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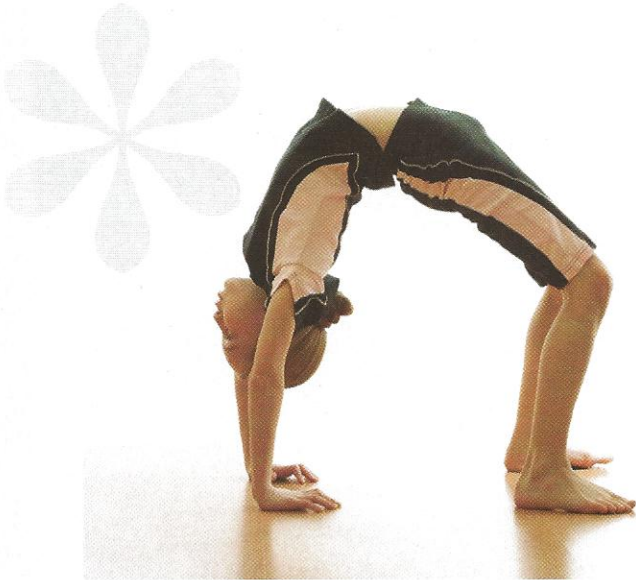
YEAH, LET'S TAKE A SECOND LOOK

### GREAT CHEFS II

IT WAS A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

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# Bending Over Backwards

Research shows yoga benefits start early

BY MEGAN CHAMPION

Yoga isn't just for grown-ups anymore. According to Dr. Randolph Thornton of Jacksonville Pediatrics, the popular form of exercise is safe for kids, too.

"There is new research [published in the *Journal of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*] that found the psychological benefits of yoga to be even more beneficial for adolescents than traditional physical education," says Dr. Thornton. "The study showed that the kids who participated in yoga classes improved their overall mood, and had less symptoms of depression and anxiety than those who attended regular P.E. classes."

Dr. Thornton stresses the

importance of finding activities the kids will enjoy, and says that yoga is great because children can start early and grow with it. "There's a huge push for what we call 'hands-on' activities, especially getting kids more active and less sedentary at an early age. Three-year-olds are at a great age to start yoga; they have the attention then and are able to participate and have fun. You just want to make sure you are taking the time to help them loosen up, and stay hydrated."

Locally, Ananda Kula offers a variety of yoga classes and workshops for everyone in your brood. More info (including class times and prices) is available at [Ananda-Kula.com](http://Ananda-Kula.com). \*

# READ, WRITE, REPEAT

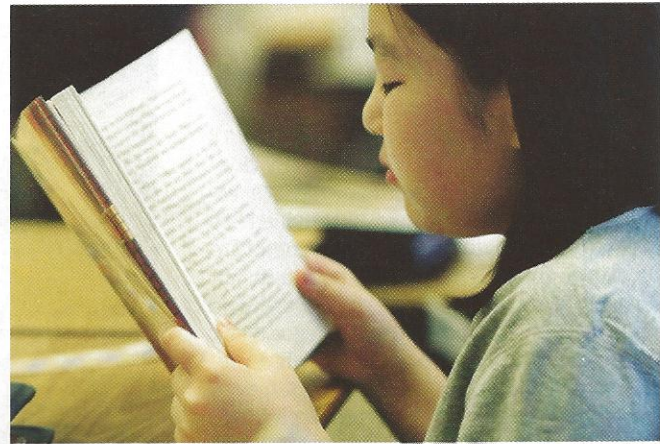
First Coast students take a hands-on approach to language arts by creating their own works

BY ANNA RABHAN

Imagine a row of preteen girls sitting in a room full of adults for an hour and a half on a school night listening to two adults speak. What could have motivated them to be there—and in the front row, no less?

That was the scene at a recent Children's Book Writers meeting at the Southeast Regional Library, and what motivated those young ladies was nothing less than the power of creative expression. The girls were members of a local Girl Scouts troop, and they had decided together to pursue the Book Artist Badge. Their Scout leader approached Jane Wood and Frances Keiser, leaders of the Children's Book Writers group, about opportunities for the girls to learn how to produce a book. Wood and Keiser are certainly experts on the topic; each woman is an author of her own children's book series, and both women started their own self-publishing company to produce and distribute their work. Together, Wood and Keiser founded a consulting business called Get Book Savvy, which focuses on educating authors about publishing and marketing. They conduct workshops and occasionally teach classes at UNF's Division of Continuing Education.

Both women feel strongly about the value of creative pursuits for young people, such as writing a book. "Technology plays such a big role with kids today that we need to stimulate their creativity, and one of the best ways to do it is through writing," says Wood. "Let their imaginations go wild and they can create



**Help On the Way:** If tragedy strikes for your child, help may arrive in the form of Wolfson Children's Hospital's new Kids Kare Mobile Intensive Care Unit, the most technologically advanced ambulance for transporting infants and children in the River City. The vehicle is equipped with a third seat for parents, \$500,000 worth of monitors, defibrillators, IV pumps, ventilators and medication, and it operates within a 200-mile radius of the hospital. \* BY CAITLYN FINNEGAN

their own stories, whether it's vampires or ghosts or whatever the kids are interested in. It gets them thinking instead of simply being spoon-fed by techno-gadgets."

Empirical evidence supports the idea that creative expression produces benefits for kids. The 2006 National Assembly of State Arts Agencies report, *Critical Evidence: How the Arts Benefit Student Achievement*, cites an abundance of studies such as one comparing years of arts education with SAT score results which shows that "arts participation and SAT scores covary—that is, they tend to increase linearly: the more arts classes, the higher the scores." The report goes on to demonstrate benefits in reading and language, mathematics, thinking and social skills, as well as benefits related to students' motivation to learn and an overall positive school environment.

Curriculum varies from one school to the next, but schools within the Duval County public education system are bound by statewide mandates. Cheryl Lemine, chair of the creative writing department at LaVilla School of the Arts, says that the Language Arts Sunshine State Standards help guide her department's curriculum decisions, especially since there is still room for new ideas. "The strength of our curriculum is that its varied nature allows for flexibility from year to year, and the introduction of new sources," she says. Students at LaVilla are exposed to those benefits through a variety of writing experiences and guest speakers.

Twice a year, the school also holds Writer's Readings, a recital of sorts for young writers. All writing students are required to audition. If selected, students meet with a community coach. The CSX chapter of Toastmasters provided helpful advice on presentation methods, memorization techniques and how to use the stage and one's voice in engaging ways; for their part, the students get invaluable public speaking experience and learn what it feels like to expose themselves creatively and get a public reaction to their art.

That sort of integrative approach seems effective when it comes to creative writing. At Holy Family Catholic School, media specialist Karen Cox leads a holistic program for HFCS third- and fourth-graders using Jane Wood's books. The third-graders read her *Trouble on the St. Johns River* as they learn about ecology. Those stories are complemented by visits from professors at Jacksonville University, which help students learn more about manatees and the river. The third-graders also used what they had learned to write the script, from a manatee's point of view, for a puppet show they filmed in March. "It obviously helps their creativity. They're learning about Florida, about our environment, but they're also learning about writing in a situation where their imaginations are engaged," says Clements.

And, perhaps that's the best lesson of all. \*

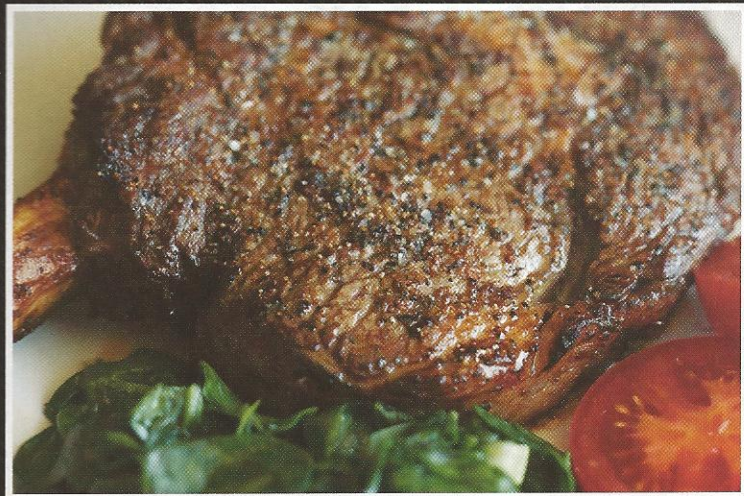
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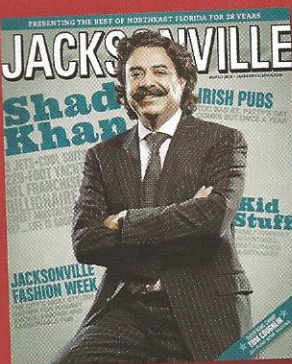
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