

VALENTINE'S DAY FUN FACTS

Expressing one's love to another is a celebrated custom on Valentine's Day. Sweethearts and family members present gifts to one another, such as cards, candy, flowers and other symbols of affection. Opinions differ as to who was the original Valentine, but the most popular theory is that he was a clergyman who was executed for secretly marrying couples in ancient Rome. In A.D. 496, Pope Gelasius I declared Feb. 14 as Valentine Day. Esther Howland, a native of Massachusetts, is given credit for selling the first mass-produced valentine cards in the 1840s.

The spirit continues today with even young children exchanging valentine's cards with their fellow classmates.

\$14.9 billion The estimated value of chocolate and cocoa product shipments for manufacturing establishments that produced these products in 2014.

\$272,180,347 The value of imports for cut flowers and buds for bouquets in 2014 through October. The total value of fresh cut roses as of October 2014 was \$381,757,889.

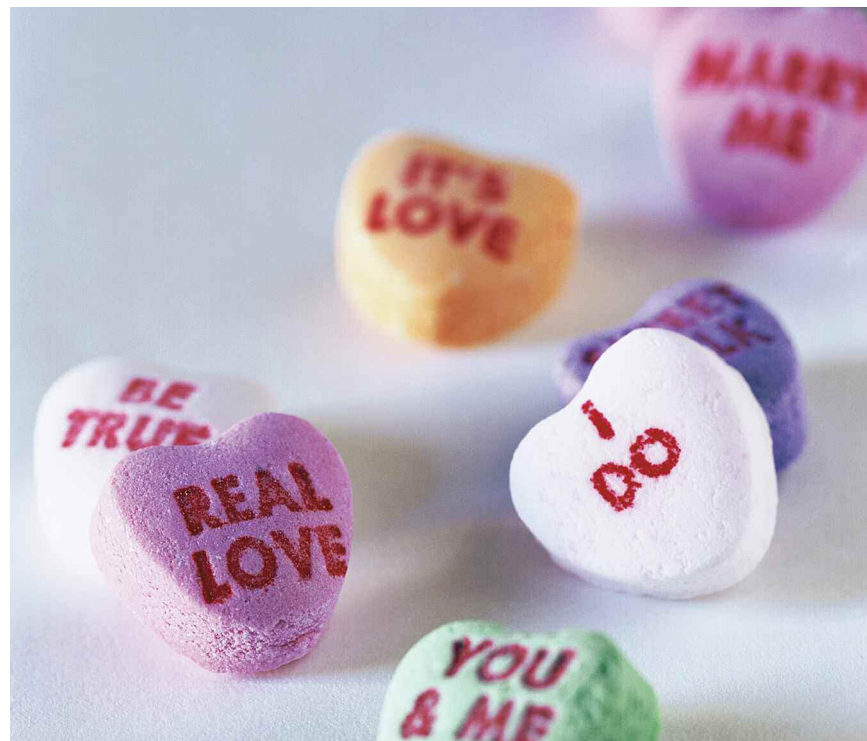
29.5 and 27.6 years Median age at first marriage in 2014 for men and women, respectively.

47.7% The overall percentage of people 15 and older who reported being married, except those separated.

19.2% Among people 15 and older who have been married, the percentage of men and women who have been married twice as of 2014. Five percent have married three or more times. By comparison, 75.5 percent of people who have ever been married have made only one trip down the aisle.

Romantic-sounding places in Oklahoma to spend Valentine's Day: Love County, OK or Loveland, OK.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau



THEY'RE OFF TO SEE THE WIZARD

The Jenks Vocal Music Program will be performing The Wizard of Oz as their spring musical, March 2-5, 2017 at the Performing Arts Center on the campus of Jenks High School.

The production will feature 65 students from Jenks High School as well as students from all three elementary schools and both intermediate schools. Members of the Jenks High School Orchestra and Band will be joined by several professional musicians to play the score for the production.

Tickets are on sale now at jenksvocal.tix.com. For more information, call the Jenks Public School Box Office at 918.299.4415 ext. 2368.

LIBRARY'S YOUNG PEOPLE'S CREATIVE WRITING CONTEST

"Write every day." That is the advice any award-winning author gives to aspiring writers. The continuous practice helps build essential storytelling skills as well as establishes a daily routine to fuel creativity.

Tulsa City-County Library's annual Young People's Creative Writing contest can help achieve a writing routine. The contest is geared much like a publisher works. You are given deadline, parameters and encouraged to submit your best story.

Entries for the 2017 contest are being accepted Feb. 1 – March 4. The contest is free to enter and open to ages 10-18 for those who live in Tulsa County, attend school in Tulsa County or have a nonresident library card.

There are three age divisions: 10-12, 13-15 and 16-18. Participants may enter one manuscript per category. Within each age division, there are five categories:

Short Story – each entry no more than 1,500 words.

Informal Essay – a short composition on a topic of issue giving your opinion or recounting a personal experience. Limited to 1,500 words.

Poetry – one poem, no more than 300 words.

Short Play – no more than six characters, no more than three locations, no more than 10 pages. Limited to five to 10 minutes in length.

Comix – entry must be complete in and of itself, and not a fragment of a larger work. No more than eight pages. Work can be with or without words, in black and white or color, and fiction or nonfiction. Computer-generated images are acceptable as long as they are original works (no clip art). Use 8 ½" by 11" paper and submit as flat work, not as a booklet.

Within each age division and category, cash prizes are awarded in the following amounts: \$100 for first place, \$50 for second place and \$25 for third place. The "Writer to Watch" award is endowed by retired TCCL librarian Rosemary Moran, the award of \$100 recognizes a young adult who consistently entered the contest and demonstrated promising writing techniques.

All entrants will receive an invitation to the awards program, which will be held on Friday, May 5, 7 p.m. at Hardesty Regional Library's Connor's Cove, 8316 E. 93rd St. Laurie Halse Anderson, winner of the 2017 Anne V. Zarrow Award for Young Readers' Literature, will be the featured speaker and will present the awards.

Entry forms with rules and regulations are available at all TCCL locations or on the library's teen website, <http://teens.tulsalibrary.org/YPCWC>. For more information, call your local library or the AskUs Hotline, 918.549.7323.

BY LAURA RAPHAEL, CHILDREN'S SERVICES COORDINATOR, TULSA CITY-COUNTY LIBRARY

giggles galore: how (& why) to play with your baby

My niece Emma is nearing the official age of adulthood, but one of my favorite memories of her will always be the time we spent playing with a basket of scarves. We would spend hours taking each scarf out, squishing them up in our hands, throwing them up in the air, and, of course, playing “Peek-a-boo!”

I wasn't a children's librarian yet (18 years ago!), so I only had a vague knowledge about children and play (namely, that it was good for them). I just knew that it was the best way to get a cascade of giggles and smiles from my niece, and I wasn't giving that up for anything.

Like privacy, liberty, and the freedom of expression, playing is a human right. No, really! On the surface it might seem ridiculous to lump making a LEGO pirate ship or using a scarf to play peek-a-boo with having access to clean water, but “The Right to Play” is important enough to be codified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article #24).

In fact, play is so important that the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) advises its members to discuss how to support play with parents at every check-up, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYP) has literally thou-



SCARVES ARE AN IMPORTANT PART STORYTIMES WITH CHILDREN, LIKE THIS PHOTO FROM A CENTRAL LIBRARY CHILDREN'S STORYTIME.

sands of research reports about the efficacy of play in things like building empathy and developing symbolic thought.

5 Easy Games To Play With Your Baby

While these lofty goals sound fantastic, you might be wondering how exactly you can “play” with a baby? After all, babies are blobs! OK, of course they aren't blobs, but they also aren't intellectually ready to engage in a pretend Star Wars battle or line up all of the trains for a theoretical cross-country trip in your living room.

The good news is that “playing” for a babies can be something as simple as giving them a fuzzy mitten to touch, or singing a song as you change their diapers. The “play” enters these easy activities because it involves your special attention and a fun and lively spirit.

1. Looking at and Tracking Objects. Find a colorful object that your baby can see. Move that object from side to side so that your baby's eyes can track it.

2. BOOOM: Build it Up – Knock It Down! Sit your baby in your lap, then build up blocks or

cups in front of you. Then knock them down, saying “BOOM!” Your baby will begin to anticipate the BOOMS, and eventually be able to help you build and knock down.

3. Give & Take. When your baby is old enough to grasp objects, practice giving her an object and then ask her to give it back. “I'm giving you a cup. Can you give the cup back to me?”

4. Knowing & Naming. Go around the room and point out everything you see by name. “And this is Baxter, our doggie, and here are the hooks where we keep our coats, and...”

5. Pull a Toy. Put a toy out of your baby's reach on a scarf or towel. See if he can pull it closer.

The most important thing to keep in mind while you are interacting with your baby is to have fun. Listen for the giggles, and know that 18 years will pass before you know it!

NEW! Kids Read Blog

Looking for more tips to help your baby or young child develop as readers? See the “Kids Read” blog at www.tulsalibrary.org/blog/kids-read. Recent articles include how to use semantic maps with your child to enrich reading, the results of a Scholastic “Kids & Families Reading Report,” and strategies to increase vocabulary development.

be unemployed and we'd be living under a bridge somewhere. You can handle peeing and lying down on your own. If he can come to a big appointment -- the gender reveal, maybe? -- that's great. But use your leverage for later, when you want to shower or run away for an hour to do some blessed errands without the baby. That is when you will need some support -- not now!

2. Lamaze/birthing classes:

My sister was curious if she should take Lamaze classes. Well, I went with my first, and I guess the breathing exercises helped with those late, deep contractions from Hades. But then my first child was vacuumed out! Since then I've had C-sections, so I just show up and get sliced and diced. I don't know; go ahead and go to a class if you want to meet other pregnant people. Maybe you are passionate about wanting a drug-free birth, or giving birth in a big bathtub, or having the baby at home? You can probably look up some breathing techniques on YouTube. Well, have some thoughts, but don't get too hung up on anything. The best deliveries are the ones that result in a healthy baby and a healthy mama. The end.

3. Are you spending a lot of time, sweat and love on a nursery? If you are, that's great! But if you don't have the time, patience, money or stamina, don't sweat it at all. My husband was unemployed during my first pregnancy; we had a crib -- well, MY crib from when I was a baby -- and that was it. Since then, the babies started coming quickly enough that we'd have a room for the "big kid," and I had the "new" baby right next to my bed anyway. My sister's apartment is about 600 square feet; there's not going to be any nursery to speak of. Guess what? The baby doesn't care one little bit if he's sleeping in a Kardashian-inspired seraglio, or a modest bassinet next to you. All he wants and needs is your love, attention and food!

4. Work: Work is such a complicated thing once you have a baby. You just don't know how you are going to feel -- and quite probably how you feel is largely

irrelevant to your financial situation. But if you have any financial flexibility, see how it goes! With my first couple of children, I had a really great work situation: two days per week in the office, and a bit of working from home. And, yet, I still dreaded dropping them off, and could not leave work fast enough, especially when they were still little bundles of fleshly baby flab. I should note I was a CPA, and while the work was fine and paid the bills, the only aspects I truly loved about my job were lunch, gossiping with grown ups, and happy hour. Most of us have to work; my sister has to work. Hopefully you are able to work out a situation that suits you and your baby -- without a jillion-hour train ride. Which brings me to my last point:

5. Move to Tulsa! OK, smarty pants, you already live here? Great job! We moved here from Portland when I was pregnant with my third child; we had made the calculation that the costs of having three children in daycare even part-time meant I ought to be earning a salary roughly equal to the CEO of Nike. Alas, I was not. PVT found a job in Tulsa that meant we would need to make sacrifices, but that we could get by on one income for a while. And that we did! Now that I've been here 10 years, I appreciate Tulsa so much more: It's a city that aspires to be both hip and family-friendly. Oh, pregnant mamas, aren't you glad you live here? Whatever your pre-baby situation is, I bet it doesn't involve train rides, fifth-floor walk-ups, washing machines that might involve a trek in the rain or snow, and living in someone's basement. Another bonus? Somehow it seems like wherever you land here, you are bound to find a caring and concerned community surrounding your doorstep. My poor sister doesn't know a single neighbor. Whatever your concerns are regarding motherhood, dear mama, rest easy knowing your baby will be born here in our little lovely town of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

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