

# Year One

Because I was born and raised in the Chicago area, I still peruse the online suburban newspaper; I guess it's to get my news "fix" because let's face it – good news is boring. The more serious or tragic the news, the more interesting it is, and my local daily newspaper just doesn't do it for me – I mean, local news is interesting, but not in the same way. So lately as I've been reading Chicago news, I couldn't help but notice these all over the place:



So what is the deal? What is Year 1? It's no secret that the Chicago Cubs are under the new management team of the Ricketts family this year, so I'm sure it has something to do with that. And it's an unfortunate reality that the Chicago Cubs are also the team in baseball to have been without a World Series title the longest... so I guess management figures that maybe if they just reset time altogether and start from the beginning, the Cubs might have a shot this year. Two or three months from now, we will have a clearer outlook as to how the "new" team can really play. But what if the Cubs go nowhere this year, and we fans find ourselves chanting our infamous October mantra, "Maybe next year..." – what then? Will 2011 be Year 2? Let's hope we don't have to find out. GO CUBBIES!

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## Brown Hogs

Everybody knows that kids say the darndest things – there was even a tv show or two about the subject. If you go back and watch the Art Linkletter version, you can see him coaching the

kids and moving his lips for the kids to see what they were supposed to say. I don't know why they had to do that; kids come up with enough cute stuff on their own. The reason I decided to write this post is because it came to my attention that my 3-year-old daughter Disney calls groundhogs "brown hogs". Just a cute little tidbit I wanted to share, and hey, she's got a point – the critters **are** brown! Makes sense to me! ☐

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## Homework

Maybe I'm becoming more simple-minded as I get older, or perhaps it's the fact that I spend my days with children. For whichever reason, I've found myself more amused by simple things lately, most notably email forwards. Here is another one that made me laugh out loud. I don't know; I found it funny, but I did read it at the end of a very long day...

My husband informed me it was fake, but it's more fun of course if you believe that some version of this actually happened. Either way, the author gets points for creativity in my book – and maybe my husband was just upset that he didn't get what the drawing was supposed to be in the first place ☐

*A first grade girl handed in the drawing below for a homework assignment:*



*After it was graded and the child brought it home, she returned to school the next day with the following note:*

**Dear Ms. Davis,**

**I want to be very clear on my child's illustration. It is NOT of me on a dance pole on a stage in a strip joint. I work at Home Depot and had commented to my daughter how much money we made in the recent snowstorm. This drawing is of me selling a snow shovel.**

**Mrs. Harrington**

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## **Polly DOES Want A Cracker**

I used to think that parrots had a secret pact to make fun of the many asinine humans who idiotically blurt, "Polly want a cracker?" every time they spot one of the beautiful birds. I'm not sure from where the custom originated, but I always thought it was a stupid, albeit irresistible, thing to say to a bird. But that sentiment changed last week when I actually offered our Scarlet Macaw a saltine cracker – he acted like it was the best thing he ever ate! He even learned the word "cracker" and was uttering it by the end of the day. And come to think of it, they have a Scarlet Macaw at a local pet

store, and one of her favorite words is also “cracker”. So next time you see a big bird and you feel the temptation to say, “Polly want a cracker?” be prepared to fulfill what that bird probably considers a promise!

Just for fun, here is the earliest known reference to “Polly want a cracker” from 1937 – I dig how the mom parrot is a housewife complete with apron – clearly before the feminist movement ☐

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# Potty Training Celebration!

Ok, I know it might seem weird, especially to those of you who aren't parents. But in my family, we are celebrating a major milestone – 3-year-old Disney is officially potty-trained!!! In lieu of this triumphant moment (congrats to Disney but let's face it, one of the best parts about this is that we only have to buy and change diapers now for ONE instead of TWO!), I thought I'd share a cute potty-training-themed email forward, here goes, and again, forgive me if you are not on the same page with me – potty-training kids is a big deal, and this is our THIRD success story!



## THE POTTY

A LITTLE THREE YEAR OLD BOY IS SITTING ON THE TOILET. HIS MOTHER THINKS HE HAS BEEN IN THERE TOO LONG, SO SHE GOES IN TO SEE WHAT'S UP.

THE LITTLE BOY IS SITTING ON THE TOILET READING A BOOK. BUT ABOUT EVERY 10 SECONDS OR SO HE PUTS THE BOOK DOWN, GRIPS ONTO TO THE TOILET SEAT WITH HIS LEFT HAND AND HITS HIMSELF ON TOP OF THE HEAD WITH HIS RIGHT HAND.

HIS MOTHER SAYS: "BILLY, ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? YOU'VE BEEN IN  
HERE FOR A WHILE..

BILLY SAYS: "I'M FINE, MOMMY.. I JUST HAVEN'T GONE 'DOODY'  
YET."

MOTHER SAYS: "OK, YOU CAN STAY HERE A FEW MORE MINUTES. BUT  
BILLY, WHY ARE YOU HITTING YOURSELF ON THE HEAD?"

BILLY SAYS: "WORKS FOR KETCHUP."



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## Death, Murder, Love, and FUN!

Maybe you've noticed that at some point this winter, I began to blog less... I no longer write reviews about every movie, tv show or play I see – it mostly has to do with the fact that there just isn't time for me to sit at my computer uninterrupted long enough to do that – well, not if I want my toddling, climbing 18-month-old to stay safe anyway. But this Valentine's Day weekend of 2010 saw me venturing to two local plays, both involving fellow tangenteers, so I figured I could let Hubby hold down the fort long enough for me to write a quick little blurb.

First of all, let me say how thankful I am for my babysitter who worked overtime this weekend – she usually doesn't do weekends, and without her, we couldn't have afforded to support our friends at either show. Friday night's selection was Dearly Departed, a southern comedy about a crazy family coming together for the funeral of the patriarch. The show was hilarious, and my friend [justj](#) was very memorable as a fire n' brimstone type southern preacher. I have to say that my favorite part of the show was his other character however, a wheelchair bound man named Norval who is depicted as practically a houseplant by his caregiver wife when she describes how she cares for him – which pills, what he can and can't eat, that sort of thing. But on stage, Norval was anything but a houseplant, and justj depicted him with just the right amount of humor – not over the top, but not comatose either – I felt that achieving this perfect balance was much more difficult than it looked. It should come as no surprise that I absolutely LOVED the music in the show, and it was amusing for me to think about how much that must have irked the director (who had left a party we threw one time because there was 'too much country music' – even though the only country song I played was Travis Tritt's remake of the Eagle's classic Takin' It Easy, which I didn't even consider country, but apparently some would beg to differ) – haha. I need to find out what that Elvis song was in the second act; it was wonderful.

Saturday night we tried out a murder mystery dinner theater starring [Jamiahsh](#), and we had a blast! We rounded up some friends, and when all was said and done, we had a somewhat rowdy table of 8 with whom to enjoy the show. Without having to draw any sort of diagrams or assemble any calculative theories like someone at our table who shall remain nameless ☐ I guessed the murderer correctly and was entered into the drawing to win a prize – a free one hour massage! But I tore my ballot wrong, and my friend who was also the director felt it would have been obvious if she had chosen my idiotic-

looking ballot to win the prize. I agree with her; it was my own fault, and I'm happy that another patron's experience was even more enhanced by his free massage. Besides, my hubby gives THE BEST massages, and they're always free! But we had a super time at the dinner theater, the food was good, and Jamiahsh was wonderful as the bumbling FBI agent who was trying to crack the case. I loved the relaxed atmosphere of the show with members of the cast joining us for dinner and chatting casually – although too casually at times, because several members of the cast came out of character at times asking us if our questions were for their characters or for them “in real life” – oops. But of course ours truly Jamiahsh remained in character and professional at all times!

So bravo to many jobs well done on this weekend of community theater! Knowing that my days of keeping my kids out so late are numbered (especially judging by the way they screamed on the way home), I am thankful for every show I get to experience!

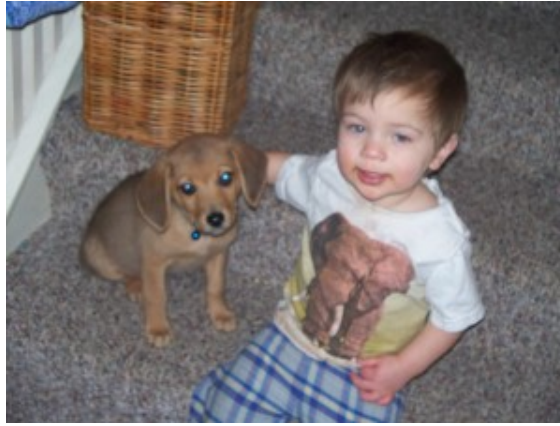
And wrapping up the weekend, of course, is Valentine's Day, and that's where the love comes in – hopefully the kids will fall asleep before Hubby and I crash so that we can snuggle and watch a scary movie – who needs chick flicks on Valentine's Day?!? Hope you had a wonderful weekend!

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## **Cutest Puppy In The World**

After almost a week of having our new puppy, I finally got him to hold still long enough for some adorable pictures – enjoy!





Gizmo will follow me up the stairs, but then he gets overwhelmed and can't go up or down! My 19-month-old son gave him a hug to comfort him; how cute is that?!?



This is Gizmo and my daughter Disney - our friend gave us a cute little blue sweater for him, so now he doesn't shiver quite so much when he goes outside!



He wants so badly to be able to jump up on the couch, but he's not big enough yet. Won't be long; we can notice that he is growing bigger EVERY single day!!

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## The Kindness Of Strangers

I came across a couple of instances of good citizenship lately, so I thought I'd share. I would write a letter to the local newspaper, but I don't think they'd print it – they didn't print the last one I wrote them about the wonderful person who found my lost wallet and turned it in to the police station – intact! I guess the newspaper is only interested in printing letters where someone has an issue or is complaining about something...

So the other day, we were stopped at a stoplight, and it turned green – but the car in front of us was not moving, and that's when I noticed that he had his hazard lights on. The guy behind me was too close for me to back up, so I was stuck. I saw the guy behind me throw his hands up in frustration, and I'm thinking, oh great, here comes the

blaring horn and obscenities (I'm from Chicago – sadly, that is what most people there would do). My husband gets out of our car to see if he can help push the stalled car, and off they go. The next thing I know, there are two other men helping push it (they had been on the corner holding signs advertising a sale at the shopping center). Then, the guy behind me – the one who I thought was p-o-ed – gets out of his car to see if *he* can help!! What an amazing example of people being thoughtful and going above and beyond! I've both lived in and visited plenty of cities where I saw (or I was) a stalled car. But in all of these instances, never have I seen **4 people** come out to help the stranded driver. I've seen cars speeding angrily around the stalled vehicle, people honking, making obscene gestures, yelling obscenities, or simply ignoring the person in need. I feel very lucky that I was able to witness such selflessness; people disregarding whatever their own plans may have been for that day – people willing to sacrifice being on time to their obligations just to help another in need. How refreshing!

And something else happened this week – I'm sure you know about the big snowstorm by now. We got about 8 inches of snow that came down in less than 12 hours. I was sitting in my living room, watching it come down, and I was trying to shovel when I could – I couldn't bear the thought of my husband having to come home from work with a walkway full of 8 inches of snow to shovel. But I have 4 little kids, and we had just gotten a new puppy, so my efforts to shovel away the snow as it fell were in vain – I just couldn't keep up. So I'm playing with my kids in the living room, watching the snow fall, when we see someone clearing our walkway for us with a snowblower! I thought that it must be a neighbor; someone who has a snowblower and was kind enough to take pity on those of us who only have shovels. I told the kids to watch the man and see which house he went into so I could later drop off a thank you note. But instead of walking into a house, he packed up his snowblower in a red truck and drove away! I

didn't recognize the man nor his truck, but I don't think he was just roaming town snowblowing everywhere he went – he purposefully cleared **our** walkway! I doubt he reads my blog, but if he does, then I'd like to tell him a big THANK YOU! And for the rest of you – never underestimate the power of a kind word or deed! I have a wall hanging with that saying on it in my bathroom, and it means even more to me now!

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## **My Favorite Music Comes From Sesame Street**

I'm not really hip with pop culture these days. Sure, I read my share of celebrity gossip whenever it happens upon [cnn.com](http://cnn.com), but I'm really out of it when it comes to the latest tv shows and music. I am such a nerd that I had to wikipedia 'Jersey Shore' because I got sick of reading all these headlines about it and not knowing what the heck they were talking about. Sounds like kind of a dumb show, by the way, not for me.

Because I listen to country music, mainstream music is usually of no interest to me. But I couldn't help but take notice when a snappy tune came out of the tv this morning – it was Sesame Street, and there was a musical guest. I know that Sesame Street has celebrity guest-stars all the time, so I chose what seemed to be the title of the song and did a search on [youtube.com](http://youtube.com). The song is "I'm Yours", and it's sung by Jason Mraz. Even all my reading of celebrity gossip didn't help me here – I've never heard of Jason Mraz, but I have to say that I like his sound. But that shouldn't really come as a surprise that I've never heard of him – I don't think he's a regular in my pop culture circle that includes such characters as Dora, Miss Spider, Little Bear, or Wow Wow Wubbzy. My 18-

month-old son and I couldn't help but bounce and groove to this song; see if you feel the same. By the way, when Mr. Mraz performed this song on Sesame Street, the lyrics were changed to make the song be about playing outside, making it more kid-friendly. Cute.

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# Uh Oh, Snow!

There is a kink I did not foresee in my housebreaking-the-new-puppy plan – snow. We are currently getting nailed by a snowstorm – about 4 inches on the ground and much more expected. The snow engulfs our poor little shivering puppy, and I've had to shovel first every time before I take him out. It's quite challenging to find the time to go out and shovel and take the dog out, all while taking care of 4 kids – changing diapers, feeding lunch, breaking up fights, helping them do homework and Valentines... But today school was canceled, and this time it's actually been more of a good thing than a bad thing. The new puppy and the Valentine's projects are helping to ward off cabin fever, plus the older girls are helping to walk the puppy. Adding some fun to the snow storm is that my husband and I started watching [Storm of the Century](#) last night; which is an excellent scary movie that we watch every year during heavy snows. I'm looking forward to watching the second part of the movie tonight, but only if I make it through the dinner rush. My husband gets home from work around 5, and the kids are always starving by then, but it's nearly impossible to start dinner before he gets home with my 18-month-old underfoot. Complicating today's dinner rush is the fact that my husband will have to finish the shoveling when he gets home, and I also have to send him on an errand – stupid me didn't stock up on certain essentials before the storm hit. Most of the region is experiencing the same weather, so stay warm, stay dry, and most importantly – stay safe!!