



Port Washington NEWS

Serving Port Washington, Sands Point, Baxter Estates, Flower Hill,
Port Washington North and Manorhaven — Published by Anton Community Newspapers

VOL. 103, No. 26

WWW.ANTONNEWS.COM

THURSDAY, JANUARY 22, 2009

75 CENTS

Early Years Institute Contest for 'Amazing Ways to Play' on LI

What's your favorite way to play with your child? The Early Years Institute is looking for the most creative, fun ways that parents and caregivers today are playing with their kids ... and is launching a unique contest looking for Long Island's most unique "players" that bring to life the true meaning of the often-overlooked concept of free play.

The Early Years Institute "Amazing Ways to Play" contest is open to parents/caregivers of children age 10 and younger—and is geared to highlight innovative ways that families can simply "play" together without the all-too-common distractions of today's technology (e.g., computers, video games, cell phones, etc.). There will be two separate categories—indoor play activities and outdoor play activities—and parents can submit entries in either or both categories.

Winners will be chosen by a panel of top child development experts, based on the most innovative and "fun" ways that parents/caregivers use play with their child/children — with a grand prize winner in both the Indoor Play and Outdoor Play categories each receiving a \$250 American Express Gift Card. Runner-up prizes will also be awarded — with all winners honored at a special ceremony to be held in June. Winners will also be publicized in local newspapers and on The Early Years Institute website.

To enter, parents/caregivers can submit their favorite "way to play" with their child/children, by sending a short description and/or photo of a special family playtime activity to The Early Years Institute. Submissions should explain the type of imaginative, creative free play activities that the parent enjoys with their child—with the only rule being that the activity can't involve anything that is "plugged in"/electronic.

Entries can be mailed to The Early Years Institute at One Dupont Street, Suite 101, Plainview, NY 11803; in addition, entries can be submitted online at www.earlyyearsinst.org. The deadline for entries is March 31.

"In recent years, with increased focus on academics and standardized testing, the overscheduled lives of families today and the growing popularity of computers and video games, we've seen a decline in children and parents simply enjoying an afternoon or evening of "free play" together," said Dana Friedman, Ed.D., executive director of The Early Years Institute and a widely published national expert on early childhood, as well as a national expert on the benefits of play in healthy child development. "There are so many major benefits of free play for a child, and we want to recognize parents for the creative ways that they are making the most of playing with their children — and highlight to other parents and caregivers how simple it is to provide their children with the proven results that come from unstructured free play."

The Early Years Institute, through its groundbreaking Early Years Matter campaign launched in 2006, has made tremendous strides in making the case for allowing children the freedom to play, and encouraging play in both formal and informal learning environments. According to research, play is believed to enhance many aspects of child development and helps develop many important life skills in young children. In fact, not only do experts note the value of play in providing a strong foundation for learning and literacy development, but play has been proven to help foster curiosity in children, encourage and build their imaginations through "make-believe" and creative activities — as well as help them make friends and understand both their own feelings and the feelings of others. In addition, The Early Years Institute, through its Early Years Matter campaign, stresses how children "learn how to learn" through play — and continues to work with both parents and educators to highlight the power of play for children of all ages.

For more information about The Early Years Institute "Amazing Ways to Play" contest, call Kerri Lawrence at 304-5480 or visit www.earlyyearsinst.org.