***Describe some typical family activities:***

In today’s fast-paced society, most of us are consumed by a packed schedule of activities which start on Monday morning, end on Sunday night and then begin all over again. Time races by as we rush to complete tasks, juggle jobs, run the house, and shuttle our children between appointments and classes. It’s easy to get so engrossed in our schedules that we overlook the importance of spending time interacting as a family. Whether it’s our outings in Central Park, weekly trips to the beach in the summer, cooking on Friday nights or getting together with extended family, each of these activities helps create our family footprint.

When spring comes around, one of our favorite activities is a picnic in Central Park. We run to the grocery store, pack a bag full of lunch, overload the stroller with toys and sports gear and find a quiet spot under a tree. On these picnics, we are able to interact with Camden in a different setting, watch him discover things for the first time and teach him new things like how to throw a baseball. We also utilize this time to catch up on milestones that we might have missed, such as realizing he can say a new word or that he has mastered his ABC’s.

On Friday nights, rather than go out or order in, we choose to stay in and cook a meal as a family. Obviously it would be easier to send the kids off to play while we cook but we found that with a little prep and forethought, it is fairly easy to incorporate them into the meal-making process. During this time we show the kids science in action, like watching butter melt, or basic math skills, like counting the quantity of each ingredient. Once dinner is ready, Camden corrals us to the table and showcases what can only be described as his “inner foodie” as he tries to describe what we are about to eat. We also use this time to reflect on everyone’s week and talk about our plans for the weekend. This time provides the perfect way for us to unwind after a busy week, and start our weekend on a positive note.

Another activity we look forward to is gatherings with our extended family whether it’s our siblings, aunts, uncles or cousins. These outings range from a barbecue at someone’s house, spending the day on the beach, an adventure at the zoo, sledding in the winter or something as simple as taking the kids to a museum. Regardless of the venue or activity, this gives Camden and Chase a chance to spend time with their cousins, understand their family history, and also reinforces the importance of family and community.

We hope that over time, these activities, establish habits that last for future generations and help deepen the connections we have with our children.

***Describe your child’s bedtime routine:***

As full-time, working parents, we are deeply entrenched in the manic energy for which Manhattan is notorious. Practically speaking, this means our high energy mornings are followed by high energy days. But regardless of whether the markets went up, down, or sideways that day, our family pauses just before bedtime where we take a time out from the frenetic world around us. This time is devoid of all the technological distractions we keep in our pockets or wear on our wrists. It is just Mommy, Daddy, Camden, and baby brother Chase, creating the memories that bind us as a family.

During this time, we ask Camden about his day, read stories, and sing songs. We then go to “Club Moolani”, where “DJ Daddy” puts on fun music and everyone dances, jumps up and down, and acts silly. Sometimes Camden can even get our dog to join the party and she howls along. When the “club” closes, Camden asks for “mommy hugs”, “daddy hugs”, and sometimes “2 more minute hugs”, before whispering “I love you” and asking us to tuck him in to his “big boy bed”.

Now, we might look ridiculous to those on the outside if they caught a glimpse of our nightly party and unorthodox bedtime routine. However, we both know that with the blink of an eye, Camden will grow up, and the hugs around our necks or kisses on our cheeks will be replaced with a quick goodbye as he rushes out the door. For now though, whether it’s the third night in a row singing “Twinkle Twinkle” or the 100th time doing “The Elmo Slide,” these are the moments that pick us up and give us the energy to power through whatever the next day may bring.

***Tell us what you think the ideal preschool environment is for your child:***

The right learning environment has the potential for positively influencing all areas of Camden’s development: physical, social /emotional, and cognitive. Particularly for preschool, we believe that each child develops at an individual pace, and we are therefore looking for a school that is deeply immersed in understanding the developmental needs of each individual child. We are looking for an environment that creates a secure and exciting place for Camden to expand his imagination and gain confidence in his abilities. Since preschool is a time for social adjustment, we believe Camden will thrive in a classroom that promotes and reinforces the learning experience through a wide range of hands-on activities. Therefore, a classroom filled with cooperative play, art, music and literature will help Camden to develop his abilities to create, ask questions, problem solve, express himself and work well with others. At the same time, we believe Camden should be also exposed to the foundational concepts of literacy, and writing in ways that are meaningful to him.

Although Camden’s communication skills are strong and he is generally able to express himself, he is still learning to cope with his own feelings, particularly those stemming from his recent realization that he is a separate individual from Mommy and Daddy. We look forward to him attending nursery school where he will continue to develop his language skills and have more experience working with his peers, handling disappointment and following directions. Camden will thrive in a nurturing environment which endorses independence, individuality and creativity.