

What's Inside?

1. What's New - An update on The Focus Foundation since our last newsletter
2. Holiday Books for Every Age
3. Balance and Coordination: Ideas for Exercise, Toys and Gifts
4. A letter from Dr. Samango-Sprouse

WHAT'S NEW

This season has been full of activity. Here is what we have been up to:

August gave us a quick break after our *Eighth Annual 49ers Conference*. This year's conference was better than ever. We added Dr. Michael Keller, an immunologist from CHOP, to our consult team. Conference sessions featured Carol Kranowitz, MA - Focusing on Sensory Processing Disorder; Jennifer Hoskins, MS CCC-SLP - Improving Communication Outcomes, and from Brandy Cox, M. Ed. B.C.B.A. - Behavioral Problems: Turning Frustration into Success.

September brought around our first ever *Chesapeake 5k Run and Family Fun Walk for The Focus Foundation*. The event was quite a success and we hope to get even more families involved next year!

October marked the *Oktoberfest Under the Sea* event hosted by our Greater Philadelphia Area Fundraising Committee. These folks pulled together one outstanding party! We gathered in the Camden Aquarium under their 50,000 gallon shark tank to talk with over 200 attendees. Highlights of the night included a silent auction, a performance by Julia Othmer and wonderful German tastings. Special thanks to all who

helped, we were able to raise over \$85,000. What a success!



November and December have been a time of giving thanks and looking back on a year filled with friends, family and fabulous events. *As we plan ahead for the year to come we want to say a special thank you to every single person that helped us this year by giving their time, money and support to our organization.*

And a very special thanks to the following people:

The Stratts Family, The Schmuke Family, The Falcone Family, The Wagoner Family, The Belinsky Family, Melissa Quigley, Audrey Doucette and all of our anonymous donors!

We are of continued gratitude to our original founding family who have been generous with their support and their consistent encouragement throughout this journey.

December is National Read a New Book Month

That's right; December is National Read a New Book Month! With all the time off for the holidays why not use this time to read to the kids, or have them read some fun holiday books on their own. December is also Safe Toys and Gifts Month, and a book is about as safe as it gets when it comes to gift giving. We've compiled a list of happy holiday reading for children of all ages. Enjoy!

Corduroy's Christmas Surprise by Don Freeman

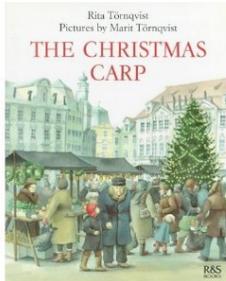
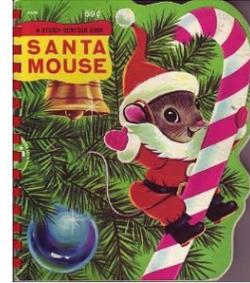
Grades K-1

Celebrate the true meaning of Christmas with Corduroy! Read-aloud as Corduroy discovers what Christmas is really about celebrating. This one is sure to be a holiday favorite.

Santa Mouse by Michael Brown

Grades K-2

Santa Mouse is a beautifully illustrated book written to keep the short attention span of our little ones while telling a story of love and kindness. Have fun flipping through pages full of the cute and cozy home of Santa Mouse.



The Christmas Carp by Rita and Marit Tornqvist

Grades 3 - 6th

Take a look at how Christmas traditions are celebrated differently all over the world. In *The Christmas Carp* a young boy and his grandfather in Czechoslovakia spend the days leading up to Christmas getting ready for the big holiday.

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever by Barbara Robinson

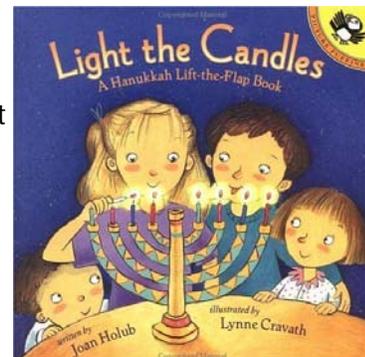
Grades 3 -6

Meet the Herdmans—they lie, cheat, and love to give clonks on the head. They are, without a doubt, the worst kids in the history of the world. So no one is prepared when this outlaw family invades church one Sunday and decides to take over the annual Christmas pageant.

Light the Candles by Lynne Avril Cravath

Grades Pre k - 1

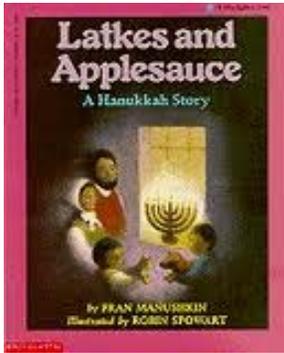
Hanukkah is here! There are so many fun things to do—light candles in the menorah, open presents, eat latkes and chocolate coins, play the dreidel game, and more. Children can lift the flaps and see all the special ways there are to celebrate this joyful holiday.



Chanukkah Guest by Eric A. Kimmel

Grades 2 - 5

Bubba Brayna is almost blind and deaf, she makes the best potato latkes in the village. On the first night of Chanukkah she makes them for the Rabbi. When there is a knock on the door she serves them to her guest. Only later does she realize she has served a bear her delicious latkes!



Latkes and Applesauce: A Hanukkah Story by Fran Manushkin

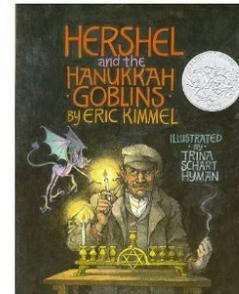
Grades 2 - 5

The Menasche family enjoys a joyous holiday celebration despite a scarcity of food. Includes notes on Hanukkah, a bibliography, a recipe for making latkes, and rules for playing dreidel.

Herschel and the Hanukkah Goblins by Eric A. Kimmel

Grades 4 - 6

What are the poor villagers to do? The holiday-hating, hill-dwelling hobgoblins are bound and determined to ruin yet another Hanukkah for them. Every year the beasties snuff out the menorah candles, destroy the dreidels, and pitch the potato latkes on the floor. But these wicked wet blankets never counted on someone as clever as Hershel of Ostropol showing up.



Balance and Coordination

Ideas for Exercises, Toys and Gifts

Is your child often falling or bumping into things? Working on balance might help. Balance is an important neuromotor skill that helps the child gain confidence and skills with physical movement and coordination. In fact, balance is important for children of all age levels.

Gaining skills in balance will aid in developing gross motor coordination, fine motor coordination, and self-care skills. It lays the groundwork for reading and writing. There are two kinds of balance - static and dynamic. **Static** is when you have to remain still. **Dynamic** is maintaining balance while moving.

Let's look at static balance exercises first.

Have the child stand heel to toe with one foot in front of the other. Their arms may be held next to their body or stretched out at their side. Try to hold the position for a short duration of time--say the length of time it takes to sing a favorite song or to count to ten.

Challenge the child to see how long he can stand still balanced on one foot like a stork. The child may hold his arms next to his body or stretched out to his side.

If standing on one foot is somewhat challenging, try instead to have the child stand on one foot with the other foot resting on a ball. Challenge the child to time each leg to see which leg can hold the position longer.

Stand on one leg, holding onto a support like the wall or a chair if the child has difficulty maintaining his balance. Keep the other foot off the ground in a comfortable position.



Check your balance by doing a squat, bending at the knee. Make sure your foot is pointed straight ahead and your knee stays in line with your toes. Add a balance challenge to the simple squat exercise by squatting and attempting to touch the ground. For this exercise, you should bend at both your knee and at your hips. Reach forward with your arm and touch the ground in front of you. Come back up without putting your other foot down. Switch legs to improve your balance on the other side as well.

Do an advanced version of the squat once you master your balance in Step 3. This time, attempt to touch the ground in front of you and to the side. Then, do the same thing on the other side, staying on the same leg. Again, you can switch legs to improve balance on the other side.

Modify the advanced squat if you need to by doing the squat in front of a low table. Rather than reaching to the ground, reach to the table instead. You can catch yourself easily if you feel like you're losing your balance.

Now let's look at some exercises for gaining dynamic balance.

Dynamic exercises are most fun when there is an obstacle course set up that has them running on uneven surfaces, climbing and hopping. Increase the difficulty gradually.

- Walk through a sandbox.
- Climb over a barrel.
- Use a balance beam.

Games such as Twister, Hop Scotch, (take three jumps forward or two large steps, skip two times), and Simon Says (stand one foot, spin two times, touch your foot to your hand) are all fun ways to improve balance using age appropriate activities.

There are also many fun toys that help develop balance skills including but not limited to: trampolines, pogo sticks, jump ropes, hippy hop balls, scooter boards, jumpolenes,

pieces of wood/balance beams, moon shoes, stilts (you can make your own), Chinese jump ropes, and balance boards.

Yoga Classes for Kids

Your child's first exposure can come as early as infancy, if you bring them to a mom and baby yoga class. While this may not make much of an impression on a young child, by the age of three they will probably be ready to do simple poses. Many yoga studios now offer age-appropriate classes for toddlers and school-aged kids, which may include singing, movement, and lots of talking. Ask that the teacher is yoga certified.

Yoga at Home for Kids

By the age of 3, if you want to do some yoga at home with your kids, here are some ideas:

Put out mats for yourself and your child(ren).

Introduce simple poses your kids will feel a connection to, such as those that relate to the natural world or represent shapes. Basic breath work, such as three-part breath can also be introduced to older children. Just learning to take deep breaths and clear the mind can be helpful to kids.

Follow along with a video, such as [YogaKids](#)

Poses for Kids:

Cat- cow stretch - Encourage them to meow and moo

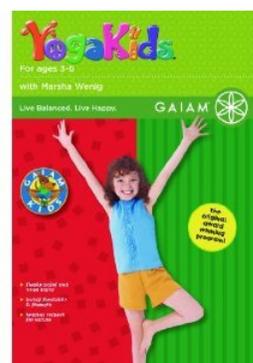
Downward facing dog - Can also be described as making a triangle or a mountain

Cobra - With hissing and slithering, of course

Tree - Rooting into the earth, swaying in the breeze

Butterfly (aka cobbler's pose) - Fluttering their wings

Corpse pose - Lying still can be the most challenging!



Other Helpful Tips

- Try this App - [My First Yoga - Animal Poses](#). Includes strengthening exercises, flexibility poses and breath control techniques
- Give your child a head start in learning to ride a bike - first develop balance and coordination before they have to pedal. Check [stridersports.com](#)
- [Monkey Balance Board](#) - This balance board "rocks," in every way! Kids love shifting their weight from side to side for fun, never guessing that they're building balance and core strength. A safe way to indulge little thrill-seekers. Made of sturdy wood; use indoors and out. For ages 3 and up, up to 150 lbs. (available at Amazon.com)
- Pick-up sticks are a great coordination builder. For ages 5 and up.

Books to get you moving:

- [Jump](#) by Steve Lavis: Join the animal romp!
- Music, Movement, and Mime for Children by V. Gray and R. Percival
- [Zita Newcome's Toddlerobics](#) is a lively interactive book that will have toddlers

imitating actions and noises

- With [Eric Carle's From Head to Toe](#) kids eagerly clap, stomp, kick and wriggle their way through the pages

A letter from us...

Dear Friends and Family,

As I write this note, I wonder just what astonishing deeds await your children for the upcoming year. First steps for many of our new little babies, first phrases for our toddlers and of course the new readers and the new athletes who may hit a homerun, make a goal or simply run like the wind. The absolute wonder of the developmental progression of your children is joy to observe. We are happy to report that OUR BABY—The Focus Foundation, is thriving as well.

We are now six years old and 2011 has been a banner year for the Foundation with so many firsts---- Oktoberfest, The Chesapeake Walk/5k and our Atypical Learner's Conference to name a few. Our scientific endeavors have been fruitful with articles in several prestigious journals as well as numerous presentations. The Focus Foundation is moving forward to change the life of an entire generation of boys and girls with dyspraxia, X and Y chromosomal variations and dyslexia every day.

Now The Focus Foundation receives daily calls from throughout the world regarding the care of children with all three conditions. Early detection and treatment is improving because of increased awareness, appropriate and current information and our continuing advocacy efforts on a national and international level! Please visit us on [Facebook](#) and on our [website](#) so you can share in our latest events, comings and goings and scientific findings.

With your continued support and our resolute and unyielding effort, 2012 will bring even greater accomplishments in the areas of science, education and medicine. Perhaps most important goal for all of us is to make every child's life with these THREE disorders happier, healthier and more hopeful **because every child deserves a chance at success!**

I wish you all Happy Holidays and Prosperous New Year.

Carole A. Samango-Sprouse, Ed.D.
APIB and BNABS Certified, NDT Trained Neurodevelopmentalist
Science Director, The Focus Foundation
Associate Clinical Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at
George Washington University, Washington, D.C.
Adjunct Associate Professor in the Department of Human and Molecular Genetics at
Florida International University

Year End Giving

Have you done all of your charitable giving for 2011? Remember charitable gifts can help reduce your taxes and increase your tax refund. Now is a great time to make a tax deductible donation to The Focus Foundation! Here is how you can give:

We accept donations online with secure giving through [Paypal](#)
Or contact us at info@thefocusfoundation.org for a mail-in pledge form.

Happy Holidays!



©2011 The Focus Foundation | P.O. Box 190 | Davidsonville, MD | 21035

Powered by [Mad Mimi®](#)