she has instinctively done it from a young age.”

Fern would also have a calming effect during Leon’s meltdowns, lying on him and applying deep, soothing pressure to ease his nerves, or nudging his hand as a distraction, encouraging him to stroke her. Moreover, Leon’s found in Fern a friend, and a source of strength.

“Fern gives Leon confidence in situations he would otherwise find impossible,” Hayley said. They do everything together, from showering to sleeping to trying new foods. The Instagram page @mancub\_and\_fern captures many of their moments together.

So delighted were the Kirby-Bulners that they even started a dog training organization called T.A.P. Assistance Dogs to help more families with children with autism. They recently placed a second cocker spaniel, Arlo, with a family whose autistic child was in need of a friend.

“Fern gives Leon confidence in situations he would otherwise find impossible.”

Hayley Kirby-Bulner, mother



GILLMAR/SHUTTERSTOCK

The nave fills with light in the late afternoon. With the extended nave, the Basilica now has the largest interior volume of any in the world and can accommodate 60,000 people.



J.H.SMITH/CARTO

Michelangelo’s “Pieta.” Mary holds Jesus with an expression not of sorrow, but of hope.

HOMESCHOOLING

# Homeschooling Through the Winter Blahs

A conversation with Leigh Bortins, founder of Classical Conversations

BARBARA DANZA

Homeschooling parents, regardless of whether they homeschool all year round or stick to a traditional school year schedule, ride the wave of back-to-school momentum in September. That leads to the onset of fall and outdoor activities in October. Next thing you know, the holidays kick off in November and the calendar year wraps up with fun and festivities galore.

After the holidays wind down and the new year begins, many homeschoolers get back to business. Come mid-January, after the holiday decor has been put away and each week seems rather similar to the last, there's a phenomenon some have called "the homeschool blahs." It's a time where you're checking a lot of boxes, but you may feel your motivation waning or your spark fizzling. Simply knowing this can occur can be helpful. What can parents do to overcome a sense of malaise and reignite the spark of excitement and energy? I asked homeschooling expert Leigh Bortins, the founder of Classical Conversations, for her advice. Here's what she said.

**THE EPOCH TIMES:** As homeschoolers, did you and your family ever experience "the winter blahs?"

**LEIGH BORTINS:** Our homeschooling family worked really hard on academics up until Thanksgiving and then celebrated the holidays and traveled until New Year's Eve. So on January 1st, we were ready to get back to work. We made sure the boys had a snow weekend with friends at the end of January, and all four of our sons played sports and got plenty of exercise throughout the winter.

We worked really hard on academics through the winter so we could finish our



## New Year Reflections: 6 Questions Homeschoolers Should Ask Themselves

BARBARA DANZA

As the peace and joy of the holidays linger, this time of year offers a unique opportunity for homeschooling parents to assess their efforts thus far and renew or refresh their goals for the new year ahead. Those who've just begun to homeschool may find taking advantage of the goal-setting vibes of this time of year to be especially beneficial.

So, homeschool moms and dads, take out a notebook and pen, pour a hot cup of seasonal comfort, and consider the following questions.

**What are your favorite things about homeschooling?** Kick off your reflection on a positive note and jot down all the things you're loving about homeschooling. Perhaps it's forging close



“Wherever we have lived, we went outside a lot. Children don't complain of cold the way adults do.”

Leigh Bortins, founder, Classical Conversations

intense studies by spring, vacation before the crowds can, and snag summer jobs before anyone else. Taking the six weeks at year-end and knowing we had a very long delight-directed summer coming up kept us going at a good pace for 15 weeks in the fall and 15 weeks in the winter. Our schedule and great rewards kept us on task even when the winter blahs arrived.

**THE EPOCH TIMES:** What do you think are the main contributors to this seemingly common experience of homeschoolers in the months of January and February?

**MS. BORTINS:** People with a purpose seem to get more accomplished. I love homeschooling because I had so much free time, but in order to have free time, I had to set very specific goals. Of course we had days that slowed us down and we just had to be a family, but in general, my family was driven by routine, even now that they're all adults.

We had a motto, "Work and pray, then rest and play." The seasons are given to us to mark beginnings and ends, new goals, and finished accomplishments. I found working with the seasons helped avoid winter depression because we were busy indoors and outdoors.

**THE EPOCH TIMES:** What are some ways homeschooling parents can reignite their enthusiasm for homeschooling when motivation wanes?

**MS. BORTINS:** I suffer from mild depression, which of course is worse in winter. For me, wanting my children to succeed in their Classical Conversations seminars, wanting to be a help to my homeschooling community, and knowing the days were long but the years were short helped me to keep moving. For a person with depression, the phrase "Change your

position" really helps to remind me that change—physical, mental, and emotional—is reenergizing. Changing location like schooling outside or at the library, changing energy levels like walking or calling a friend to encourage, and changing topics, like a new emphasis on map-making or new recipes, all help.

And the best advice, have a pajama day and read for five or six hours together and apart, in bed and on the rugs. You can't fail parenting if everyone has a book in their hand.

**THE EPOCH TIMES:** What ideas have you employed in the winter months to make homeschooling more fun?

**MS. BORTINS:** First, wherever we have lived, we went outside a lot. Children don't complain of cold the way adults do. Collecting leaves, playing duels with sticks, setting up bird feeders, cleaning the garage, and visiting seniors are all good winter projects besides the sports leagues, art lessons, and music lessons available to homeschoolers. Visiting friends from our Classical Community, Moms Night Out, and Dad's Day at the Playground provide a lot of emotional growth and winter cheer. Serving others is the best way to overcome any complaint.

**THE EPOCH TIMES:** How can a homeschooling mom or dad differentiate between winter blahs and the need to make a major adjustment in homeschooling strategy?

**MS. BORTINS:** What a great question! A lot of people give up important things like eating well, exercise, studying, and even marriage just because of some bad days. It's a good idea to wait to make decisions when you feel stronger. As I said before, small changes in attitude and activities can sometimes be enough. Noting your children's growth patterns can also inform whether a parent needs to make major adjustments. Children's bodies grow or their brains grow—not both at the same time. If eating, exercise, and thinking are at healthy levels and your child feels the blahs, they may be about to have a growth spurt. Children have seasons of growth just like any other living thing. At the end of the struggle, anticipate a beautiful outcome.

**THE EPOCH TIMES:** What would you tell a first-year homeschooling parent who feels his or her enthusiasm dwindling?

**MS. BORTINS:** You may feel enthusiasm dwindling because homeschooling has become normal. It's not always exciting or rewarding to homeschool. Sometimes I'm tired of cooking and reading and making the bed, but I am not going to give up eating, learning, and organizing. I may rest for a day or two. Like life, homeschooling has ups and downs. Again, I find if I change my position, I may find an unexpected enthusiasm. Or at least remember I'm homeschooling because someone loves me and needs me!

relationships with your children, free time, read-aloud time, the freedom from institutional learning, or freedom for the whole family.

Take your time to make note of the tiny as well as the huge things—you'll want to continue to foster and appreciate those in the new year.

**What aspects of homeschooling are draining you or your children?** Maybe a particular science unit sounded good in August but is now dreaded, or an online class turned out more tedious than advertised. Perhaps the morning routine you mapped out is leading to anxiety instead of organized bliss.

One of the greatest benefits of homeschooling is the inherent flexibility. If something isn't working, it's time to change. Of course, discernment between a healthy challenge and a soul-sucking endeavor is key here. Identify those aspects of homeschooling that aren't life-giving so that a new strategy can be implemented.

**What are your high-level goals for your homeschool?** Review why you embarked on this journey in the first place and why you continue to walk this path. Maybe it's that your children's spiritual and character development are first and foremost; supporting the unique talents and interests of your children is the top priority; or maintaining the freedom to travel as a family is key.

Reminding yourself why you're doing this

and take note of any new priorities you've identified with experience.

**How is your day-to-day?** Now zero in on the way that your daily rhythms and routines unfold. How does the day begin? How are the group activities and independent activities? Are you getting outside as often as you'd like? Is everyone getting enough sleep? How are extracurricular activities going?

Considering the aspects of the nitty-gritty may help you identify ways to improve your homeschool experience, making things more efficient or more joyful by focusing on the fine details.

**How do you want the new year to be?** Looking ahead, what are your hopes for the new year ahead? What do you want to maintain or enhance? What do you want to change?

**What's your plan?** Finally, identify the actions you'll take and when you'll take them.

Go forward with confidence knowing that you can come back and reassess using this framework any time of the year.

Barbara Danza is a mom of two, an MBA, a beach lover, and a kid at heart. Here, diving into the challenges and opportunities of parenting in the modern age. Particularly interested in the many educational options available to families today, the renewed appreciation of simplicity in kids' lives, the benefits of family travel, and the importance of family life in today's society.



Now is a good time to reflect on the big picture as well as the day-to-day routine in your homeschool.

**One of the greatest benefits of homeschooling is the inherent flexibility. If something isn't working, it's time to change.**

# FOR KIDS ONLY

THE EPOCH TIMES

## A Snow Man

Oh, the beautiful snow!  
We're all in a glow—  
Nell, Dolly, and Willie, and Dan;  
For the primest of fun,  
When all's said and done,  
Is just making a big snow man.

Two stones for his eyes,  
Look quite owlishly wise,  
A hard pinch of snow for his nose,  
Then a mouth that's as big  
As the snout of a pig,  
And he'll want an old pipe, I suppose.

Then the snow man is done,  
And to-morrow what fun  
To make piles of snow cannon all day,  
And to pelt him with balls  
Till he totters and falls,  
And a thaw comes and melts him away.

## WHY WAS THE SNOWMAN DIGGING THROUGH THE CARROT PATCH?

“ESON SHI ONIKICIA SVM EH

No winter lasts forever; no spring skips its turn.

HAL BORLAND, AMERICAN AUTHOR (1900-1978)

## This Week in History

### CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON THE GOLDEN GATE

On Jan. 5, 1933, workers began construction on one of the most famous bridges in the world, San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge.

This recognizably red (technically international orange) suspension bridge spans the strait known as the Golden Gate that connects San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean. Designed by engineer Joseph Strauss, the bridge opened on May 27, 1937, enjoying the status of being the longest-spanning bridge at the time.



The Golden Gate Bridge under construction circa 1935.

By Aidan Danza, age 15

## FEEDING THE BIRDS

**F**eeding the birds is a fun hobby and one that the birds, of course, will thank you for.

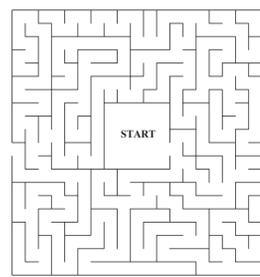
The first thing you'll need is a feeder. Wood and plastic feeders aren't the best. Wood can rot, and squirrels can chew through plastic, destroying your feeder. Your best option is either a metal feeder or the eco-friendly imitation wood that is actually quite durable. Don't try to keep squirrels away. They've been labeled as bullies that scare birds away, but I have never seen a so-called squirrel-proof feeder work for more than three days. On the off chance that the gadget does work, squirrels are perfectly content to eat spilled food, and they're interesting animals in their own right. Plus, squirrel-proof bird feeders generally have moving parts that are prone to break. Get a feeder that looks like you couldn't break it if you tried. I highly suggest getting a suet feeder, especially for winter feeding. This is a large

cage, roughly six inches square, one inch thick, that you insert a "suet cake" into. Suet cakes are small patties of fat and protein, mixed with worms, berries, nuts, or other goodies. With the suet cage hung, you can attract a wide range of birds that don't eat seeds, most notably woodpeckers. You can fill your feeders with several types of seed. The best, by far, is black oil sunflower

seed. Nearly all seed-eating birds eat sunflower seeds. Millet is also a good choice for ground birds such as mourning doves and various sparrows. Nyjer (alternatively called niger or thistle) seeds are small seeds that are too small for standard bird feeders, and they actually need their own type of feeder. Nyjer isn't cheap, but it will attract finches, especially in the summer. Enjoy the birds!

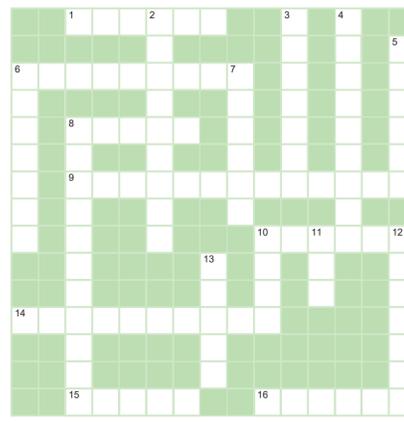


## AMAZING ESCAPES!



**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 X 3) + 1 = 28 and 1 + (7 X 3) + 6 = 28

Easy puzzle 1	Medium puzzle 1	Hard puzzle 1																								
<table border="1"> <tr><td>7</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr><td>66</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>7</td><td>7</td></tr> <tr><td>+ - x ÷</td><td></td></tr> </table>	7	10	66		7	7	+ - x ÷		<table border="1"> <tr><td>11</td><td>18</td></tr> <tr><td>43</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td>17</td></tr> <tr><td>+ - x ÷</td><td></td></tr> </table>	11	18	43		3	17	+ - x ÷		<table border="1"> <tr><td>16</td><td>26</td></tr> <tr><td>10</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>1</td><td>21</td></tr> <tr><td>+ - x ÷</td><td></td></tr> </table>	16	26	10		1	21	+ - x ÷	
7	10																									
66																										
7	7																									
+ - x ÷																										
11	18																									
43																										
3	17																									
+ - x ÷																										
16	26																									
10																										
1	21																									
+ - x ÷																										
Solution For Easy 1 L + O1 + L = L	Solution for Medium 1 C - 11 + 181	Solution for Hard 1 1 - 92 - 91 + 12																								



**Across**

- "Jolly, happy soul" in a Christmas song (6)
- Stuck inside by winter weather (9)
- Nasty (weather) (5)
- Like some winter weather (5,8)
- Flu symptom (6)

**Down**

- Not quite a blizzard (9)
- Mood when making a snowman (7)
- "Seems like" temperature (4,5)
- Penetrating (cold) (6)
- Negative temperatures (7)
- Not bright (6)
- Bears' activity in winter (11)
- Icy (4)
- Hazardous state for driving (3)
- No school today! (4,3)
- Many a winter day (5)
- Arctic (6,4)
- A bit chilly (5)
- A bit cold outside (6)

# Rediscover America— One Story at a Time

**Our nation like you've never seen it before**

American Essence is a magazine created for anyone who loves America. American Essence focuses on traditional American values and great American stories. It recounts significant historical events, from the time of the Founding Fathers to the Americans today who want to give back to their community and country. American Essence celebrates America's contribution to humanity, and focuses on three pillars—from history to future, timeless values, and perseverance.

## American Essence

Subscribe today at **AmericanEssence.net** or use this form.



“I want my world to be filled with positive real heroes that emulate, share and care [about] the authentic human values that make America great . . . creating a new set of hero values for our children to grow into as the “New America.” — *Laurel Young*

**Yes, I'd like to subscribe!**

**BEST DEAL**

- 1 Yearly (12 Issues)**  
\$95.40 ~~\$179.4~~ Save \$84 (47%)  
\$7.95/issue for the 1st year, \$8.95/issue from the 2nd year
- 6 Months (6 Issues)**  
\$59.70 Save \$30 (33%)\*  
\$9.95/issue for the 1st year, \$10.95/issue from the 2nd year

\* Based on a monthly rate of \$14.95. Rates are subject to change without prior notice.

**3 EASY WAYS TO SUBSCRIBE**

ONLINE : **AmericanEssence.net**  
HOTLINE : **888-805-0203**  
BY MAIL: **American Essence\***  
Subscription Department  
5 Penn Plaza Fl. 8, New York, NY 10001

\* American Essence is part of Bright Magazine Group, a non-profit media company committed to bringing stories that elevate the daily lives of our readers.

PLEASE PRINT **LEGIBLY** (INCLUDE APT., STE., OR UNIT NO.)

**American Essence**

FIRST NAME \_\_\_\_\_ LAST NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ APT. # \_\_\_\_\_  
 CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
 EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

PAY BY CHECK (PAYABLE TO **American Essence**)     USE MY CREDIT CARD / DEBIT CARD

CARD # \_\_\_\_\_  
 We use your credit card solely, and securely, for your subscription. We do not share it with any third parties. The subscription is auto-renew with credit card payment.

EXPIRATION \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_ Y \_\_\_\_\_ Y    CARD CVV# \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

NAME ON CARD \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

BY SIGNING THIS SUBSCRIPTION FORM, I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD AND AGREED TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS AT **AmericanEssence.net/Terms**. I ALSO AFFIRM ALL INFO ABOVE IS COMPLETE AND ACCURATE.

**WEEKLY**  
News Magazine

# INSIGHT Magazine from The Epoch Times

**THOROUGH INVESTIGATIONS. GROUNDBREAKING FACTS.** While The Epoch Times' flagship paper gives you the important news of the day, INSIGHT is designed for a more leisurely read, filled with longform articles that give you in-depth coverage into the stories shaping our world.

The stories and perspectives you won't find anywhere else.

**In-Depth and Exclusive**  
Morale Collapse on the Border



**Global and Regional**  
Australians Lose Freedom Over Pandemic Response



**Focused and Relevant**  
Cover Story: Natural Immunity, an Alternative to Vaccines?

Subscribe today at **ReadEpochInsight.com** or use this form.

**Yes, I'd like to subscribe!**

**BEST DEAL**

- 1 Yearly \$3.83/week (Save 45%)\***  
(billed every year at \$199)
- 6 months \$4.96/week (Save 29%)\***  
(billed every 6 months at \$129)

\* Based on a newsstand price of \$6.95/copy. Please refer to **ReadEpochInsight.com** for details.

**3 easy ways to subscribe**

ONLINE : **ReadEpochInsight.com**  
HOTLINE : **833-699-1888**  
BY MAIL: **INSIGHT**  
Subscription Department  
5 Penn Plaza Fl. 8, New York, NY 10001

PLEASE PRINT **LEGIBLY** (INCLUDE APT., STE., OR UNIT NO.)

**INSIGHT**  
by THE EPOCH TIMES

FIRST NAME \_\_\_\_\_ LAST NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ APT. # \_\_\_\_\_  
 CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
 EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

PAY BY CHECK (PAYABLE TO **The Epoch Times**)     USE MY CREDIT CARD / DEBIT CARD

CARD # \_\_\_\_\_  
 We use your credit card solely, and securely, for your subscription. We do not share it with any third parties. The subscription is auto-renew with credit card payment.

EXPIRATION \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_\_ Y \_\_\_\_\_ Y    CARD CVV# \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

NAME ON CARD \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

BY SIGNING THIS SUBSCRIPTION FORM, I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE READ, UNDERSTOOD AND AGREED TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS AT **ReadEpoch.com/terms**. I ALSO AFFIRM ALL INFO ABOVE IS COMPLETE AND ACCURATE.