



Connecting With Kids

By Shelley Putnam Burge

Celebrate! (Part Two)

July 3–7: Tanabata Festival—Hiratsuka, Japan

This romantic holiday celebrates the day that two stars, Altair and Vega, meet after being separated all year by the Milky Way. During the Tanabata Festival, people write wishes on colorful paper called tanzaku and then display their wishes on bamboo and pray that their wishes will come true. Participants also use other paper decorations to festoon the trees and main streets. By the way, if you get too busy to celebrate Tanabata in July, you can celebrate in August instead. The city of Sendai will celebrate the holiday from August 6–8 because the date is closer to the seventh lunar month, making one's luck that much greater.

- Cut small strips of construction paper on which to write your wishes. Authentic tanzaku paper is about 14" x 2". Buy it at <http://www.thejapanshop.com>.
- Hang your wishes on the trees and bushes in your yard.
- Make paper lanterns to light up your walkway. Get directions from <http://www.myweb3000.com/Lantern.html>.
- Make a colorful koi fish to add to the tanzaku hanging in the trees by visiting <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/japan/koi>.
- Learn to say a few Japanese words. The Web site <http://japanese.about.com/blphrase.htm> includes several short lists of common words divided by topic such as animals, family, and common expressions. To hear the Japanese pronunciation, simply click on the Japanese word. Your kids will be saying arigatou before you know it!

August 10: National S'mores Day—United States

Of all the holidays in the world, this is possibly the yummiest. Who can resist chocolate and marshmallows melted between graham crackers over a campfire? Perhaps this holiday should be celebrated all year long?

- Ideally, get the family outdoors for this holiday. You don't have to go far; your own backyard will do. Set up the tent, get out the sleeping bags, and don't forget the bug spray!
- Gather all of the ingredients to make a proper S'more: Hershey's chocolate bars, large marshmallows, graham crackers, a stick, and a great campfire. If you can't manage a campfire, a Bunsen burner or the stove top will suffice. If you must roast your S'mores indoors, turn off the lights, open the windows, put on your pajamas, and use lanterns to set the mood.

- Tell stories around the campfire or in the living room by lantern light.

September 13: National Grandparents Day—United States

In the early 1970s, Marian McQuade fostered the idea for National Grandparents Day as a way to help the relationship between senior citizens and their grandchildren grow. In 1978, President Jimmy Carter declared the day a national holiday. It is now celebrated on the first Sunday after Labor Day in September.

- Dig up the past. Help your kids make a scrapbook for their grandparents. Use photocopies of original photos, enhance with stickers, and journal information that they collect from their grandparents to describe the pictures.
- Have the kids enter their grandparents in the Grandparent of the Year contest at <http://www.grandparents-day.com>.
- Visit Grandma and Grandpa and spend the afternoon watching old home movies, flipping through photo albums, and reminiscing about the past.
- Help Grandma and Grandpa with something around the house that they couldn't normally do on their own or that would be difficult for them.
- Visit an elderly person from your church or in a nursing home who may not otherwise have family with whom to spend time. Take them a small gift to brighten their home. This also is a great way for your kids to spend the day if their grandparents live far away or are deceased.
- With your younger children, read books about grandparents:

Funny, You Don't Look Like a Grandmother by Lois Wyse (ISBN: 0517571579)

Grandfathers Are Like Gold by Janet Lanese (ISBN: 0684862174)

Grandparents Are Special by Lucy Mead (ISBN: 0517162652)

The Gifts of Being Grand by Marianne Richmond (ISBN: 0965244881)

October 9: World Egg Day—Dozens (HA!) of Countries Worldwide

How eggciting! A day just to celebrate the wonder of the great food we call the egg! The egg truly is an amazing and versatile food and one that people worldwide eat, unlike many foods that are only eaten in certain countries or regions. Eggs are easy to find, store, and adapt to use in a number of recipes. The International Egg Commission promotes World Egg Day, and people in countries including Argentina, Australia, Colombia, Hungary, Spain, and Zambia participate in a variety of activities each World Egg Day.

- Devote every meal to eggs. Make eggs the star of the show by serving them boiled, scrambled, or sunny-side up; making an omelet, a quiche, a frittata, or strata; or dishing up French toast or eggs Benedict.
- Hold a fall egg hunt for the neighborhood kids.
- Use empty egg cartons, pipe cleaners, and paint to sculpt all kinds of creatures: caterpillars, spiders, bats, camels, or ladybugs. (The bats and spiders would be great to save for your upcoming Halloween party!)
- Go online and search for pictures of Fabergé eggs. Your kids will certainly get a thrill from the artistry of these special pieces.

November 20: Universal Children's Day and World Children's Day (Worldwide)

Universal Children's Day is celebrated by many countries throughout the world on November 20, while the date for World Children's Day varies by country. In the United States, the holidays coincide, and the day is an opportunity to celebrate the wonder of kids and to contribute financially to children's organizations.

- Patronize McDonald's in connection with World Children's Day. McDonald's has raised more than \$75 million for the Ronald McDonald House and other children's charities in the last 5 years alone.
- Visit Crayola.com for tons of great activities for younger children, including coloring, crafts, e-cards, and lesson plans. Crafts to try: Watch Me Grow Handprints and Friendship Link Bracelets.
- Help your kids organize a fundraiser at their school to raise money for children in need.

- Work with a few other families to organize a block party in your neighborhood or at your church to celebrate being a kid. Have snacks, games, music, and fun. Let your imagination run wild! Consider taking donations for your favorite children's charity.

December 26: Boxing Day (Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, New Zealand)

No need to step in the ring and lace up your gloves; Boxing Day is a day of giving, not fighting! This is wonderful way to end the year—that is if you still have energy left from all that you've already done this holiday season. Popular belief says that Boxing Day originated in the mid-19th century in England as a day for the upper class to provide gifts to the lower class. The gifts were presented in boxes, hence the name of the holiday. Boxing Day also ties in to the tradition of the clergy giving alms to the poor. Throughout the Christmas season, parishioners donate food and other necessities that are then distributed by the church to those who are in need.

- Start preparing for this holiday early in the month. Identify a family or person in need. Buy or collect items such as food, toiletries, and clothing. Wrap the gifts and deliver them to the family on December 26.
- Spend the day volunteering with your family at a local food bank or an organization that serves meals to the needy.
- Donate food to the local food bank. Ask for donations from friends, family, coworkers, and neighbors.
- Visit a local nursing home and bring small wrapped presents to give to the residents such as scented soaps, toothbrushes and toothpaste, shampoo and conditioner, picture frames, magazines, miniature wind chimes, sun catchers, and puzzle books.

Author's Note

Shelley Putnam Burge, M.S., resides in Hattiesburg, MS. She has taught English and reading in public middle and high schools in Wisconsin, Florida, and Mississippi. She can be reached at shelleypburge@aol.com.