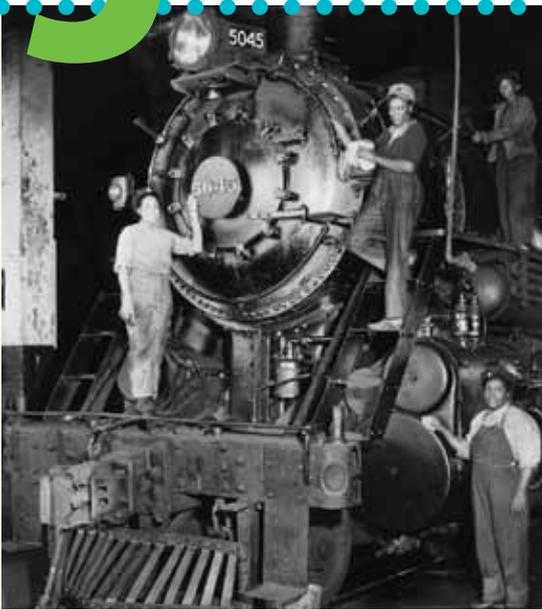


goodstuff

By Karen Kullgren



Black History on the Rails

February is Black History Month, and a unique observation will take place nearby this year. Sponsored by Amtrak, "Celebrate Black History Month at the B&O" will be held February 1 to 28 at the B&O Railroad Museum in Baltimore (an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution). The program offers an opportunity to celebrate the contributions of African-Americans to the railroad industry. Learn about these men and women who filled vital jobs along the B&O Railroad's line, and understand how significant social issues, such as segregation, affected railroading. 901 W. Pratt Street, Baltimore, 410-752-2490, borail.org.

Storytelling Schoolkids

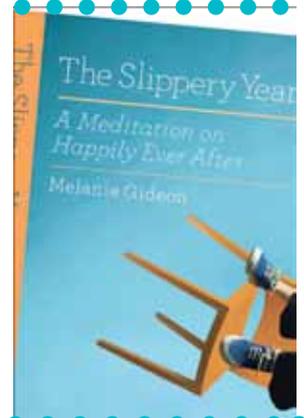
PBS' KIDS GO! Writers Contest launches January 27, to encourage children in grades K to 3 to celebrate the power of creating stories and illustrations. The children submit their own original pieces, and PBS stations will work with schools, public libraries and other literacy organizations to implement the contest in their communities. Also, a new contest website will launch soon at pbskids.org/read and include winning stories. The contest is a part of PBS KIDS Raising Readers, a national initiative that uses the power of public media

to build the reading skills of children ages 2 to 8, with an emphasis on children from low-income families.



Being a Mother— The Meaning & the Messiness

The memoir *The Slippery Year: A Meditation on Happily Ever After* by Melanie Gideon made me alternately laugh and cry, and I had to read it straight through. Melanie's the reluctant 44-year-old, peewee lacrosse mom of a 9-year-old boy, and she's taking a look at her life. Whether she's chronicling her struggles at home with a sick child, helping little Ben with a Halloween costume, sharing a crazy hulking camper with her husband who bought it online, caring for a dying dog and her son's grief or calming herself in the carpool line, Gideon is gloriously imperfect and funny and warm.



Smelly Solutions

Most of the products families use as air fresheners around nursery diaper pails, odiferous closets, etc., are full of chemicals we don't really want to expose our kids, pets and ourselves to. Maybe you've looked for natural alternatives but found they didn't stand up to the stink. I recently discovered Fresh Wave, and it's worked for me. The products (gel crystals, candles, sachets and vacuum shake or pearls) are made with natural extracts of lime, pine needles, aniseed, cloves, cedar wood and soya. To find a retailer, visit fresh-wave.com. For your older kids, check out the Stinky Dorm Kit!



Families Finding Simple Happiness

One of my favorite blogs is "Zen Habits," from Leo Babauta, author of the powerful book, *The Power of Less*. Recently, he and Sherri Kruger, blogger at SereneJourney.com, launched "Zen Family Habits." It celebrates family and tries to help us live with minimalism and more meaning. Babauta, Kruger and other contributors share thoughts, experiences and advice in areas including home, education, health, finances and relationships. Recent posts include "More Family Outdoor Adventure with Less Stuff," "Help Your Kids Beat These 5 Sources of School Stress" and "How to be a Fantastic Grandparent." zenfamilyhabits.net

[zenfamilyhabits](http://zenfamilyhabits.net)
simple happiness

Turtles and Tunes

The Tortoise and the Hare (ages 4+) is the latest CD from local composer and conductor Stephen Simon and producer Bonnie Ward Simon in their award-winning

Maestro Classics Stories and Music series. In the classic tale of animal friends, Tortoise, played by the contrabassoon, plods along and proves that "slow and steady wins the race." The original score is written by Simon and performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, with narration by famed storyteller Yadu. The Simons originally created and performed *The Tortoise and the Hare* for the Concerts for Young People series at the Kennedy Center in Washington. maestroclassics.com

