

**Tips for Parents** by Susie Kohl

## *Creating Traditions of Your Own*

**R**ABBITS, BEARS, AND BADGERS bounce to music in the enchanting window display at McCaulou's department store in Lafayette. Two ecstatic penguins revel in jumping down an ice slide around the corner from our school on Kinney Drive. Have your children seen them? Innovative decorations surprise us everywhere. Recently I stopped on an evening walk, astonished at a gigantic, lone pine tree around the corner from my condo that suddenly displayed strand after strand of jewel-like lights. Who managed to climb that high and skillfully drape the branches with glowing color?

At this time of year, adults are apt to put extraordinary effort into creating beauty and magic for the sake of people they may never meet. The creators must imagine someone walking or driving by and taking a moment to laugh or feel their spirits soar as a result of their efforts. Whether we celebrate the holiday or not, it's wonderful to take a few moments to appreciate the beauty and merriment.

In the meantime, here are some ideas to bring more magic this winter season:

**Make beauty a destination.** Our family tradition involved driving to see the lights, as well as making the rounds of store windows. These venues provide lots of opportunities for moments of awe as well as conversation. "How do you think they hung all those lights?" "Do you like the colors they used?"

**Draw a scene on your window.** Use soap or bathtub crayons to create interesting drawings on one of your windows. Ask your child, "What do you think people would like to see?"

**Turn dark into light.** On the winter solstice, December 21, turn out all the lights in your house until the sun goes down and the rooms turn dark. Light candles or let young children run around and turn on all the lights.

**Decorate envelopes and wrapping paper.** Encourage children's design abilities, using crayons or pens to decorate for others.

**Make fairy footprints.** Sprinkle glitter on your front walk and ask your children in surprise where it came from. Cut elf footprints out of sponge, dip them in washable paint, and make a few footprints outside.

**See exquisite fairies.** After 4 p.m., you're welcome to sneak into Room 2 to look at Diane Cobb's beautiful painting of fairies and elves. (Her daughter, Josie, sits on the upper branch, and her son, Mike, plays the flute.)

**Get inspired to move to music on YouTube.** Older children will enjoy these videos that show young people singing and dancing in surprising ways. Check out T-Mobile's "Home for the Holidays" and Steven Ziegler's "This is how my son does dishes." On D-PAN (Deaf Professional Arts Media), children sing and dance to the White Stripes' version of "We're Going to Be Friends," a back-to-school song in sign language.

**Choreograph your own family dance.** You can have fun learning it together. If you like it, Skype it or perform live for relatives and friends.

Ancient traditions have always propelled people to warm their hearts and explore the magic and mystery of life during long winter seasons that find new expression every year. Let's have fun and create some traditions of our own.

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