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First Amendment

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Opinions

Reeder's Digest



By Jen Reeder
Staff Reporter

I don't have any kids, so my six nephews and six nieces are ridiculously important to me. The oldest one is 10, starting fifth-grade this year, and the youngest is 4. Each one has their own distinctive personality, and they're six of my favorite people in the world.

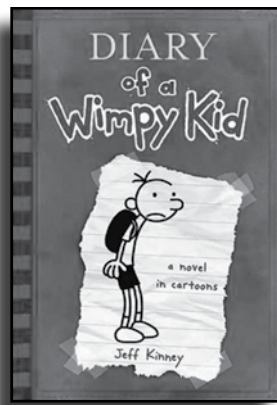
I've worked hard to become their favorite auntie over the years. I do fun stuff like taking them to video arcades and ice-skating rinks, letting them jump on my bed, or teaching them jokes. One of my most successful ideas has been always taping a piece of candy to the top of any present my husband and I give them – they inevitably like the 75-cent goodie more than the wrapped present that cost a whole lot more.

Usually, that present is a box of books. I love to read and want my little relatives to step away from the computer or the TV once in awhile and get lost in a story. It's one of life's pleasures that I want them to experience, too. (Now you understand the need for the candy so that I stay in their good graces.)

So even though I'm 35, I find myself researching potential gifts for my nephews and nieces by reading children's books. At least, that's what I tell myself – some of the books I read won't interest them until they're much older. But I need to have an excuse for reading a genre that has become something of an addiction. Can it be that I just love knowing that by reading children's books, I'll get a happy ending?

Anyhow, with summer in full swing, I

thought I'd make some recommendations for fun children's books before local kids are back in school and reading books that are required for class. Parents and aunties – you might find yourselves enjoying them, too.



Diary of a Wimpy Kid
by Jeff Kinney

My oldest nephew prefers to read Sports Illustrated Kids instead of books, but *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, by Jeff Kinney, is his absolute favorite book of all time. So I had to read it, and I can see why he loves it so much: It's written journal-style, with comics supplying lots of jokes. It reminded me of why I loved Beverly Cleary books when I was his age – life seems filled with injustices related to younger siblings and school dynamics, and the book brings them to light and makes you feel that it's a universal experience.

The protagonist, Greg, is forced by his mother to keep a journal. A budding cartoonist, he fills the pages with pictures to accompany his funny observations and anecdotes. For example, when he's trying to get his best friend to act a little cooler, he writes: "I have told Rowley at least a billion times that now that we're in middle school, you're supposed to say 'hang out,' not 'play.' No matter how

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Recession is not in our heads

By Jen Reeder

A few weeks ago Phil Gramm, a former senator and economic advisor to John McCain, had to resign from the campaign as a result of his claim that rather than the economy being bad, America was in a "mental recession," and that we had become "a nation of whiners."

But as most Americans know, the recession is not just in our heads. The abrupt closure last Thursday of all three locations of Gerard's Bakery, including the one in Firestone, is just the latest in a string of obvious signs that the economy is in serious trouble. The layoffs at Gerard's affect hundreds of local citizens, many of whom had worked at the bakery for years. Now they will now be looking for jobs in a weak market.

The town of Frederick found out last week that plans for a 400-bed hospital – which would have created jobs – had been scrapped by the developer, Banner Health. The reason: the nation's "deepening economic challenges."

We can also find concrete evidence of the economy's problems in the slew of home foreclosures due to the subprime mortgage crisis – thanks to shaky lending practices, people can't pay their bills, and they lose their homes.

Gas prices are, as we all know, ridiculously high (the fact that the oil companies are posting record profits is another can of worms), so people are having to cut back not just on luxury items, but on basic expenditures like the family food budget. Health in-

urance is an expense that many cannot afford – Census Bureau data showed that 46.6 million Americans were uninsured in 2005. If an uninsured person gets sick or needs hospitalization, they will have a very hard time recovering from their medical bills.

Most people get insurance through their employer. I have several friends who have been looking for jobs in metro Denver for the past six months or so. One is a librarian with a master's degree in library science who was laid off due to budget cuts from a job that paid her \$55,000 a year. Now she can't get calls back from employers posting lower-paying jobs such as receptionist or volunteer coordinator at nonprofit organizations. Another friend was a mortgage broker – now she is working as a cashier at a retail store for \$7.25 an hour.

So when I hear an advisor to a nominee for the President of the United States say something as out-of-touch as claiming that the recession does not exist, it makes me very nervous that the wealthy politicians in our country have no idea what is really going on. Though McCain has recently said that he "would imagine" we are in a recession, he did say this April that many of the nation's problems are "psychological."

I hope that in this election year, all of us will pay close attention to the positions of each candidate and vote accordingly. Because as Bill Clinton's campaign understood in 1992, "It's the economy, stupid."

LETTER POLICY

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