

Family Living Focus

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anything that occurs with some regularity and holds special meaning for a family. It can be as simple as reading bedtime stories or as elaborate as an annual trip across the country to grandma's house. The existence of family traditions can help make a family and family members feel special and unique. Because the meanings of these occasions and activities are usually understood and enjoyed by the family, they can create feelings of closeness and shared meanings. Traditions provide stability and continuity in a changing world.

If young children are part of your family, why not consider establishing some birthday traditions? Consider starting to build traditions by including the children in the development of these special times:

- Allow the child to choose the kind of cake and icing. Let them work with you to make and decorate the cake. Remember, perfection is not necessary!

- Let the child make their own party invitations with stickers and

kah, New Year's Day, and so forth, but birthdays in the eye of a child is a special day for them to "celebrate." To a child, it is so important to be one year older. We adults don't seem to have quite the need to keep as close a watch on the birthdays!

When celebrating birthdays with children, family traditions can be easily formed. Whether it is a get-together with family members or a party with school friends, we seldom stop and think about the traditions we are forming with our families. Traditions can be

stamps or design them on the computer.

- Involve the birthday child in helping to plan party games or let them invent new games. Libraries have lots of books that include creative games.

- Children delight in making decorations and also enjoy decorating for the special event. Don't be too quick to take decorations down. Let the joy continue for a few days.

- Decorating party bags can occupy young hands for several hours and can be very cost effective. White lunch size paper bags work great for this project.

- Consider involving the birthday child in making party favors for guests.

Themes for birthday parties can be fun if friends are being invited to attend. I remember two parties that were especially fun at our home. One year we had a Detective Party where the party guests caroused the yard following clues.

There were bags of junk mail to go through, secret messages to figure out, hidden keys to find, etc. The final station was a bag of candy for a candy scramble. Another party for our daughter centered around a carnival theme. Children tossed bean bags into clown faces drawn on cardboard boxes, decorated ping pong balls and then threw them into bowls, experienced face painting, and played balloon games. Themes can make the planning fun for the parent as well as the children. Anything from a Pirate Party for young children to a Hair and Jewelry Party for older girls adds a special flavor to any party.

Whether the activity is fun or serious, the anniversary of one's birth is a special opportunity to honor each individual — whether child or adult — and create cherished family traditions and memories. Why not start some new birthday traditions this year?

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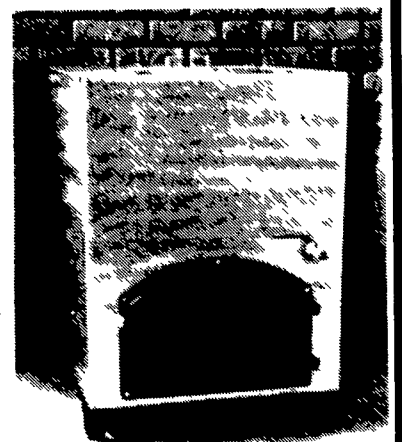
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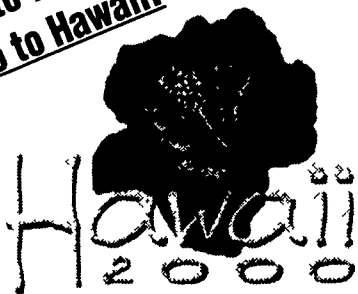
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