



Beth Bacall

Catch & Release

If the moms at karate knew I eavesdropped on their conversations, they might not be so explicit about their everyday lives. But I feel their information is fair game because they speak loud enough for the entire waiting room to hear. One mom really should invite me to her son's Bar Mitzvah because I now know every bit of energy and planning that has gone into this celebration—the menu, entertainment, theme, and cost. Is a particular magician, disc jockey, or caricature artist really the best in the county? I want to go just to find out. Most important, will she lose enough weight to fit into the fabulous one-size-too-small dress she purchased as an incentive? I truly hope so. Another mom is needlepointing a pillow as a Hanukkah gift for her mother. Her toddler sits dutifully at her heel while she threads her needle. The child suddenly throws a container of Cheerios up in the air with a loud, gleeful scream, which wakes the dad in the row behind them. He had been managing a nap in an uncomfortable chair quite well. This mom acts as if nothing happened and tells her daughter to hush. My favorite eavesdropping topic is what's for dinner. I overhear, "Costco's seasoned salmon is really the food of choice. It cooks up quick. Mixed with a boxed wild rice mix and frozen vegetables, my kids can't get enough of it." I do however feel bad for "a certain dance instructor in town"; she's not at the top of the list for Christmas gifts this year. But they are (and should be) going all-out for their kid's teachers. Speaking of Costco, televisions are flying out of this place, also K-Mart and Target report record sales for televisions this year. Nice gift to get, but it's hard to wrap the big-screen ones; stick with a big bow. The Christmas spirit is in the air but not necessarily at the ATM. Yesterday while I was depositing a check, the woman in the car behind me got out, walked up to my window, and told me I was taking way too much time. I had only been there for about three minutes. My kids were in the car when this happened and all eyes were on me waiting anxiously to see my response. The pressure! I simply wished her a nice day and finished my transaction. A few minutes later, I was at the hardware store singing the Chia Pet theme song with a jolly lady who was so happy to be alive. People are so funny. Last week I ended with the promise of an experiment. I was attempting to bring fruit into what I had deemed the "evil" kitchen at my workplace. This kitchen is the keeper of all things sweet and fatty. I walked in with a big bag of oranges, only to find a huge disposable turkey-roasting tray filled with apples, pears, and oranges. Figures! Now I'm trying to figure out who received an advanced issue of *She Prep* at my workplace.

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She's surprised that televisions are flying off the shelves for Christmas gifts.

She Buzz Words

- Latkes
- Lights
- Thermal Underwear
- Luminaries

Right now she could be...

- Driving around and looking at the lights
- Starting a new family tradition
- Going to *The Nutcracker*
- Writing holiday cards
- Deciding to switch to New Year's cards
- Decorating a gingerbread house

She baby

She can prepare for her delivery, and go a step past the standard-issue hospital gown, with an organic-cotton, all-access garment designed especially for the delivery room. www.instylemoms.com



She could be a...

- Shipping and receiving clerk
- Car parking lot attendant
- Theater ticket taker
- Auto salesperson
- Newspaper deliverer

She's totally ready for...

- *The Tale of Despereaux*: small mouse, big dream. It's good to have a kid's movie to see over the holidays.
- A snow day: imagine how much catch up work she could do!

She top of mind...

- How to make the most of the season with the least of funds.

She loves...

- Clean sheets
- Poinsettias that last through winter
- Healthy alternatives when she's surrounded by sweets
- Electric blankets
- Roaring fireplaces
- Kids and pets dressed-up in reindeer ears and Santa hats

She questions...

- Does she give her boss a Christmas gift?
- Does her office have a Secret Santa?
- How does she handle teacher gifts?
- Is it all merry and bright?
- Can she fit into the same clothes she wore this time last year?

She deal...

Purchase Amazon Prime for \$79 and get free two-day shipping from Amazon.com for a whole year.

She datebook!

- Hanukkah starts at sundown on Sunday, December 21st and will continue for 8 days until sundown on Monday, December 29th.
- Christmas Day is December 25th.
- New Year's Eve is January 31.
- New Year's Day is January 1, 2009

She TV

She may need a new TV. Television is no longer broadcast in analog format. Now they will use only digital signals, which are more efficient. A digital (DTV) converter box is all that's needed. They sell for approximately \$60, with the government offering \$40 in coupons to help with the cost. Each household can use two coupons. For information call: 888-DTV-2009 or click www.dtv2009.gov. If a new antenna is needed, go to www.antennaeweb.org. And if basic cable is the only way to go, check out www.dtvtransition.org.

She site

Andrew Shue (Billy from *Melrose Place*) added dad-of-three to his credits and a new domain, *CafeMom*. This site allows moms across the country to chat and discuss topics like parenting and marriage. Andrew is co-owner and obviously the only celebrity involved, hence the press release. Time to watch some reruns; remember when Billy was so in love with Allison, then actually ended up with Amanda? Obviously, the drama continues. www.cafemom.com

She reads

- *Freakin' Fabulous: How to Dress, Speak, Behave, Eat, Drink, Entertain, Decorate and Generally Be Better Than Everyone Else* by Clinton Kelly (from *What Not to Wear*).
- *How to Have Style* by Isaac Mizrahi
- *Dinosaur Soup (And Other Dubious Recipes Written by Children)* <http://bobsyouruncle.com/dinosaursoup.html>
- *The Green Year: 365 Small Things You Can Do to Make a Difference* by Jodi Helmer





She cooks

Here is a list of handy websites that will help with her holiday cooking:

- www.Butterball.com (1-800-Butterball)
- www.bcturkey.com
- www.kraftfoods.com
- www.perdue.com
- www.reynoldskitchens.com
- www.foodtv.com
- www.marthastewart.com
- www.allrecipes.com

She quote

Sally Brown: "What's going on? Is my sweet babboo helping my brother write a Christmas card?"

Linus Van Pelt: "I'm not your sweet babboo! That is so stupid! That is so humongously stupid!"

Charlie Brown: "There, how does it look? I drew a Christmas tree with little hearts on it."

Linus Van Pelt: [Reads card] "Merry Christmas from your sweet babboo?"

Charlie Brown: "It's a family expression."

She tips

- Remember: when visiting new friends and relatives, some homes might not be childproofed.
- Many restaurants send coupons to their database; sign up to receive email promotions.

She facts

- Americans personally gain approximately one pound between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day.
- The United States Postal Service prints 4 billion holiday stamps per year.
- The life expectancy of an American woman is at an all-time high of 80.7 years. (Source: *Good Housekeeping*)

December is...

- National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month: www.cdc.gov
- National Egg Nog Month: www.slashfood.com
- National Preparedness Month: www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/08/20080826.html

She vent!

"I can't believe that woman actually got out of her car to tell me I was taking too long at the drive-thru ATM!"

She shoe

Shopping for shoes online is difficult; all shoes do not fit alike. Kathryn Kerrigan allows you to try before you buy, online. A "'shoe-tube' is sent, holding one shoe in the size, color, and style you'd like to try. If it fits, the mate will be sent and your credit card will be charged. If it's not a fit, return the solo shoe in a postage-prepaid envelope. www.kathrynkerrigan.com

She pet

- She can help find a pet in need at Much Love Animal Rescue, a nonprofit organization that rescues cats and dogs that are in danger of being put down. www.muchlove.org
- Businesses are now trying to accommodate the needs of wannabe pet owners by offering animal-share plans for those whose lifestyle is not conducive to full-time animal care/ownership. Busy lifestyles and travel commitments hold people back from committing to owning a pet. The city of Boston disagrees with this idea and passed an ordinance against the renting of dogs. What does she think?

She green

Clothesnik is an organic-cotton bag, to take to and from the dry cleaners. For information, log on to www.reuseniks.com



She gift

Preschool

- Animal Scramble, from Wild Planet
- Curious Bonz Band by Curious Toys



- ZinkoTek
- Disney Pix Jr.

Elementary

- Easy Bake Oven



- Air Hogs Zero Gravity Micro
- Captain Clueless
- EyeClops Night Vision Goggles
- Middle School

Electric Guitar

- Guitar Amplifier
- iPod Nano



- Bicycle

She's lovin'!

- Funky Chunky Candy Cane: fluffy popcorn covered with caramel, white chocolate, candy cane crumbles, and macadamia nuts. www.funkychunkyinc.com



- Thakoon Panichgul clothes at Target, all priced \$45 or less.
- Campbell's V8 Soup
- Hal and Holly Moose at Build-a-Bear Workshop



- Baker's Joy Non-Stick Cooking Spray
- Olay Definity Color Recapture: foundation with the power of an anti-aging moisturizer.



- Chocolate Body Wrap at Haven Spa



She need

A good night's sleep is a necessity yet not always easy; nearly 50% of us don't get enough. The **Sleep Number Company**, makers of those comfy beds, now offers pillows that are just as comfy. These customized pillows help correct posture, alleviate back pain and ward against allergens.

www.sleepnumber.com

She stats

- The *Guinness World Records 2008* reports the largest Christmas tree is 269 feet tall.
- Americans spent an estimated \$9.3 billion on holiday decorations last year.
- The **National Christmas Tree Association** reports 25% of people polled bought a live tree last year.
- The average American household spent approximately \$20 on seasonal decorations in 2006

She site

According to the *Journal of Consumer Research*, dieters who stuck with snack-sized bags ate less when opening a large bag of snacks, thanks to the habit they already had. For non-dieters, it takes much more willpower to resist overeating. Awareness and discipline are key.

She site

She can send a holiday video with ease. After uploading some personal pictures and selecting music, she can send greetings that are fun to watch. Thirty-second videos are free; other costs vary but are reasonable at www.animoto.com.



She serves and saves lives...



Lets remember the troops and their families this Holiday season...five years and counting.

She's not so sure

A recent Colorado State University study found that drivers who have bumper stickers or personalized plates are more prone to road rage than the average driver.

She contest

Win \$1000 for yourself and your charity with Pepperidge Farm. For more information, log on to www.pepperidgefarm.com/share



She's listening





She gives tips

Regardless of her economic woes, she's still expected to acknowledge and tip those who provided her with some form of good service throughout the year. Here are few views so she can get it right:

According to *Real Simple* magazine:

- Child care staff: \$20–\$70 per caregiver
- Doorman, superintendent, building staff: \$20–\$100 depending on what they do during the year
- Gift wrapper: \$1–\$5 per package
- Hairstylist: double the usual tip
- Hotel bellman, doorman, or skycap: \$2 for the first bag, \$1 for the rest
- Holiday caterer: 20% of bill
- Mail Carrier: USPS employees are allowed to accept gifts or cash up to \$20
- Personal trainer: the amount of one session

According to the blog *Free Money Finance*:

- Mail carrier: \$20
- Hairdresser: \$20 (don't try this in Manhattan)
- Cleaning person: \$75
- Occasional babysitter: \$25
- Full-time nanny: \$270
- Gardener/yard worker: \$50
- Newspaper carrier: \$15
- Garbage collector: \$20

According to *CNN Money*

- Babysitter: one night's pay plus small gift from child
- Full-time nanny: One week to one month of pay depending on how long they have worked plus a small gift from child
- Child care service: \$25–70 plus small gift from child
- Teacher: \$25–\$100; a gift certificate is also appropriate
- Coaches, tutors, dance instructors, music teachers, etc.: a small gift from child
- Parking attendants: \$10–\$35 each or up to half-a-month's rate for a group if you park regularly
- Hairdresser: cost of one hair cut plus small gift
- Manicurist: cost of one session plus small gift
- Massage therapist: \$50–\$100 or cost of one session
- Dog groomer: Small gift plus 1/4–1/2 the cost of one session
- Dog walker: Cost of one session up to one week's pay
- FedEx, USPS, etc.: up to \$25 if you get regular deliveries
- Churches usually have an offering for the clergy