

SUNDAY
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The Tampa Tribune

Baylife & Travel



Pretty Easy
Growing orchids isn't as tough as you've heard. **Page 8**

TBO.COM Search: Short List, for five ways to get ready for Gasparilla



Donna Koehn
The Tampa Tribune

Art class is a tough draw

It was an email instead of a breezy text and even used the word "crap," the first time my son, 18, had ever let the (moderate) profanity fly to me. I knew it was serious.

"Where the heck am I supposed to get all this crap?" it asked, followed by a list of terms so alien to the two of us it could have been astrophysics. Although with his science/math brain, he no doubt would have understood that better.

"Arches cover paper, as needed. HB, 2B, 4B charcoal pencils, 15 per student, the type you sharpen, not unroll. Red colored pencil, the Verithin or Polychromos brand. Middle gray conte crayons." And more.

I agree, Ben. Crap!
Ben and I are not artists; we do not draw. Art teachers don't always get this. They think if you just try, you will master the lesson. Nope. I was the girl with Elmer's glue in her hair dragging home odd-shaped construction paper things mutilated by scissors.

My Christmas art projects — a scrawny, cotton-swab Rudolph and a wreath made of dry-cleaning bags — are still displayed annually by my parents ... as a family joke. Ben's sad ornaments, macaroni dangling, hang on our tree.

To add insult to a lack of talent, I also gifted my son with less-than-adequate motor skills. Dinner with us means one or both will send a utensil crashing to the floor or clanking into a plate when we fumble it. We break fine crystal, almost always at other people's houses. We drop balls thrown right to us.

Fortunately, we both survived middle school, so we've pretty much learned to live with our clumsy fate.

But Ben now finds himself forced to take not one but two art classes at the University of Central Florida. He's majoring in digital media with an emphasis in game design, and the courses are required.

This means he'll be in class with actual college art majors! People who can hold and actually use an HB, 2B, 4B pencil! Whatever that is!

His occupational therapist (yes, I tried professional help) says his motor skills are at about the level of a kid in early elementary school. On computers, no problem. His fingers fly. On paper, forget it.

Ben is a born perfectionist (again, sorry, Ben), and as a college junior so far he has straight A's. Alas, I don't believe his grade point average will survive intact with art class.

So I did what we mothers do all the time, and apparently don't stop doing even when our kids go off to college. I tried to fix it, to spare him embarrassment or stress.

"Maybe you should show your teacher the diagnosis from your occupational therapist, explain about those pesky motor skills. No shame in that!"

And again, I saw that kid who continued to try to run with his fellow first-graders, lagging behind, but still laughing. The kid who tried out, unsuccessfully, for seventh-grade basketball, even as he overheard the mean kids snickering. The kid who stood up for himself when I tried to talk him out of a career as a game designer.

"No, Mom," he texted. "It's a challenge. I love a challenge."

"I'm going to learn how to draw."

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DINO VOURNAS

A carriage passes by the Aux Anciens Canadiens restaurant, housed in the oldest home in the province on Rue Saint Louis in Old Quebec City. Below, a child is all bundled up for the cold and transported by snow sled around the grounds of the Quebec Winter Carnival, which has been an annual event since 1955.



WINTER WONDERLAND



DINO VOURNAS

Vacationers can get a massage, relax in a sauna or soak in hot pools at Le Nordique spa on the banks of the Jacques Cartier River.

Carnaval de Quebec celebrates all things cold and Canadian

BY DINO VOURNAS
Special correspondent

Les Quebecois et Quebecoises, male and female French-Canadian inhabitants of the province and city of Quebec, Canada, are a hardy, resilient, independent and fun-loving bunch of folks.

In the early 1600s, they settled the

sometimes harsh lands around the St. Lawrence River north of Maine and created the magnificent walled city of Quebec, which turned 400 years old in 2008 and is junior to only a few other settlements in Canada and the United States.

Defeated by the British armed forces in 1759, they succumbed to English rule in the years before American independence. Shortly thereafter, with American troops threatening British-held Canada, the French-speaking Quebecers offered their assistance to Mother England. In exchange, they were able to negotiate the salvation of their French culture and language, which survives and thrives to this day. The independent-minded citizens even refer to their province as a "nation" within Canada.

In 1894, they responded to the cold winters, the desire to "let off steam" before Lent and the need to thumb their noses at Old Man Winter by staging the first Quebec Winter Carnival. It was held intermittently for the first half of the 20th century, but

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The Ice Hotel has many themed rooms, complete with ice beds and pads or skins and sleeping bags for overnight comfort.

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Museum makeover
Civil War exhibits take a more objective stance.
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Krewes celebrate with parties, prayer
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