

# goodstuff

By Karen Kullgren



## Rock Around the Block Parties

Whether or not you can get *away*, you can certainly get *together*. Get the kids involved in a block party, a great exercise in teamwork off the playing field. Put the word out with flyers in mailboxes, notices in community newsletters or on listservs and/or evites). Make a list of what people need to be recruited to bring (coolers, ice, tables). Music can be from a boombox or may be live local talent, including the kids. For games, don't forget to include something really fun and messy, like water balloons or a watermelon toss, and don't be afraid

to get corny—sometimes the classics are the best, like musical chairs, three-legged races or pin the tail on the donkey. The games are a good excuse to get kids active, too. Make decorations, but keep it simple—the ambiance will be the backdrop of the neighborhood and the smell of good food! And if you're all very busy and not so much the potluck kind of folks, don't let that stop you. Order pizzas or subs—and don't forget the vegetarians. The gathering of community is what it's all about.

## Vacation Value & Volunteerism

Add oomph to your New York trip with the American Girl Hotel Package at InterContinental New York Barclay, located just a five-minute walk from American Girl Place. There's a designated American Girl check-in desk, an American Girl DVD to borrow while in-house, an in-room munchies basket and a weekend-only "Kids Eat Free" coupon. Kids also get a Peace Bracelet Service Project kit for ages 5 to 15, which benefits Children for Children, an organization that mobilizes the energy and compassion of young people through volunteer opportunities. The package is available through December 31. 888-424-6835, 212-755-5900, intercontinental.com, childrenforchildren.org



## Hit the Water for Family Fun

River Expedition's experienced and certified river guides welcome families with children as young as 6 for easy paddles on the mild waters of the Upper New River, which flows through the deep canyons of West Virginia's New River Gorge National Park. Kids raft for half-price! Enjoy the rap-

ids, sand volleyball, horseshoes, campfires, s'mores and camping under the stars or pitching a tent on a wooden platform complete with roof overhead. Customize the trip with horseback riding, mountain biking, rock climbing and a zip line/canopy outing. River Expeditions offers trips April-October. 800-463-9873, raftinginfo.com

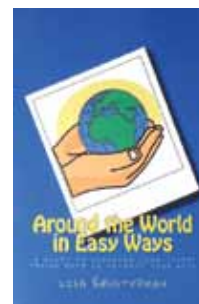


## Trip Insurance

With a DVD player or Nintendo DS in every minivan, today's tuned-out children can take their passive entertainment on vacation, too. Why not try the alternative—the new creative, interactive The Wheels on the Bus Sing-Along Travel Kit from Scholastic? Designed to provide kids ages 3 to 9 with hours of immersive fun, it features two musical DVDs, a CD of sing-along story songs, a booklet loaded with games and activities, crayons and helpful travel tips for parents, all in a colorful and portable travel case. Don't miss Cyndi Lauper's rendition of "There Was An Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly"!

## Museum Deals for Military Families

Blue Star Museums is a partnership of the National Endowment for the Arts, Blue Star Families and more than 650 museums across America, offering free admission to all active-duty military personnel and their families from Memorial Day through Labor Day 2010. Among participating museums is Woodrow Wilson House, the president's final home. The artifacts in the current exhibit, "My Third Leg: Woodrow Wilson's Walking Sticks" (through August 15), tell the story of Wilson's early years through his two terms in the White House and his final struggle with disability. Highlights include sticks carved by Civil War veterans and patriotic canes from the WWI era. arts.gov/bluestarmuseums, WoodrowWilsonHouse.org



## Around the World in Easy Ways

Want to expand your family's horizons beyond the borders of the United States and beyond summer vacations? In the course of planning her family's year-long trip around the world, a 2 ½ year process, mom Lisa Shusterman wrote *Around the World in Easy Ways: A Guide to Planning Long-Term Travel With or Without Your Kids*. The book combines valuable planning information (from transportation to vaccinations, Skype to schooling, emotions to emissions) with traveler's anecdotes (like "Paying to Pee"). A springboard to up-to-the-minute web research, this book is good not just for what you need for the journey, but how to keep things humming on the home front while you're gone.