WEEK 16, 2023

# THE EPOCH TIMES **IFFE & CONTROL OF CONTROL**



JEFF MINICK



as Whynot, North Carolina; Truth or Consequences, New Mexico; and Dension, Journ Some have served as

rive down any interstate in the United States, and the sights are the same. Sure, the terrain and weather differ—Eastern Colorado sports the Great Plains and the Southern Rockies, and snow blowers are roaring in Minnesota even while tourists are basking in the sun of Mississippi's Gulf Coast. Apart from those differences, these highways are mostly one and the same.



# We're there for people after the casseroles stop.

Janet Speer, volunteer, Stephen Ministries

The high speeds require a driver's complete attention to the road, and the off-ramps generally feature the same bill of fare: fast food restaurants, chain motels, gas stations, and some occasional signage urging travelers to come see some local attraction.

Meanwhile, embedded all around this spiderweb of expressways are the United States' communities and small towns. Some of these places are distinguished by odd names, such <u>— Small Towns,</u> Big Hearts

A tribute to the builders of our communities



**(Left)** The Unicoi County Public Library organizes a "Yarn Bomb" event every March to celebrate National Read Across America Week, draping tree trunks, utility poles, and more with crocheted pieces. **(Right)** Its seed library offers patrons packages from Baker Creek or Eden Brothers, as well as locally collected seeds.

Popejoy, Iowa. Some have served as the stage for history's dramas, such as Osawatomie, Kansas, and Williamsburg, Virginia.

For the most part, however, many see these towns, when they see them at all, as ordinary and dull, scarcely worth a glance. Eager to make Thanksgiving dinner at Aunt Zelda's country estate, the family from D.C. leaves I-81 and blows through Strasburg, Virginia, little noting the Victorian buildings and unaware of the many annual events hosted by the town.

Even some of the folks who reside in such dots on the map may have given little thought as to why their towns have survived or why they shine with vibrancy and pride.

The answer is simple, really. It lies in the talents and passions of those who love and care for these communities. Let's meet some of them.

#### Working Hand-in-Hand

Billed as the "Gateway to the Shenandoah Valley," Warren County, Virginia, has a population of about 40,000. Take away 15,000 residents living in the county seat, Front Royal, and you'll find the rest scattered among hamlets, neighborhoods, and farms.

Continued on Page 2

COURTESY OF HALEY CELESTE MILLER

## 'Unschooling' Teaches Kids Through Living

How Hawaiian mom Haley Celeste Miller is helping her kids thrive

#### LOUISE CHAMBERS

Maui, Hawaii, natives Haley Celeste Miller, 31, and her husband, Travis Okano, 32, met at a movie theater at the age of 12 and have been together ever since. Miller is a stay-at-home mom and professional network marketer for Young Living Essential Oils, and Okano is a part-time farmer, part-time landscaper, and part-time hotel valet. Their children are Caleb, 11, Nash, 8, and Mila, 4.

"Caleb is such a serious kid and he's actually the reason why we 'unschool.' He's very brilliant," Miller, who shares their family life on Instagram, told The Epoch Times, describing Nash as "the life of the party" and claiming that Mila "runs the show most days."

#### 'Our Journey Began'

While pregnant with her second child at 23,

Miller decided she wanted her kids to have everything she never had. Growing up as the child of drug-addicted parents, Miller had taken on responsibility for her sisters, and her own education suffered until a teacher became her champion in eighth grade.

When she was 23, Miller and Okano were both working two jobs and were on food stamps and low-income housing, struggling to make ends meet.

Continued on Page 2



(L-R) Mila, 4, Nash, 8, and Caleb, 11.



## A Life-Changing Bestseller



huan Falun expounds on the profound principles of Truthfulness, Compassion, and Tolerance. It focuses on a long-forgotten term called "cultivation" and the importance of moral character on one's path to spiritual perfection. The book is the main text of the spiritual practice Falun Dafa. It was a national bestseller in China in the 1990s, and has since been translated into more than 40 languages. Find out why it has captured the hearts and minds of tens of millions of people in

What made Falun Gong stand out from other gigong exercises and meditation practices was a moral system-compassion, truthfulness, and forbearance-unmistakably Buddhist in origin. Arthur Waldron

more than 100 countries worldwide.

LAUDER PROFESSOR, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

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# **AMERICAN LIFE** Small Towns, Big Hearts

#### Continued from Page 1

Excluding Front Royal, which has its own police department, the rest of the county falls under the jurisdiction of the sheriff's department. Here, head honcho Mark Butler, the department's officers, and other personnel perform their required duties: helping out in emergencies, ticketing traffic violations, solving crimes, and fighting the illicit drugs that are now endemic in the United States. Elected 3 1/2 years ago and with a lifetime in police work outside of Warren County, Butler said in a recent speech, "Law enforcement is about honor, integrity, and courage." Later, he said, "And I work for the people."

Butler also works very much with the people through what he calls "community policing." He speaks to many different organizations to explain the mission of the department, but then he takes it another step by asking them what specific problems they face and what solutions they might suggest.

"We're trying to build a culture within our ranks to get the community to become one with the sheriff's department," Butler said. "I have two individuals, Lieutenant Robbie Seal and Sergeant Terry Fritts, who deal with community policing and outreach. The majority of our officers volunteer and want to be a part of this. We're trying to build a culture within the ranks to get the community one with the sheriff's office."

The department's website lists numerous outreach and education programs reflecting this emphasis. Butler himself takes a particular interest in the senior center, where he often plays music and attends luncheons.

"The only way to make a community safe is everyone working together handin-hand," he said. "Without that, we're never going to get anywhere." Next stop: Banner Elk, North Carolina.

#### A Gem in the Mountains

"We're there for people after the casseroles stop," Janet Speer, professor emeritus of theater, said

She's speaking of the Stephen Ministries, a nationwide program that offers theater program. Meanwhile, Allen

counsel and a listening ear to those who are grieving, depressed, or battered by life. After intense training, Speer has spent the past six years volunteering in this capacity. She also teaches an exercise class free of charge, which moved to Zoom during the COVID-19 lockdowns. "I have people in class from as far away as Wisconsin," she said with a laugh.

Banner Elk's permanent population is about 1,000. Often, the mountain town is bustling in the winter with skiers from the nearby slopes, and in the summer with hikers, campers, and part-time residents escaping the heat of the flatlands. The town is also home to Lees-McRae College, where Speer and her husband, Allen, a professor emeritus of humanities, each taught for more than 40 years.

#### The only way to make a community safe is everyone working

#### together hand-in-hand.

Mark Butler, sheriff, Warren County Sheriff's Office

Today, Allen said with rightful pride, this small town features art galleries, two active theater companies, live music in its restaurants, and outdoor concerts in an amphitheater throughout the summer. One unusual feature is the Book Exchange, housed in the historic Banner Elk School, a beautiful stone building in the middle of town. Staffed by volunteers, the Book Exchange allows patrons to swap books without charge for those on the shelves.

And the Speers have long been involved in this conversion of the town into a sort of permanent festival of the arts. With her decades of directing, writing, and performing plays, Janet Speer has helped make Banner Elk a center of the theater arts for the Southeast. Though retired from the college, she continues to operate the award-winning summer



# 'Unschooling' Teaches Kids Through Living

#### *Continued from* **Page 1**

But when Miller found a work-fromhome opportunity as a network marketer, she took matters into her own hands. "I had a huge goal to travel with my family," she said. "When Caleb turned 5, I was able to make that goal happen. I was getting enough income to retire my husband and myself, and we traveled for eight months. The world was literally at [my kids'] feet, and the profession that I'm in gives us the opportunity to be able

to learn anywhere we are." Returning home to Hawaii, Miller and Okano put Caleb in school.

"We're driving one day and he's looking out at the ocean, and he's like, 'Mom,

when I die, I'm gonna become the whole ocean," Miller said. "I don't know why, but, at that moment, I knew that this was our path. I don't have anything bad to say about school ... but the way I see it, I get to embrace everything he is and build him up. That's kind of where our journey began."

While traveling, Miller had collected books to read to Caleb and had been blown away by how much he learned. They drew and wrote together every day, went fishing in rivers and lakes, and learned from nature. Miller couldn't fathom taking that away. Today, all three of her children are taught from home.

"I don't know if there's a word for what I do; a mix of homeschooling and un-



A crochet class brings together members of the community at Unicoi County Public Library in Erwin, Tenn.

Speer has written books mostly centered on family history and his boyhood town of Boonville—he recently raised more than \$100,000 for the renovation of its library and is active in a writers' group that meets at the Liars Table, a restaurant devoted to a "light-hearted tradition and spirit of community."

In their teaching, the Speers affected the lives of two generations of students. In their countless hours of engagement and volunteerism, they've enriched Banner Elk's "spirit of community."

Time now to strike out west across the mountains.

The Little Library With the Big Heart "I really think the library is the hub of our community," said Suzy Bomgardner, the outgoing director of the Unicoi County

Public Library in Erwin, Tennessee. Susy lives in nearby Johnson City with her three sons and her husband, Tim, who directs a gap-year house there for young men discerning a vocation in ministry, but her affections for Erwin and its library clearly run deep.

"I love Erwin. It's a quirky little town," she said. "And in my experience, the library is unique. I've worked at all sorts of

schooling-it's very much child-led," Miller said. "I'm just really putting things in front of them that they're already passionate about.

"I would say our life is in seasons. Some seasons are ... very scheduled and intentional, and some seasons are very freeflowing. It's very much like the water."

A typical day for Miller and her kids starts early. Miller rises at 4 a.m. for her own selfcare before preparing breakfast with her kids, who sometimes cook for themselves. After breakfast, the foursome goes outside to play ball, jump in the ocean, or go diving or fishing for a couple of hours. Next comes lunch.

"If they feel like it, we'll do bookwork like math, reading, and writing," Miller said. "We'll talk about history or we'll play games; games are a huge part of our lives."

Caleb, Nash, and Mila read a book of their choice for 20 minutes every day, and in the evenings they accompany their parents to the family farm and attend sports practice. Dinners are always a family affair and a time to "digest and connect" about the day. Lastly come showers, more reading, and bed.

#### 'God Has Got Them'

Miller believes that children learn a lot from nature and their elders. However, the most fundamental connection for Miller is with God, and she believes that all parents should nurture this bond.

She said: "I'm able to look past my own eyes, and really see a child who was gifted to me by God. ... They have to walk in the light and in the dark, they have to learn and navigate the world, so I think that faith plays such a big role because it's this undeniable trust that God has got them."

Much of what Miller teaches her kids also stems from honoring their indigenous heritage, making sure that Hawaiian culture, language, and reverence for the ocean are not lost.

Miller draws support from friends who homeschool their own children. She also libraries, and this one is special. It's warm and inviting, and the people who come in really want the best for each other."

Three other attributes set this library apart. For one, it occupies the town's beautiful old train station. Stick around long enough, and a freight train will roll by just yards away from the building. For another, every March, the library helps deck out the town in crocheted art. Called the "Yarn Bomb," the library celebrates "National Read Across America" week by draping tree trunks, utility poles, fences, and park benches with colorful crocheted mantles of yarn. Finally, a cat named Story resides permanently among the books. The library recently celebrated her 10th birthday.

Casey Groll, age 27, newly married and new to Erwin, works the front desk and is also the library's teen and homeschooling coordinator. She and her husband wanted to own a house in a small town and found that in Erwin.

"People want to stick around here 'cause it's special," she said. "And I think it's the fact that it's a small town that's genuinely a small town. It's mostly local people doing business here. There's something kind of dreamy about it."

The biggest

are about

how well

and how

capable

they are.

Caleb

catch.

with his

her children

communicate

compliments

Miller receives

are very involved with the town. From church leadership to the senior center, everyone has their own pocket of things they do here."

#### **Faithful and Loving Servants**

Suzy Bomgardner often puts in a 70-hour work week, with much of that time devoted to writing grants and planning events that will keep the library afloat. Casey Jeff Minick has four children and a Groll sparkles with enthusiasm for her job and the community she serves.

"This is my dream job," she said. In their decades-long commitment to Lees-McRae and Banner Elk, Janet and Allen Speer have volunteered countless hours to community activities, especially in theater. Sheriff Mark Butler is on the job 24/7 with his department's police work, his engagement in the community, and his time spent as a volunteer.

In other words, keeping a small town alive and well requires elbow grease, in-

ple mentioned above, however, reminded A few minutes later, she said, "People me that across this land are millions of and catnip.

> leans on the wisdom of the older women around her. She has been criticized for unschooling by skeptics who believe her kids will be

academically inferior to their peers. In response, Miller talks about a broader way of looking at intelligence.

"I can look at my kid and say, 'You're so nature-smart, look at what you just created,' or 'body-smart,' like the way they are able to move, wrestle, and throw balls," she said. "[It boosts] their confidence because they're not like, 'Oh I don't know how to spell that word and that means I'm dumb.' It's like, 'No, I'm body-smart, I'm nature-smart, I'm word-smart!""

#### 'Humbled Every Day'

The biggest compliments Miller receives are about how well her children communicate and how capable they are.

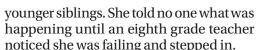
"They can tie different fishing lines, cast it out, catch these massive fish, crack open their own coconuts," said Miller, who is equally proud of her children's emotional intelligence.

"I really listen, and my husband does as well," she said. "I think just being their mother and watching them shine in their own innate gifts and talents is the

best thing in the world—I'm just so humbled every day."

Miller was born to a teen mom and a 20-year-old "punk rocker" dad, both of whom were addicted to methamphetamine. Miller claims that it's a miracle that she was unharmed as an unborn baby.

Her parents separated when she was 12, and a sequence of abusive men came through the family home. Miller became both mom and dad to her two younger sisters as her family went through homeless shelters and various drug addicts' homes, stealing food from the store when the cupboard was bare and hitchhiking to school after putting her sisters on the bus. Fearing foster care, Miller closed herself off to the world for the sake of her two



"I just broke down and told him what was happening," Miller said. "He started to pick me up for school, and he would make me stay after class and do my work. By the fourth quarter of my eighth-grade year, I had got into honors. I had a 4.1 GPA."

Miller earned a full-ride soccer scholarship to Chaminade University of Honolulu to study early childhood education and psychology and finished 18 months of study before becoming pregnant with Caleb.

#### Perseverance

Miller says she doesn't judge education by normative standards.

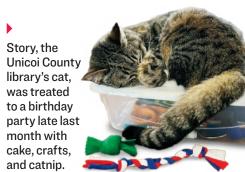
"I believe that when you want to learn something, you will learn it," she said. "I knew nothing of sales, and when I wanted to build this life for my family and be a stay-at-home mom, I deep-dove into selling and the psychology of sales and network marketing-I wanted to learn it, and I did. "I feel the same with a child-they are so innately in tune with who they are. If we give them the great growing spaces to be everything that they're created to be, they can do anything."

Miller encourages other parents interested in unschooling their children to persevere past self-doubt.

"You are going to doubt yourself every single day," she said. "Educate yourself. There's so many different ideas around homeschooling and unschooling, so you really have to find what's best for your family.

"I always tell moms, the first year is the parent unschooling themselves to have no ideas and no expectations around what school looks like, but to really get to know their child. Really know what excites them, what makes them ignited to want to learn."

Share your stories with us at emg.inspired@epochtimes.com, and get your daily dose of inspiration by signing up for the Inspired newsletter at TheEpochTimes.com/newsletter





A young patron at Unicoi County Public

Library in Erwin, Tenn.

library's beloved cat, Story.

men and women just like them, ordinary people who are really not so ordinary at all seeking daily to do their jobs well, to improve the towns and cities where they live, and to boost the spirits of their communities, large or small.

In our present age of turmoil, they are my heroes.

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.

telligence, and fire in the belly. Like many readers, I closely follow the daily news in our country, and consider with more than a little dismay the often dreary headlines. Speaking with the peo-

# SACRED ART Meeting the Four Evangelists in Berlin

### Gothic sculptor Tilman Riemenschneider's Münnerstadt Altarpiece

#### LORRAINE FERRIER

ERLIN-Gothic sculptors had God in mind with every piece that they made. Their carefully crafted sculptures, illustrating the Bible and the lives of saints, formed an important part of church architecture—cementing the word of God into the heart of man.

Architects, artists, and artisans ensured everything in the church glorified God, so that even the illiterate could understand the word of God.

In his article "Erwin Panofsky's Gothic Architecture," Benedictine monk Daniel J. Heisey distills some of the 20th-century art critic's work.

"Panofsky's insight was that through proportion and distinction of parts, a Gothic cathedral was as solid and precise in its service of Catholic doctrine as was the treatise of a Scholastic theologian."

Art museums and galleries around the world now contain fragments of these church stories in carvings, sculptures, and other architectural motifs. We appreciate the beauty of those pieces isolated from their original church architecture, like reading a line of verse without knowing the whole poem.

#### Together, the scenes show us that even sinners can repent and become saints.

Tillman Riemenschneider's four evangelists, from the altarpiece of the church of St. Mary Magdalene in Münnerstadt, Bavaria, is a classic example. Last year, I admired these carvings at the Bode Museum in Berlin. The figures had once been part of the church's predella (the lowest part of the altarpiece). The evangelists are displayed in the order that their gospels appear in the Bible-Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The replica figures on display in the church's predella today follow this order too

Riemenschneider (circa 1460-1531) worked in a time of artistic transition, the Northern Renaissance (around 1380–1580). His figures typify the Gothic style that he was trained in, championing sublimely expressive works over anatomical accuracy, and creating art that appeals to the emotions, whether terror, awe, or religious fervor.

Riemenschneider carved the four figures in limewood, his favored medium. He was among the first artists to leave his figures



Gothic sculptor Tilman Riemenschneider designed the altarpiece in the Church of St. Mary Magdalene in Münnerstadt, Bavaria. Some of Riemenschneider's original works remain in the altarpiece but the casing was made in the early 1980s, and replica pieces, such as the four evangelists, were added over time.

unadorned by paint or metal leaf, preferring to give them a light wax. Each piece alone speaks volumes. He carved each evangelist so as to symbolize the work that he did. Mark and Luke are dressed as contemporary, humanist scholars indicating pious learning, and Matthew and John are dressed in ancient robes hinting that these are the apostles.

He included the beasts that are symbolic of each evangelist, carving Mark with a winged lion and Luke with a winged ox. He made separate carvings of John's eagle and Matthew's angel; these were directly attached to the predella, but are now lost.

The museum's curators have a wooden mock-up of the Münnerstadt Altarpiece on display, showing where the four evangelists fit into the overall altarpiece theme of the life of Mary Magdalene, who is mentioned in the gospel of each of the four evangelists. Together, the scenes show us that even sinners can repent and become saints.

Displayed together, Riemenschneider's four evangelists form a cohesive group. Each figure appears to interact with another, with their bodies turning to the middle, above which would be the central altarpiece panel (corpus) showing angels carrying Mary Magdalene to heaven, flanked by St. Kilian and St. Elizabeth of Thuringia.

Shutters of painted or decorative reliefs flank the corpus. The two panels on the left wing show "Christ Appearing to Mary Magdalene" (top) and "Christ in the House of Simon," and the two on the right wing show "Mary Magdalene's Last Communion" (top) and "Mary Magdalene's Burial." The shutters are open on Sundays and other holy days.

According to the Bode Museum, engraver Martin Schongauer's woodblock prints inspired many of Riemenschneider's sculptures. For instance, in this altarpiece, Riemenschneider's sculptural relief "Christ Appearing to Mary Magdalene" bears a striking resemblance to Schongauer's print "Christ Appearing to the Magdalene." This is the scene often referred to as "Noli me Tangere," where the resurrected Christ tells Magdalene not to touch him, for he hasn't yet ascended to his father in heaven.

The altarpiece tracery stretches another two levels above the corpus. Directly above the corpus, the Virgin Mary and St. John the Evangelist flank the trinity. Higher into the heavens of the tracery stands St. John the Baptist.

Riemenschneider's four evangelists have long been removed from the Church of St. Mary Magdalene, yet the sculptor's sacred intent for the figures springs forth from the works, demanding an eternal reverence bevond words.



"Evangelist Matthew," 1490-1492, by Tilman Riemenschneider. Limewood; 28 1/2 by 13 3/4 inches by 12 5/8 inches.



"Evangelist Mark," 1490–1492, by Tilman Riemenschneider. Limewood; 29 inches by 153/4 inches by 97/8 inches.



The four evangelists appear in the order that they appear in the New Testament. While Matthew and John were among Christ's 12 apostles, Mark and Luke were companions of St. Peter and St. Paul, respectively.



"Evangelist John," 1490–1492, by Tilman Riemenschneider. Limewood; 28 3/4 inches by 17 3/4 inches by 97/8 inches.



The story of Finn MacCool is the story of the roots of Irish society and culture. Finn MacCool by Beatrice Elvery

LITERATURE

The Tales of Finn MacCool: Strange, Inspiring, Funny, and Profound

#### PAUL PREZZIA

The folk stories of Gaelic heroes are a rich source of imaginative literature for children and adults alike, and the greatest of these heroes is the legendary Finn MacCool.

While Finn is the subject of many legends, some of his tales best exemplify the four qualities of Gaelic folktales: They are strange, inspiring, funny, and profound.

#### The Strangeness of Wonder

To talk about strangeness as a reason for reading and listening to Irish legends might seem strange; we can all think of a lot of strange things we would not want to expose ourselves and especially our children to. But there is a different kind of strange: that of realizing the limitations of our own point of view and experience, of realizing that there are beautiful and interesting things we have Finn's confrontation illustrates the importance of

## with Aillen courage and self-sacrifice.

yet to learn in this immense world. It is the strangeness of wonder.

With the story of Finn, it starts with his very name: In Gaelic, it is written "Fionn mac Cumhaill," but it is pronounced pretty much like the anglicized version, "Finn MacCool."

Another odd thing is the mystery of who Finn is, for to dive into the story of Finn Mac-Cool is to discover the roots of Irish society and culture itself. It is a society and culture that, while Christian, never got rid of its old religious heritage and stories. Instead, it transformed them and, in the process, enlarged the status of human beings.

In the stories the Irish told themselves through centuries, Finn was sometimes portrayed as a giant and sometimes as a heroic man. On this topic, the great Irish poet W.B. Yeats noted that, "When the pagan gods of Ireland ... robbed of worship and offerings, grew smaller and smaller in the popular imagination, until they turned into the fairies, the pagan heroes grew bigger and bigger, until they turned into the giants."

#### A Tale of Overcoming Adversity

Finn's early years illustrate the inspiring nature of these stories. From childhood, he faced adversity and overcame it with great pluck.

He was born to the Irish princess and beauty, Muirne, in his aunt's house. His father, Cumhall (pronounced something like "Cu-ahl"), the leader of the great warrior clan, the Fianna, had recently died in battle. He had fought and lost this battle with his rival within the Fianna, and the reason this battle occurred was directly connected to Finn's birth.

Cumhall had fallen in love with Muirne but her father had refused to give her to him in marriage, and so Cumhall abducted her. Muirne's consent seems implied in the fact that both her father and Cumhall's rival, Goll MacMorna, tried to kill her after the battle.

Finn grew up on the run. He would serve a local Irish king until it was discovered that he was Cumhall's son, and then he would be sent away for fear of Goll's reprisals. Then it was on to another Irish king, and another. But plucky little Finn (he is a mere boy in all these stories) never gave up trying to make his way in a world that opposed him.

Through all his early trials, he is described as having only one lasting desire: wisdom.

#### **A Funny Story**

Finn lived the fugitive life until he came to the abode of the druid-poet Finnegas, who lived on the river Boyne. Finnegas, a kind-hearted man, took Finn into his service and told him about the fish he had been trying to catch in the river for seven years: the Salmon of Knowledge. Finn asked Finnegas what would happen if he caught the fish.

plied the sage.

This story of Finn and the Salmon is no flippant or merely ridiculous, but humorous all the same. Finn continued to ask the sage questions about the Salmon, such as "What would you do with all knowledge?" The response: "A weighty question. I could answer it if I had All Knowledge, but not until then."

Salmon was so wise because it had eaten a nut of knowledge. Around a secret pool, nine hazel trees grew, dropping nuts of knowledge into the pool, where the Salmon ate the nut. When Finn pointed out that Finnegas could just go to this pool and eat the nut of knowledge himself, Finnegas wryly responded that he would, if he only had All Knowledge and knew where the pool was!

Finnegas eventually caught the Salmon of Knowledge and instructed Finn to prepare and cook it for him. Finn obeyed him, but accidentally burned his thumb on the fish while cooking it. Sucking his injured thumb like anyone would, suddenly this small boy had access to All Knowledge.

With this knowledge came Finn's opportunity to overcome Goll MacMorna. Any conundrum that he faced was met by simply putting his thumb in his mouth, for it was now a Thumb of Knowledge. The story, with a wink in its straight face, points out that Finn would always place this thumb under his wisdom tooth, which was now the Tooth of Knowledge.

#### **Beneath It All: Profundity**

Goll MacMorna eventually relinquished leadership of the Fianna to Finn MacCool. Having filled his father's shoes, Finn continued on to more adventures, such as his single combat with the fire-breathing fairy, Aillen. This episode illustrates the profound quality of folktales in the way in which they indirectly guide us toward virtue.

The fairy, Aillen, bore a grudge against the ancient Irish town of Tara. Every year, it would come on the night of the feast of Samhain, play beautiful music that would put all the defenders to sleep, and then burn a great part of the town with fire from its mouth

Finn decided to stand against this monster, but he needed something to keep awake. A member of his clan gave him something that could help: the magic spear, Birga.

It was a weapon enchanted with great loathsomeness; for one thing, it was extremely hot, and smelly as well. Simply by touching his forehead to it, Finn would be incapable of falling asleep while the rest of the town did so. And so, catching the fairy off guard, Finn killed him with the spear.

Mysterious and interesting in itself, this story of Finn's confrontation with Aillen illustrates the importance of courage and self-sacrifice. Finn overcame fear in deciding to challenge the Aillen. He also endured the pain and discomfort in using the Birga to keep awake.

Not only do we see the importance of these virtues individually, but also the importance of them working together. For without the willingness to endure pain, Finn would have fallen asleep and been killed by the fairy. Without courage—well, there would have been no story to begin "Then I would have All Knowledge," re- with, and Aillen would be terrorizing Tara to this day!

> To read more Irish legends, particularly those about Finn MacCool, see "Irish Fairy Stories" by James Stephens.

Paul Prezzia received his M.A. in History from the University of Notre Dame in 2012. He now serves as business manager, athletics coach, and Latin teacher at Gregory the Great Academy, and lives in Elmhurst Township, Pa., with his wife and children.

= THE EPOCH TIMES INTERVIEWS SHEN YUN AUDIENCES ------

## Shen Yun: A 'Sacred Experience'

Tew York-based Shen Yun Performing Arts is the world's premier classical Chinese dance and music company, established in 2006. Aiming for an artistic revival and celebration of China's rich cultural heritage, the company performs classical Chinese dance, ethnic and folk dance, and story-based dance, accompanied by orchestral and solo performers.

Shen Yun's Upcoming Performances Idaho Fa April 19 April 20-23 Anril 20-23

		April 20-23
San Diego	Calif.	April 21–23
Birmingham	Ala.	April 22
University Park	III.	April 27–30
Stamford	Conn.	April 27–30
Baltimore	Md.	April 28–30

please visit ShenYun.com/tickets



The singers vocally were so rich and passionate, and it really felt like a sacred experience. Like a heavenly sort of sacred experience.

AUDREY FERNANDEZ FRASER, co-artistic director, Christopher Street Collegium, New York



[Shen Yun] is probably one of the most significant things I've seen in my life! LASSE KAUKOMAA,

leading architect, National Defense Medical Center, Adelaide, Australia



Go because the heavenly feeling envelops everything in the show. It's a sensation of floating above everyone and feeling everything beneath you.

ASSI NASSIM, government adviser, Tel Aviv, Israel

The feeling was overwhelming. It was like I had entered another dimension, another world of such precise beauty. DANIELLA LUGASSY, opera singer, Tel Aviv, Israel

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PUBLIC DOMAIN

# How to Find **Good Children's Books Budget Prices**

There are countless great books to add to your home library, if you just know where to look

#### **ANNIE HOLMQUIST**

took a trip to my local library the other day, visiting the children's section for the first time in a while.

I was appalled. My surprise didn't come because the shelves were empty-they were wellfilled. Nor did it come because the books I loved as a child had largely disappeared-I already knew that many of them were purged from the shelves, deemed too oldfashioned or beyond repair or replacement.

What surprised me was the row after row of flashy, cartoonish covers sporting titles that signaled a woke, politically correct, and superficial worldview. It seemed that any child who commendably pulled himself away from video games and social media long enough to pick up a book would just receive more of the same content, only in a slower-paced, readable form.

So how do we help our children navigate the world of books in a postmodern society of politically correct feelings and relative truth?

The first thing to know is what makes a good, worthwhile story. One of the most masterful writers of the 20th century, C.S. Lewis, laid out several points in his essay "On Three Ways of Writing for Children," which parents can use when helping their children choose good reading material.

#### What Makes a Good Book?

Reading material portraying realistic children is one of the first items for which parents should look. Lewis explains this point by citing Edith Nesbit's trilogy on the Bastable family, which is told from the perspective of the oldest boy, Oswald, who gives his thoughts and opinions in an honest way that almost any child can relate to. Such a humorous depiction, Lewis explains, "enables the children who read it to do something much more mature than they realize," namely, to engage in character study—an exercise that aids in understanding not only the book, but also themselves

In addition to realistic children, good books provide depictions of the various personalities in real life. "Consider Mr. Badger in 'The Wind in the Willows,'" Lewis writes, "that extraordinary amalgam of high rank, coarse manners, gruffness, shyness, and goodness. The child who has once met Mr. Badger has ever afterwards, in its bones, a knowledge of humanity and of English social history which it could not get in any other way." In other words, the various personalities depicted in good books provide valuable interpersonal knowledge and skills-but such knowledge is cloaked so that children don't realize they're learning it.

Good literature hides the pill of knowledge in the jam of imagination, excitement, and entertainment. Just like television, it provides an occasion for ingesting ideologies and awareness of the world. But unlike television, the picture of the world that a good book presents will actually make the children who read it grow into better men and women, knowledgeable not only of



In his essay, "On Three Ways of Writing for Children," author C.S. Lewis lays out several points for parents to use when helping their children choose good reading material.

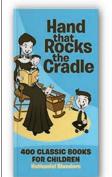
**Good books** will teach good things, but will do so in such a way that children hardly recognize the values they are learning.



**'BOOKS CHILDREN** LOVE' By Elizabeth Wilson



**'HONEY FOR A CHILD'S** HEART' **By Gladys Hunt** 



**'HAND THAT ROCKS THE CRADLE'** By Nathaniel Bluedorn

Good literature hides the pill of knowledge in the jam of imagination, excitement, and entertainment. JESSIE WILLCOX SM AIRY DRALES

the world in which they live, but of how to interact capably with it.

A third thing that good books should offer is a moral. Not a shove-it-down-yourthroat moral, mind you, but a subtle one that settles into the subconsciousness of the child. "The child as reader is neither to be patronized nor idolized," Lewis writes, "we talk to him as man to man. But the worst attitude of all would be the professional attitude which regards children in the lump as a sort of raw material which we have to handle." Good books will teach good things, but will do so in such a way that children hardly recognize the values they are learning.

#### Where Can Good Books Be Found?

In a world of many libraries similar to the one I explored the other day, how do we steer our children toward good literature, or even know how to find it ourselves? Several tricks come to mind.

The first is to look for old books. I have found that anything published in the 1950s or earlier is likely to be solid and wholesome, filled with storylines and morals that are unobjectionable. Unless these books have been republished recently, the covers will likely not be much to look at, and the pages will undoubtedly be somewhat yellowed, but the inside is what counts.

The second is to familiarize yourself with classic authors. Classic anthologies of short stories, such as Joe Wheeler's "Great Stories Remembered" volumes, are a tremendous tool in this area, for they offer a smattering of author names and story styles. Selecting the ones you like and then searching sites such as Archive.org for those same authors often provides other titles under their names. These can often be found in used bookstores or even online in digital format.

Finally, surround yourself with good book lists. "Books Children Love" by Elizabeth Wilson, "Honey for a Child's Heart" by Gladys Hunt, and "Hand that Rocks the Cradle" by Nathaniel Bluedorn are several book-length lists that categorize and describe books by genre and age appropriateness. Carole Joy Seid's online book list is another great resource.

Familiarizing yourself with such resourc-

es will soon enable you to spot a likely can-

didate for a good children's book a mile

away, enabling you to build your own li-

brary for your children. A case in point is

what happened after I dejectedly left the

children's section at my local library and

went to the discard room. Within minutes,

I spotted roughly 15 promising children's

books or classics, several of which I had

never read but knew were good options

because I recognized the authors' names.

Best of all, these potential additions to my

home library were less than a dollar each.

these discard rooms, often acting under

the banner of the "Friends of the Library"

group. They process donations of old books

and books the library discards, reselling

them for a song to those who know the

value of a good book, no matter its age.

Exploring these rooms or hitting the large

sales these groups host is one of the best

ways to start your own library at an inex-

Who knows? Perhaps you, too, will be-

come a connoisseur of good children's

Annie Holmquist is a cultural commenta-

tor hailing from America's heartland who

loves classic books, architecture, music,

Annie's Attic on Substack.

and values. Her writings can be found at

pensive price.

books!

Many libraries around the country have

reads to her children in this illustration by American artist Jessie Willcox Smith (1863-1935).

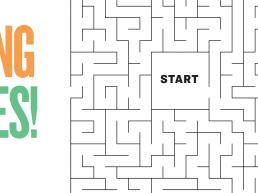
A mother



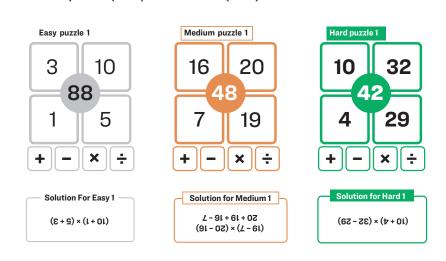
ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

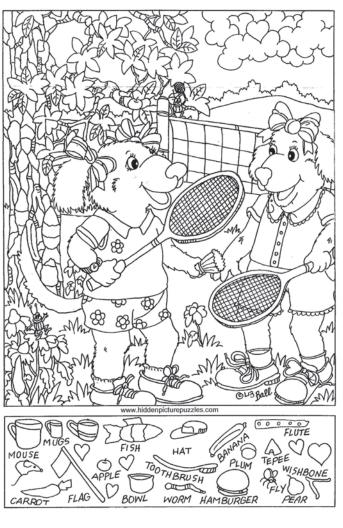
By Aidan Danza ALL PHOTOS BY GETTY IMAGES UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED HE PURPLE MARTIN When the nesting is done, the martins' association with nankind doesn't stop. They will orm dense swarms to migrate, which roost for a few weeks at a time in the lead-up to nigration. Usually, they noose not to roost in he purple secluded areas, like some e one family of martir martin is a It's feeding ached to human other is a mass apartm other species would, but cheery bird, one eings. Some people ttribute this to the instead seem to prefer to that signals the roost in cities or human Native Americans arrival of spring structures. The flocks can be so large that they are visible who wer<u>e known to pu</u> (at least in this part of the world) house the martins, which her way, as lor ch their wintering grounds apparently were good sentries. Others say it was due to 19th-century Americans who put up and also one that h America, they will hole s there are at o in one location for months, east four unit has the unique s a great nuisance designation of ts of some towns being housed nd cities, who complain of copious amounts of entirely by martin condos. Perhaps having to bring in dump trucks martins are, and always to clean up after the birds' human beings. were, just a fact of human droppings and The species, as a whole, is civilization in America east of eathers. the Rockies. All we now know generally attracted to human is that martins, as a species, beings, not just for housing are almost entirely dependent during the nesting season, on man-made housing in order A "condo" ca but even during the winter. to bring up their young. house many martin families. 🕨





**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





HIDDEN TREASURES by Liz Ball www.HiddenPicturePuzzles.com

В	0	Х	Ι	Ν	G	С	L	Ι	Μ	В	Ι	Ν	G	V
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С	Ι	Н	А	Х	F	В	L	F	G	G	Ν	Ζ	L	Y
S	Т	Т	0	R	Т	W	Ι	Ν	Ν	L	F	G	I	В
R	Κ	Υ	Ν	0	С	L	I	I	Κ	L	Μ	J	Ν	A
U	Н	A _	0	E	Т	Н	D	S	0	F	В	U	G	L
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Shooting

Skating

Yoga

Fitness

Football

WORD SEARCH: Happy Easter!

ALL PHOTOS BY SHUTTERSTOCK

# **Getting Back on Track**

It's never too late to restart fresh and change your life for the better

> Even a few minutes of fresh air can help bring rejuvenation and restore energy levels.

#### **BARBARA DANZA**

So your New Year's resolution fell on its face 10 days into January, and your habit tracker hasn't seen any marks in a while. You've fallen off the horse, gotten off track, endured some setbacks, and you're not feeling so great about it at the moment.

There's only one thing to do. Get up, dust yourself off, and get back on track. It's time for a fresh start, and it's easier than you think.

#### **Stop Beating Yourself Up**

You aren't a robot, and life has many ups and downs. Things aren't always going to go according to plan. Everybody falls down sometimes. The most important thing to do when that happens is to get back up as quickly as possible.

Don't wallow. Don't lie there lamenting the fact that you've fallen. Don't run that mental tape of insults and disgust that you tend to barrage yourself with in times such as this.

Get up. Be gentle with yourself. Put one foot in front of the other. It's time to tidy the mess and get back on track. Take just a few days to walk through the following steps.

#### **Physical Needs First**

Follow the lead of famed psychologist Abraham Maslow outlined in his hierarchy of needs by focusing on your most basic needs first. Often, when we get off track, it's because key aspects of life such as sleep, nutrition, and exercise have been neglected. Grab some water and head to the kitchen. As you hydrate, look in the fridge, the freezer, the cupboards—and assess the situation. Clean out the processed, sugar-filled foods and order some fresh fruits and vegetables, quality meats, and healthy snack options to have on hand. Stock your kitchen with plenty of delicious and healthy options that will nourish and fuel you. Next, either head out the door for a brisk walk or head to the bedroom for a muchneeded nap. Either one will be an investment in your energy. If sleep has been an issue lately, choose the nap. If you've been oversleeping but neglecting to move your body, grab those sneakers and enjoy some fresh air, even if just for a few minutes.

mit to. Continue working toward your fresh start tomorrow.

#### **Shape Up Your Environment**

Next, assess your environment.

Unplug from digital devices and the onslaught of media messaging while you tidy up your home. Starting with just one thing, then another, put items away, wipe down surfaces, get a load of laundry going, and simply putter around making your personal space a bit tidier and cleaner.

Set a new policy for yourself that you never leave a room without improving it in some small way.

#### **Dump Your Brain**

As you admire your newly improved space, pour yourself a cup of coffee, tea, or water and sit down with a pen and paper. It's time for a brain dump.

Jot down, in no particular order, the things weighing on your mind. From the abstract, such as "I want to have more fun," to the minute, such as "I need to buy more tape." There are no wrong answers, no inappropriate topics, and no grade at the end—just dump every big and small thing that's been weighing on your mind until you can't possibly think of another thing.

You'll likely end up with a page or pages full of the most random assortment of chaos, and it'll actually make you feel better. You've captured it, and your mind can take a rest from trying to remember it all. Step away from it for the day and enjoy the little bit of relief it brings. You'll be back to it, don't worry.

Tend to your responsibilities with loving care like you would a garden.

Prioritizing which roles you play in the lives of

On a new page, jot down the main roles you play in your life and in the lives of those around you. As you do, contemplate how you can best perform the duties of those roles.

Further, jot down what's most important to you in life. What are your top priorities? What do you believe life is for? Why do you believe you're here? This may lead you to some spiritual study or prayer. Take all the time you wish.

Return to your brain dump, and with one pen color, cross out all of the things on there that don't really matter to you, that you simply do not want to do or pursue, or that you've decided are no longer important.

With another color, circle all of the things you wish to remember or get to eventually but that you won't or can't handle now. You just want to remember that you might do them sometime in the future.

The things left untouched on your list are your current concerns. Take another pen and circle the three that you deem the most important. Those three are to inform your to-do list for the next few days or longer, until they are complete.

#### **Take Action**

Take at least one small-even tiny-action toward the completion of one item on your new to-do list. Give yourself a high five.

Reflect

Decide on a bedtime that you'll stick to and an exercise schedule that you'll com-

#### Inbox Zero

As you continue to care for your most basic needs, find time to tidy up the inputs that you've been receiving. Go through your email, your physical mail, and any other online or offline receptacles for communication.

Handle the bills, the responses, the calendar items, and toss or delete whatever you can. Close all open loops.

#### **Prioritize**

When you're ready, and as you continue to take care of yourself and your personal space, return to your brain dump and set aside a few pens of varying colors.

those around you, and how best to perform those roles, will help to keep you focused on what and who is important to you.



As you continue to take care of yourself, your environment, and your responsibilities, reflect on what led you to get off track and how much better you're feeling now. Continue to take small actions toward making progress on your highest priorities.

Keep the momentum going by seeking out inspiration from good books and ideas that nourish your mind. Seek spiritual growth through your religious practice or personal study. Celebrate the fact that you've begun to turn this ship around. You're getting back on track. Tend to your responsibilities with loving care like you would a garden. Keep at it.

> The next time you feel like you've fallen off the horse, rinse and repeat.



**TRUTH** and **TRADITION** 

# A NEWSPAPER GEORGE WASHINGTON WOULD READ

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