
PHOTO BY JOE O' BRIEN

Saline Fiddlers take the stage with The Quebe Sisters Band, Feb. 6.

Fiddlin' on

The Saline Fiddlers have been raising standards in extracurricular music programs since 1994. This year, the 30-piece semi-professional touring band celebrates another year of toe tappin' with the **Fiddler's 16th Annual Winter Hometown Show**, Saturday, February 6 at 7 p.m. in the Sandra Nadig Auditorium at Saline Middle School. Warming the stage before the performance is Texas sensation, The Quebe Sisters Band, fronted by champion fiddlers Grace (22), Sophia (20) and Hulda (17). The Quebe Sisters have been recently named "Group of the Year" by the Academy of Western Artists, and have played the Grand ole Opry, The Kennedy Center and NYC's Lincoln Center. Tickets are $15 and $20. 866-257-5333 ext. 1/www.salinefiddlers.com.

WANT TO BE A PART OF THE MUSIC?

The Saline Fiddlers are hosting auditions for the 2010-11 season on Sunday, February 7 at 3 p.m. at the Saline Middle School orchestra room. Participation is open to students enrolled in a music program at Saline High School for the 2010-11 academic year.



Make it personal

Teens, get your pens and paper ready! The Ann Arbor District Library presents **Writing to Get In: A Presentation for High School Students and Their Parents on the College Application Personal Essay** on Wednesday, February 10. Led by UM professor Julie Ellison and a team of trained UM college students, the presentation shares writing strategies for the personal essay so that students can share who they truly are.

Participants will also have the opportunity to be the first to register for a series of four special one-on-one sessions, which will occur at the Library on Tuesdays, March 9, 16, 23 and 30 from 4 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. (Online registration for these sessions begins on Thursday, February 11 at www.aadl.org.)

No registration is required. 7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. in the Downtown Library Multi-Purpose Room. 343 S. Fifth Ave. 734-327-4555.

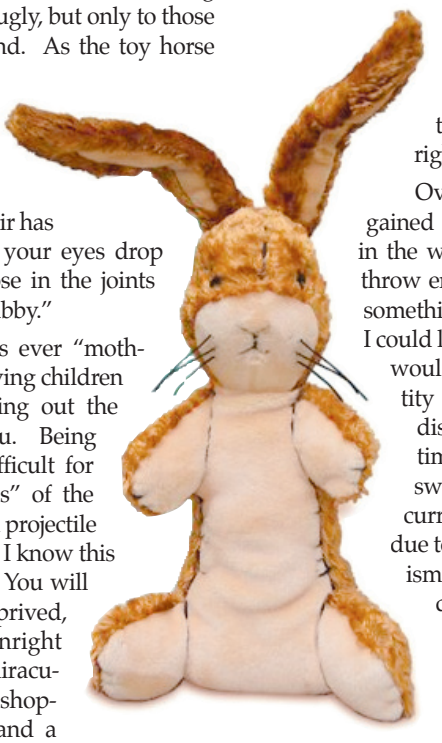


Be a rabbit

A 'Real' mom tells all *by Mary Helen Darah*

I bravely went in the back of our basement to purge. I discovered mouse droppings, a grapevine reindeer with a broken leg that looks like someone should put it out of its misery, an assortment of prom and bridesmaid dresses that confirms that not only men are colorblind and an old radio that has been there for years in case there is a typhoon or other natural disaster. Too bad the battery compartment rusted out. I also stumbled upon my childhood copy of The Velveteen Rabbit.

This beautiful tale by Margery Williams first published in 1922, is an everlasting reminder of the basic truth that being loved can make you ugly, but only to those who don't understand. As the toy horse explained to the little stuffed rabbit who wants to be Real, " Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and you get very shabby."



Anyone who has ever "mothered" knows that having children in your life will bring out the stuffed critter in you. Being a mom could be difficult for the "Princess Barbies" of the world. Having had a projectile "vomiter" with colic, I know this with great certainty. You will get slimed, sleep deprived, and become downright joyous when you miraculously fit in grocery shopping, a Target run and a shower all in the same day — yes, DAY.

Odd things happen to your body that are beyond comprehension. I nursed. I could supply a Dairy Queen. I did not "leak" as the little Nursing For Dummies 101 manual stated. I gushed. This became my new normal. I was in the store when a kind woman came up to me and sweetly said, "Pumpkin, your milk is leaking." After a few choice words while grabbing my breasts to assess the situation, she knowingly smiled and said "The milk in your cart, dear."

As the children grew, new challenges emerged. Heading out to a meeting I realized I had red sparkle glitter stuck under my nails, a rip in my tights thanks to a good morning greeting from our pooch, Elmer's glue encrusted on my thumb making it look as if I had some rare skin disorder, and I was still sporting the pink Fisher Price pretty princess crown. Obviously, "Business Barbie" was not designed in my image.

I once held vigil by my child's hospital bed during her stint with a nasty virus. Some inquisitive nurses came in our room having discovered that I was related to a physician on staff. They took one look at me and assumed that there was no way I could be kin to anyone with an IQ and asked if I knew where Mary Helen Darah was. I looked down at my denim overalls that were covered in various forms of excrement not only from my ill child but from the Guinea Pig cage I had cleaned earlier that morning and realized I only had one option. While running my unpolished nails through my mangled hair, I told them she was at home resting and that I, as the childcare professional, was holding the fort until her return. I told them that "Mary Helen" was so gorgeous and put together, that at times she was downright intimidating.

Over the years, I have gained a bit of wisdom. Or in the words of Gram, "If you throw enough 'stuff' at a wall, something is bound to stick." If I could live that moment over, I would confess my true identity proudly. I look a bit disheveled from time to time and wear obnoxious sweaters indicative of the current holiday. This is not due to a lack of professionalism but from having children love me toward the optimal goal of being Real.

Mary Helen Darah has been in marketing and development for nonprofit organizations for the past six years, but her greatest role is being a mom to three amazing and diverse young women. Mary Helen has an innate ability to find humor in her trials, and hopes her writing will give others comic relief and insight through the challenges of parenthood. Mary Helen can be reached c/o editor@annarborfamily.com.

