

PAWTUXET PARENT

Creating Family Traditions



By Donna DeForbes

When my husband and I first discovered Pawtuxet Village eight years ago, we were enchanted. We strolled the brick sidewalks of Broad Street, wandered into local shops, perused restaurant menus and delighted over the family-friendly atmosphere that infused the neighborhood. Everything was right by the bay, which was the main reason we had moved to Rhode Island in the first place.

“This is where we should make our home,” I said, although neither of us had much faith in that. We were childless and penniless and fearful of homeowner responsibility.

Yet Pawtuxet Village lodged itself in our hearts, and we returned to it with our young daughter in 2009, when the housing market collapsed and we found ourselves suddenly able to afford a home here.

Now that we’ve lived in the area for three years, I can say that it is every bit as wonderful as my husband and I had envisioned. It’s the kind of place that makes it easy to build family traditions.

For us, spring begins with neighborhood cleanups and yard sales. Our daughter, Sofie, was only two when she participated in her first cleanup at Stillhouse Cove. Back then it meant gleefully tossing pebbles into the bay, but the continuity has instilled in her a sense of concern for the earth and introduced her to a caring, kid-friendly community—one that also offers quality yard-sale merchandise. We should know, as we’ve accumulated everything from bicycles and baby clothes to best-selling books and a beautiful Indian tapestry.

The seasonal highlight is Gaspee Days. Sofie looks forward to the parade and the Arts & Crafts Festival, where we gather with friends, support local artisans and buy garden plants from the Boy Scouts.

Summer means evening neighborhood walks, lawn concerts at William Hall Library, trips to the Farmers’ Market and, always, ice cream at Dear Hearts. It is the promise of ice cream and a dalliance at the Pawtuxet Park swing set that motivates Sofie to walk the 20 minutes from our house. And I don’t know what the Boy Scouts put in their plants, but this summer’s bounty was such that we began a new tradition otherwise known as “Sneak Some Zucchini onto a Neighbor’s Porch.”

We live directly across from Pawtuxet Memorial Park Cemetery, so summer into fall often involves raucous games of graveyard hide-n-seek. This is especially popular with Sofie’s friends, and I imagine in a few more years we’ll add a spooky Halloween flavor to what is fast becoming another DeForbes tradition. This year we added the village Halloween Costume Parade and Boo Bash to our growing list, calling in friends from other neighborhoods to join us for the fall festivities.

As winter approaches, we look forward to a wide spectrum of local holiday happenings (www.pawtuxetvillageassociation.org and friendsofpawtuxetvillage.com). The fun occurs Dec. 8-9 and includes a holiday gift sale, horse-drawn carriage rides, kids’ scavenger hunt, Christmas service at Trinity Church, village procession and tree lighting and Yule log ceremony in the park.



Santa arrives in the village in true old New England style.
Photo by Donna DeForbes

We first enjoyed the carriage ride when my precocious daughter was four, and, although she was more impressed with the horses than with the cell phone-conversing Santa Claus, Sofie loves events like these.

We make a point to mark every season in the village, and in this way we build traditions. Doing something regularly as a family strengthens bonds, imparts values and creates memories. While I grew up with plenty of family traditions, not many revolved around my indistinctive suburban neighbor-

hood. Pawtuxet Village, steeped in history and community connection, adds a strong sense of place to every experience. It’s a joy knowing that Sofie’s childhood memories will be filled with such a place as this.

Donna DeForbes (www.TheJoyfulWriter.com) is a freelance writer, graphic designer and mommy blogger. Follow her musings and missteps on green parenting at www.eco-mothering.blogspot.com.



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