

Dear Friends And Family



Center Nicole Ramsay

By David Ramsay

FORKS TWSP. - In the worst of times for our family, we are forever grateful for your outpour of support. As we dealt with a deep range of emotions from shock to sorrow, the overwhelming assistance that we received for our beloved Nicole was more important to our well-being than any of you can truly imagine. Following the tragedy that struck our family, there was a wave of backing that washed over our fears and anguish. From the texts, phone calls, cards, and meals, including food and coffee at the hospital, each gesture from everyone who came to our aid has been remembered and will never be forgotten.

Within the nearby community and from afar, there was a rally for our beloved Nicole that turned heartache into hope. Our spirits were revived with visitations from family and friends to the various hospitals and nursing homes where she continued to fight along with the compassion and affection that was bestowed upon our family. Your devotion to us never wavered, and you organized events to raise money for our family. Together we walked, as you gathered by our sides through a period where we needed all the guidance and love in the world. The helping hands continued to lift us up as t-shirts, bracelets, coffee, magnets, light bulbs, and other items were sold on behalf of the Ramsay family.

Through a six-month period, our lives were a whirlwind, but the warmth and kindness we received will never cease to amaze us. Our children were invited to numerous homes for sleepovers and whenever there was a complicated situation regarding a surgery or transfer, they were driven wherever they needed to go by a safety net of friends and family that kept them pointed forward in a positive direction. A famous quote from Mother Teresa reads, "It is not how much we give but the love we put into giving." Remarkably, we received the best of both worlds and were delivered a surreal amount of generosity as gifts, donations, and even more cards began to pour in. The love behind your giving is evidenced by a stack of cards filled with well wishes and sympathies that is a foot and a half piled high. Contacts from around the country in a variety of states including PA, NJ, CT, OH, NC, SC, FL, TX, AZ, and CA, reflect the impact that Nicole has on everyone's life. Just like you will never forget her, we will never forget you.

Although we continue to mourn, your love has helped us through the struggles of adversity. Knowing that Nicole's final months were spent with your love and support has filled our family with an emotional lift that will help us move forward with the precious memories of our devoted mother, wife, and daughter.

Forever grateful,
The Ramsay and Ehle families



Jan Marie Schwartz

This column is exclusive to the *Blue Valley Times*

Single and multiple day music festivals within driving distance from the Lehigh Valley are already promoting their line-ups. Mountain Jam, in NY, The Firefly Festival in Dover, DE, Boston Calling in Allston, MA, Solid Sound, North Adams, MA, and Roots Picnic in Philly are festivals that allow parents and kids to enjoy music on multiple outdoor stages during the spring and summer months. Exposing kids to artists you love, and socializing with fellow music lovers, is good for you and your child. But are you worried about balancing your love for your favorite artists (Travis Scott or Wilco anyone?) while juggling feedings, diaper changes, and possibly a wailing infant when the music starts?

My family started attending a three-day music, art and comedy festival eight years ago in the Berkshire Mountains when my kids were in elementary school. Looking back, I wish we had started going to festivals when they were younger, much younger, because the pros of attending shows can outweigh the cons, especially since many of these festivals anticipate families attending. You can get a sense if the venue is kid-friendly by what the cut-off age is for charging admission to the show. If children under five-years of age aren't charged admission, you can infer that the site will have baby changing stations and maybe a designated area for nursing mothers. Although this can happen defacto at shows where groups of families with children of similar ages spread out blankets to socialize, feed, and rest. I witnessed it on a warm August night in Maryland at a Phish concert where parents of infants and toddlers set-up blankets under a grove of trees far away from the mob pressing in closer to the stage. The parents could still hear the music and the children were blissfully content lazing on blankets or playing with friends.

Some festival venues already have places where they encourage children to run and explore. On the grounds of the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, where the Solid Sound Festival is held, they have an area known as Kidspace. This is described as a "kid centered art gallery and



hands-on art studio" where festival goers with young children are encouraged to spend some time wandering around and enjoying the scheduled activities.

Babies are wonderfully portable and can be strapped to your chest or perched on your back in a carrier where they will be content to people watch or fall off to sleep. If you're worried the music will be too loud (trust me, it will be for their sensitive ears) you will need to invest in a pair of noise canceling headphones. These help protect your baby's ears from the loud music so you both can enjoy the show. The headphones are made just for little ones and they come in some really cute patterns and colors too. Oftentimes, strollers are allowed, although not

in all areas of the festival. It's a good idea to check the festival's website for a

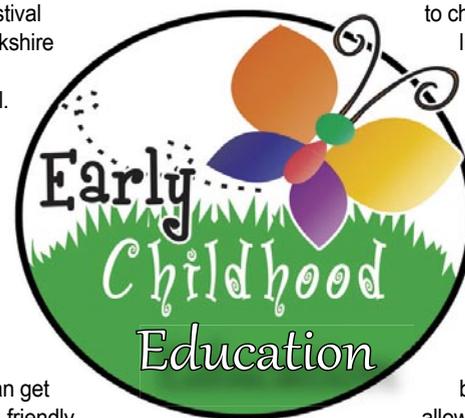
list of things that are allowed into

the venue, so you don't have any surprises at the entrance gate.

That's where some advance planning can help make the experience memorable (in a GOOD way) for both you and your child. The obvious: Most festival allow backpacks, but remember these bags need to be checked by concert security before you're allowed in. So leave behind anything

that would be considered a weapon (and yes, this would include that Swiss army knife attached to your key ring), or a camera with a lens that's too big (you don't want to have to run things back to your car). Pack plenty of sunscreen, bug spray, and remember sunglasses and hats for not only you, but for your little one, and if allowed an empty or sealed water bottle.

Certain venues allow you to carry in your own empty water bottle to be filled at a fountain or, at the festival we attend, also a hose (affectionately called Joe's hose). This helps save money and also keeps everyone hydrated and happy. The bottle needs to be empty or sealed to prevent people from bringing alcohol into the event. At the Solid Sound festival we also packed snacks so we wouldn't have to worry about waiting on a long line to purchase food. Again, certain venues allow outside food to be brought in as long as it's in a soft cooler.



Jan Marie Schwartz is an Outreach Coordinator for the Pre-K for PA campaign. The campaign is supported by individuals and organizations across Pennsylvania who believe that investing in our children is the right choice and an urgent necessity. She also serves as VP of Public Policy for the Lehigh and Northampton Chapter of PennAEYC

LEHIGH AND NORTHAMPTON CHAPTER

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Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children



**Ken
Field**

*Owner of Slate
Belt Energy
Services*

Exclusively in the Blue Valley Times

What to Heat With

I get involved in a lot of conversations about heating and too often I'm asked to settle arguments about which kind of heat is best. Much as I would like to be the world's authority on it, there are just too many variables to make a valid case for any particular kind of system or fuel. Geography has a big effect on what kind of heating system you should choose. We are a little too far North for me to be a big fan of air source heat pumps but they seem to be the system of choice in our area. Geothermal heat pumps are more efficient but are more expensive to install. Natural gas is a good choice if you use a system having 95% efficiency or above. Oil or propane is a good choice where natural gas is not available. Propane has the advantage of more uses than oil. Cooking, clothes drying, fireplaces and backup generators all are additional options for propane. Oil is a good value if it is used in an efficient furnace or boiler. When it gets to coal and wood and pellets, user intervention comes into play and some of what you save on fuel will be spent in energy feeding and maintaining the equipment. A huge wildcard is what you are heating. If your house is like a barn, your cost will probably be high no matter what fuel you try to heat with. You are also probably more responsible for climate change than people with well insulated homes. One advantage of a coal, wood or pellet stove is that most of them are spot heat sources. They use less fuel because they heat less of the house. If you can heat the room you spend most of your time in, who cares if some of the other rooms are not as warm?

I just did a fuel cost comparison between, oil, natural gas, propane, air source heat pump, wood pellets, and electric heat at current prices in our area and all were within \$2.00 of each other for 1 million btus. which could be nearly a weeks worth of heating in a 2000 sq. ft. house in our area at this time of year. All except electric heat which was over 50% higher. Most were about \$23 for 1 million btus and electric was closer to \$36. Reduce your homes appetite for fuel by insulating and your bills won't hurt as bad no matter what you heat with.

Ken Field is the owner of Field's Service, Inc. and Slate Belt Energy Services. He has over 40 years of experience in heating, air conditioning and is certificated by RESNET and BPI in various areas of energy conservation. He can be reached at 610-599-8832 or at www.SlateBeltEnergy.com

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National Groundwater Awareness Week Starts March 11th

By DCNR

HARRISBURG - About half of Pennsylvania residents get drinking water directly from groundwater. In recognition of National Groundwater Awareness Week next week, here's some tips to help protect our most valuable natural resource:

Plant natives on your property. They don't need as much water or fertilizer. If you must water them, do so in the morning or evening when its coolest, and only when needed.

Don't use lawn and garden chemicals. Lawn pesticides and fertilizers can contaminate groundwater. Safe and effective alternatives exist for most chemical pesticides and fertilizers.

Use all natural/nontoxic cleaners whenever possible. Lemon juice, baking soda, and vinegar make great cleaning products and are inexpensive and environmentally friendly.

Properly dispose of hazardous substances. Don't dump on the ground, down the drain, or down the toilet. Contact local waste authorities for proper disposal.

Have your water well tested yearly and if there is a change in your water's taste or smell.

Have your septic tank inspected and serviced regularly to prevent groundwater pollution.



"PA GI Bill" to Support National Guard Families

By State Rep. Joe Emrick

BANGOR - Ensuring a better future for our Pennsylvania National Guard members and their families is the driving force behind the first-of-its-kind Pennsylvania GI Bill, also known as the Military Family Education Program.

The proposal builds on the state's existing National Guard Military Education Program by extending benefits to a guard member's spouse or children in exchange for the guard member committing to a second obligation of six years in the Guard.

The initiative not only recognizes the sacrifices made by Guard families but also helps retain current National Guard members and attract transitioning military service members to Pennsylvania.

The program would provide for 10 semesters of tuition-free education for family member(s).

The benefit must be used at a Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency approved educational institution, and at the tuition rate set by the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

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