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# parent

**Fall 2020**

**Breastfeeding  
beautifully p4**

**Backyard camping p8**

**Children's books  
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**Ready, set..school? p12**

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COVER: Amaya Henderson with son August Brisbon.  
PHOTO CREDIT: NORMA ZUNIGA

## CAPITAL CITY parent

Fall 2020

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# Breastfeeding beautifully

CC PARENT | Carey Smith

There are many health benefits to breastfeeding, and new mothers are encouraged and assisted more than ever. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than half of American babies are breastfed through six months of age, and more than a third are breastfed until at least a year old.

Mollie Ringer has breastfed two sons,

ages 2-and-a-half years and 11 months. Her breastfeeding journey did not begin easily, as her oldest was tongue- and lip-tied. The lactation nurses at HSHS St. John's Hospital were able to provide the assistance she needed to overcome these obstacles and to nurse successfully. With her second child, "I was more proactive; I asked a lot more questions," and she says she had a much

easier time.

Previously employed full time before COVID-19, with her sons in daycare, Ringer has now transitioned to being a stay-at-home mom. "I love having the boys home with me," she states. Working and breastfeeding brought its own challenges, as pumping is not always easy for some women. "I went back to work with my old-





Photo by Nicholle Godar

est after three months. I was able to nurse him once a day and pump twice a day. With my second, I was able to pump as needed.”

Ringer advises newly breastfeeding moms to not to be afraid to ask questions, even if they seem silly. “I’m still learning with my second. Lactation consultants are so helpful.”

Amaya Henderson had it in her mind that she would breastfeed because of the health benefits. Son August Brisbon, age 8 months, made it easy as he latched on without assistance as he was on her chest right after birth. “I just kept doing it!” she laughs.

After four weeks of breastfeeding, her supply waned, and it became apparent that August wasn’t getting enough milk.



Photo by Keshia Barbee



Henderson supplemented with formula for about a week while she worked to get her milk supply up in order to meet August’s needs. Working while breastfeeding was a challenge, nursing her son a few times a day, and pumping extra while at work. August followed his hearty early interest in table foods with verve and weaned himself recently.

“Do it!” says Henderson, when asked what she would advise new breastfeeding mothers. “Breastfeeding is not just about the health benefits; it’s a chance to bond. They know you. They smell you when you walk into a room and want you. It’s a great feeling.”

Nicholle Godar nursed all three of her



Photo by Nicholle Godar

Nicholle Godar is now breastfeeding her third child and got a tattoo shortly after her second baby was born as a tribute to her breastfeeding journey. She describes it as the perfect embodiment of mother and woman, saying, “It really helped me work through the identity crisis I was having still as a new mom - figuring out who the ‘new me’ was after babies.” (Top left) Terra Stiltz is currently nursing her second child, son Jarrett. (Bottom right) Mollie Ringer says she’s had an easier time nursing her second child after asking more questions.

children: sons Jace (5) and Blake (3) and daughter Sunny, 11 months. Jace was born at 34 weeks gestation, and was in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) for two weeks. “I was nervous, and felt pres-





Photo by Keshia Barbee

Photographers Keshia Barbee and Nicholle Godar held a group photo shoot at Lincoln Memorial Garden in honor of World Breastfeeding Week, Aug. 1-7.

**Nicholle Godar** is a certified doula, photographer and videographer, specializing in the documentation of birth, empowerment and emotive storytelling. Based in Springfield, she is also the head of marketing for Scooter's Lawn Care, a wife and mother of three young children.

**Keshia Barbee** is a family and newborn photographer and owner of Barbee Dream Photos in Springfield. She believes that images should capture how our seasons of life truly feel, not just what everyone looks like, which is why she specializes in creating imagery with meaningful connections.

**Norma Zuñiga** is a part-time photographer and blogger based in Springfield. Her area of expertise is portrait/fashion editorial and business branding. She loves to create creative content that is outside the norm for both her clients and personal projects.

sured by the NICU to use formula, as it was easiest for them," said Godar. She persevered and was able to breastfeed, continuing to breastfeed Jace after Blake was born, which is referred to as tandem nursing.

Besides the rough start to nursing Jace, Godar hasn't encountered many obstacles since. But having and nursing three children in succession has meant that Godar hasn't been away from her children more than a few hours in their lives. Flexible work hours have allowed her to focus her time on her children.

Godar advises new moms to rest even – and especially – when they feel good. "In no world should new moms be expected to get up and host people," she says. She also acknowledges that breastfeeding can be

really hard for many people. "The postpartum part is the hard work of having a child. We all struggle, but we should talk about it."

Terra Stiltz has breastfed both her daughter, Josie Grey, age 7, and her son, Jarrett Stiltz, age 16 months. She breastfed "because of the closeness and bonding I received when I first started." Jarrett began life with a lip- and tongue-tie, which had to be addressed. "There was a lot of pain and issues in the beginning," she says.

Being a full-time employee of Blue Cross Blue Shield, Stiltz feels one of the biggest challenges was keeping the balance after she returned to work. "It's been hard to keep up my supply while pumping at work."

Stiltz advises new mothers: "Trust yourself. If it hurts or doesn't feel right, follow

your mom instincts and seek out the help of a lactation consultant. We need to trust our bodies and trust ourselves."

Many mothers who desire to breastfeed have not been able to, through challenges beyond their ability to meet. As Ringer asserts, "However you're able to feed your baby is the best way to feed your baby." She notes, mothering is not a competition, but a connection, and we support one another in raising healthy and happy babies, however we individually may do so.

*Carey Smith is a Springfield mama who struggled to breastfeed. She and her son finally figured it out with the help of many lactation consultants when he was 11 weeks, continuing to breastfeed for another three years.*



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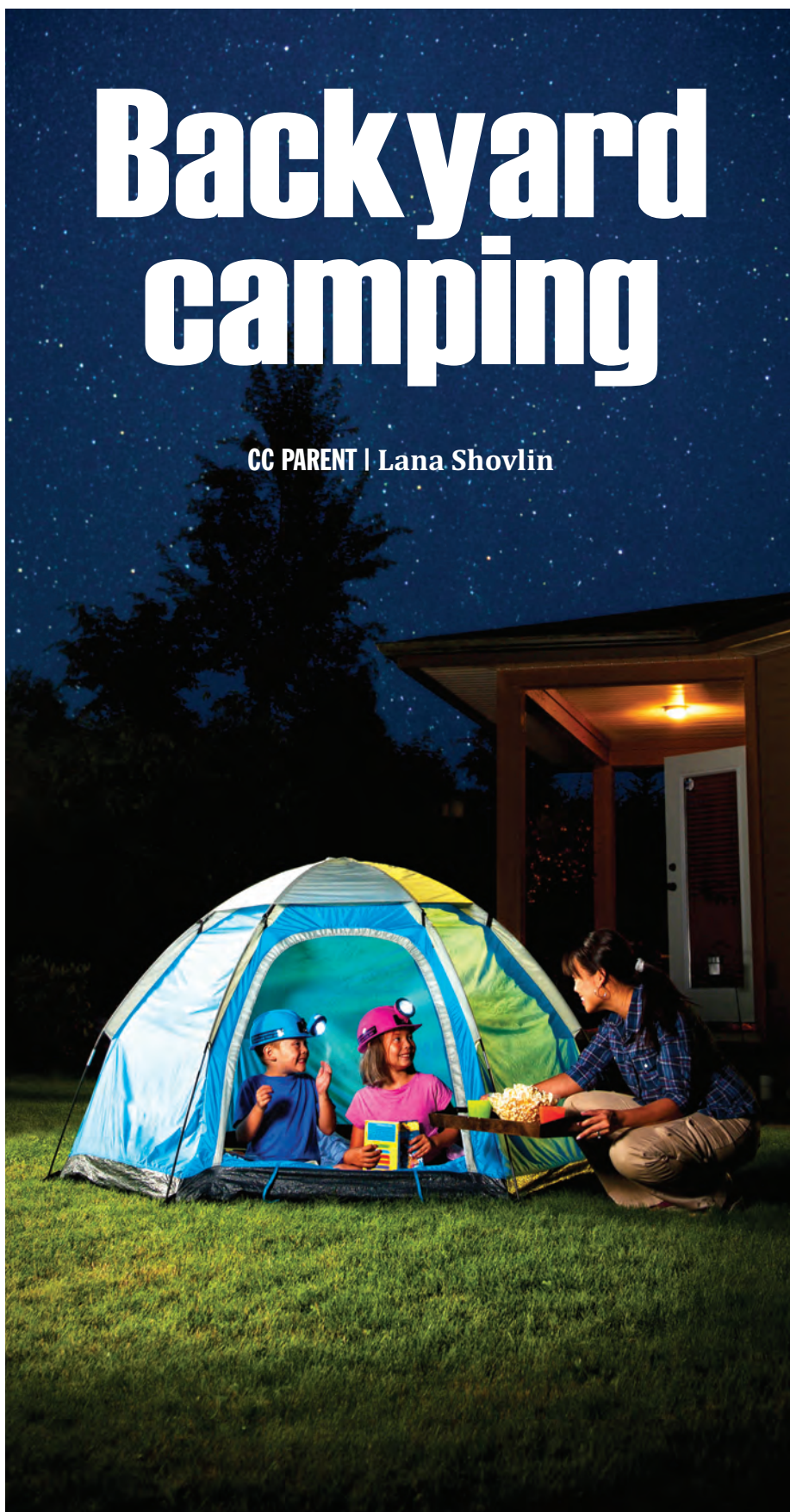
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# Backyard camping

CC PARENT | Lana Shovlin



A few weeks ago, I set up a small, blue tent in our backyard. After spending so much time sheltering in place, my daughters had become bored with their normal backyard play, and I thought that a tent would be a fun way for them to add some variety to their daily routine. I figured that they would enjoy playing house in it during the day and pretending to camp in it at night while they were catching lightning bugs. Never in a million years did I anticipate that they would actually want to sleep in it, alone, without an adult.

The following morning, when my girls ran outside to play, I saw their eyes light up when they saw the tent. Right away, they began asking me if we were going to sleep in the tent, and I realized that I had not anticipated this outcome. Sure, I had countless childhood campouts in my backyard, but that was the 1980s. Times were different then. Plus, my kids are terrified of June bugs. How would they sleep with those disoriented beetles slamming into the sides of their tent every few seconds? Honestly, though, the main reason I had for not wanting them to sleep outside was that I was terrified. I know that backyard camping is a rite of passage for many children, but those children aren't my children. I want my kids to have a childhood filled with adventure and wonderful memories, but I also know that bad things happen to kids. The thought of them sleeping outside scared the hell out of me.

As they circled around, begging me to let them sleep in the tent that night, I decided that the best thing to do, despite being riddled with anxiety, was to say yes. I'd love to be able to keep them in bubble wrap for their entire lives, but I also know that having small moments of childhood independence can help them grow into confident and healthy adults. Plus, I know how easy it is for kids to fall into the routine of sitting on the couch to watch Netflix



for hours or spend an entire afternoon glued to an iPad; I don't want that for my children. I want them to grow up with a strong appreciation for the outdoors and to be able to entertain themselves without the aid of electronics.

Later that evening, my husband and I sat on the back patio and watched as our daughters carried sleeping bags and pillows down our back steps and piled them into the tent. To the unzipping of sleeping bags, we talked about whether we had completely lost our minds and Googled statistics on kids getting stolen out of backyard tents by strangers. (In case you are wondering, I couldn't find one single instance where this has happened. In fact, only about 100 children are abducted each year in stereotypical



stranger scenarios and about half of them come home.)

Luckily, all of my worrying was for naught. Around 11 p.m. we heard the backdoor creak open and my 10-year-old came creeping inside. Apparently, she had developed a killer stomachache and thought that sleeping in her bed would make it go away. My five-year-old, on the other hand, trailed behind her, visibly upset that she'd lost her

camping partner.

Seeing the disappointment on her face, my husband went upstairs, grabbed his sleeping bag and ventured out into the starlit night. Together, he and our youngest daughter shared jokes, made shadow animals on the tent walls with their flashlights and fell asleep to an orchestra of chirping crick-

ets and hooting owls.

Meanwhile, snuggled into my comfortable bed, I drifted off to sleep knowing that my baby girl was having the time of her life and she'd definitely still be there in the morning.

*Lana Shovlin is a Springfield freelance writer and mom of three.*

A photograph of a woman and a young boy walking outdoors, smiling. The woman is wearing a dark sleeveless top, and the boy is wearing a blue shirt and a backpack.

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# Children's books about the pandemic

CC PARENT | Deana Metzke

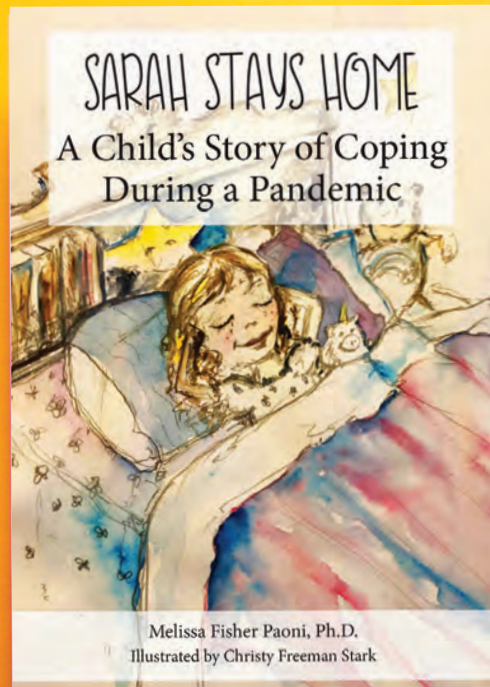
As I'm sure you have heard or said yourself many times since March, these are unprecedented times. In these particular times, it may be difficult to determine how your kids feel about the pandemic and its consequences and, depending on their age, they may not be able to find the words to explain how they are feeling. Even after you figure it out, trying to decide how to explain what is going on to them in language they understand

can be another obstacle. Sometimes books can help us find the words that we can't come up with ourselves, whether it spells things out clearly or just helps to facilitate a conversation between you and your child. Here are a couple of timely titles that may be useful when talking to your kids about COVID-19.

Dr. Melissa Fisher Paoni, a Springfield child psychologist, has written two books about children and the pandemic,

the first one titled, *Sarah Stays Home: A Child's Story of Coping During a Pandemic*. In this short picture book, we meet Sarah, who has a pretty average fourth-grade life, until the pandemic abruptly changes things. Suddenly, Sarah has to figure out how to deal with learning online, spending a lot of time at home and not being able to hang out with her friends. Dealing with all this at once is naturally causing some changes in her





moods and relationships with family members. Her mom seems to be appropriately clear with Sarah as to what's going on, but it takes some refocusing and scheduling in order for Sarah to realize what positives she can focus on during these confusing times.

Although in *Sarah Wears a Mask: A Child's Story of Adjusting to Pandemic Safety Rules*, we get to meet the same characters as we did in the first book, you do not have to read the first book in order for the second one to make sense, as it stands on its own. In this one, Sarah expresses some genuinely unsettling feelings about having to wear a mask herself and also seeing others with masks on. Again, her mother does a good job of explaining why wearing a mask is important, and her father, who is an essential worker, gives some tips to help make mask wearing even easier. This book even has a mask decorating activity in the back, as well as step-by-step directions for making a mask using a handkerchief and hair ties. And again, we discover that interactions with friends and family, and creating new schedules that are consistent, are key to helping Sarah adjust to her new normal.

I would suggest that both of these books, which are each illustrated by Springfield artist Christy Freeman Stark, are appropriate to be read to or with school-aged children up until third or fourth grade. Kids tend to like books in a series, so I do think that's a benefit to seeing the same characters in both books. If you, or other caregivers you know, are struggling with beginning these important conversations with children, these books may be just the avenue you need to get started. You can purchase the Kindle version through the author's website, [www.drpaonibooks.com](http://www.drpaonibooks.com), or they can also be found at [www.digitalldesigns.com](http://www.digitalldesigns.com). After expenses, proceeds from sale of the book are being donated to Doctors Without Borders.

*Deana Metzke is a wife, mom of two, blogger and book lover who is trying her best to raise children who will enjoy reading long after she's gone. She is a literacy coach at a Springfield elementary school. You can find her talking about children's books on Twitter at @DMetzke or on her blog, raisingreaders.site.*





# Ready, set...school?

CC PARENT | DiAnne Crown



*Parents can smooth the way back to school by helping students know what to expect in advance and getting organized before school starts. This will be more challenging in 2020. Your attitude counts – big time.*

Going back to school creates a powerful mix of emotions. This year, our youngest new students may actually have an advantage because they aren't accustomed to a school routine yet. But for returning students who were pulled out of classrooms into quarantine last spring, school will look much different this fall. Navigating change isn't fun, but

many students will be back in the classroom for at least part of the school week. You can help.

## **Your message matters**

If I were to summarize the sea of experts' views into one common-sense approach, the message would be this: Be calm, positive and proactive. As in all things, you set the tone. Explain that schools are preparing for all children to be safe and well; that wearing masks and leaving space between people helps keep everyone healthy when we're getting to know a new kind of virus; and that your

family *and the teachers* are in it together – you will figure out what works best for everyone.

Then get ready. Make sure everyone in the family has a comfortable, breathable mask to wear and have *everyone* practice all-day wear and thorough handwashing at least once before school starts.

## **Get the lay of the land**

Schools may not be offering summer tours this year, so take a look at the website together and be sure to read any



procedural messages from the school and district. You can definitely locate the car and bus drop-off and pick-up locations and discuss plans for lunches. Discuss any provisions for remote learning and set up a useful, well-lit, dedicated workspace for each student in the house.

### Supplies and packs

Find the school supply list from your child's teacher and take a fun trip to the store together. Put any general items in one bag, such as boxes of tissue, pencils and looseleaf paper for teachers. For elementary-age students and older, set



up a very basic binder/trapper. Students don't need an entire ream of paper and a dozen pencils (I've seen it).

Keep the backpack size manageable. Experts I interviewed for a 2018 *Illinois Times* backpack article cautioned that carrying large, heavy backpacks creates musculoskeletal problems for children and youth even when worn properly with arms through both straps and the pack centered on the back. Instead, select a small backpack for a small child, and a medium backpack for everyone else. If your school still uses large, heavy textbooks, buy a used set online for home and sell or donate them next year.

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## Clothes

It truly grieves me to say, clothes and shoes matter. If your child likes to make an alternative statement, affirm all reasonable and dress code-conscious choices. Otherwise, find something affordable that fits in with the crowd.

## Schedules and sleeping

Families can run themselves ragged trying to help our kids build experiences, create positive peer groups and graduate with a standout resume. According to published research, such as the sleep data from *The Washington Post*, most children and youth need about twice as much sleep as they get.

There are a lot of demands on families. Try, and don't give up, to create a routine that supports ample sleep time on a predictable schedule, time to do the day's homework and work on

larger future assignments, stress-free family time and unstructured time to enjoy creativity, relaxation, imagination and quiet spaces. The whole family will enjoy the rewards of improved communication, focus, empathy and grades.

## Eating

Make meals count, especially breakfast. A big bowl of sugary cereal or syrupy French toast sticks will put your child right to sleep during morning math. Sadly, this is usually the first thing kids reach for in the school breakfast line, so serve protein at home. Consider toast with nut butter, scrambled eggs or, for kids who don't like traditional breakfast dishes, a baked potato with cheese, chicken strips or breakfast burrito. Even vegans can work out protein-rich

breakfasts instead of sweets and will not miss that mid-morning sugar-crash headache a bit. Anything you can make the night before will help ensure breakfast success.

## Positive outlook

Our grandmothers said it, and it will always be true. Accentuate the positive. Be grateful. Affirm accomplishments and improvement, not just A's and wins. Eliminate negative self-talk. Count your blessings aloud with each other. Cheer each other on. You're in it together, so be the team for one another.

*DiAnne Crown is the editor at Seasons of Parenting, a website of resources to encourage children and support families. Visit [www.seasonsofparenting.com](http://www.seasonsofparenting.com) for more information.*



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