

# Room Mom: To be or not to be?

*You want the very best for your child, but does that mean you have to always, always, always volunteer at school?*



**BY KRISTEN DE DEYN KIRK**

|||||

Somehow, I've known my limits when it comes to volunteering at my children's school. Taking on small, routine tasks that involve an hour or so once a week fits nicely into my schedule and my desire to stay somewhat sane.

But, I have to admit, I did once consider being my daughter's room mom. No one signed up that year. It was her fourth year at the school, and the parents had grown wise: Being room mom in their awesome school means having serious party coordination skills, a no-fear approach to recruiting volunteers and at least a partial lack of hearing that comes in handy while in a room with almost 30 screaming kids and their parents and young siblings during

two-hour long parties held a handful of times each year. The teacher said she was surprised to find her sign-up sheet blank at the end of Back-to-School night, but I believe she was fibbing. Fortunately for her and me, someone else quickly answered her call for help. I counted my blessings and my remaining brain cells.

Most parents have been in that moment, wondering how they can help - as we all should because the teachers and kids need us - and wondering why the thought would even enter their mind when the job is hard. It's an especially difficult decision if you have taken on the job before.

Elizabeth Lombardo, a psychologist and author of *A Happy You: Your Ultimate Prescription for Happiness*, gives you permission to think long and hard - and say no.

Or "just a little."

"Stop the 'MUSTerbation,'" she says. "Stop telling yourself, 'I must be room mother again this year' or 'I should help

**If you do go ahead and decide to become Room Mom (or take on that big school fundraiser or leading an after-school activity), think of yourself as a coordinator.**

out, if I was a good mom.' Eleanor Roosevelt said, 'No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.' So don't give in to them. Believe in yourself and your decisions, including cutting back on volunteering."

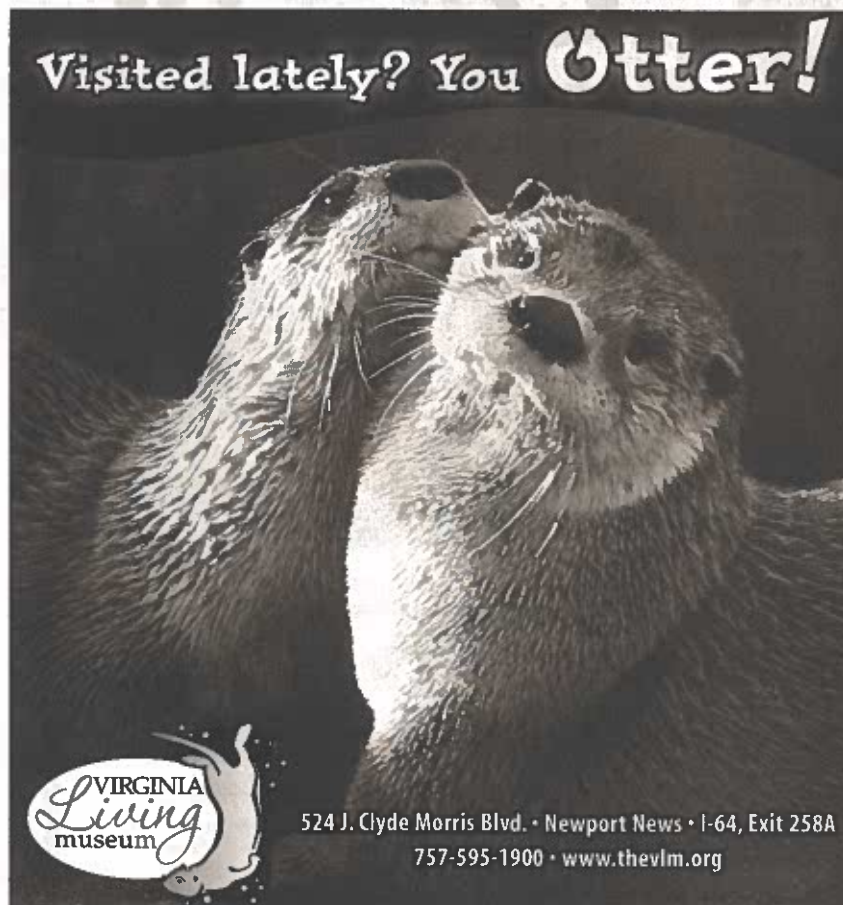
How can you decide what to do this year - if anything?

Lombardo advises developing a list of ways you want to spend your time - specifically. Volunteering might be one way. And if so, what, exactly, would you like to do? Everyone has their own strengths and areas of interest. Think them through. For example, if you really can't stand fundraising, then volunteer for something else.

"On your list, also consider other ways you want to spend your time, including spending time with your family and time for yourself. That is not being selfish. It is vital to your wellbeing," says Lombardo. "Remember the words from your airplane rides: 'Put your oxygen mask on first.' You are no good to your family or community if you can't breathe or are so overwhelmed with volunteering that you cannot function."

If you do go ahead and decide to become Room Mom (or take on that big school fundraiser or leading an after-school activity), think of yourself as a

Visited lately? You Otter!



**VIRGINIA Living museum**

524 J. Clyde Morris Blvd. • Newport News • I-64, Exit 258A  
757-595-1900 • www.thevlm.org

**Children's Dentistry & Orthodontics**  
*We Make Smiles!*

**Pediatric Dentistry**  
Mark S. Levin, DDS  
John I. Barney, DDS  
Michael F. Hasty, DDS, MS  
Scott H. Rosenblum, DDS, MPH

**Orthodontics**  
John I. Barney, DDS



1055 Kempsville Rd.  
Virginia Beach, VA 23464  
757-474-1200

1368 North Great Neck Rd.  
Virginia Beach, VA 23454  
757-496-8300

4169 Virginia Beach Blvd.  
Virginia Beach, VA 23452  
757-486-2525

905 N. Battlefield Blvd, Suite 106  
Chesapeake, VA 23320  
757-548-3030

Member American Association of  
Orthodontists



coordinator.

Sophia Chiang, a five-time room mom (drop to knees now and bow your head), says it is possible to be a room mom and not overwork.

"I think there is a tendency for room moms to think that as a room parent, they are the primary volunteer - which leads to the overvolunteering," she says. "However, if the parent views the room parent as the key communication/coordination liaison between the teacher and parents, her role is then the coordinator."

She sees this approach as being beneficial in two ways: First, it avoids the "overvolunteer" burden and second, it involves more of the parent community in the classroom.

Chiang points to a secret weapon that has helped her with her many tasks: [www.qlubb.com](http://www.qlubb.com). It's a free service, and, full disclosure, where she

works. The site delivers requests for volunteers and sends reminders and tracks results so that you don't have to.

It might be the answer to making things easier for you, or another similar system, such as [volgistics.com](http://volgistics.com), might help you. The key is to find a way to go

from "do-er" to "delegator," so that you don't wish to "delete" yourself from any and all volunteerism in the future.



**GRAND FURNITURE**  
Real Furniture For Real People.

**GRAND KIDS**

Furniture for tots, tweens, teens, college bound, and "boomerang" kids!

Decorating your kids' room can be a hard task, especially when your little one transforms from a pirate or a princess into a super hero or mermaid - in just one day! As your kids grow, there are a few helpful tips to keep in mind while decorating their bedrooms.

#### 1. Furniture

Buy full-sized wood furniture. The bed sizes can be changed to accommodate a growing child, but the other pieces can be easily used to reflect the tastes of both young and older children.

#### 2. Color

Paint instead of using expensive wallpaper. It will be easier to change and more durable. Create fun shapes with your printer and window decal paper, or go wild painting your own creations!



#### 3. Floors

Colorful area rugs add lively interest to kids' bedrooms. Even with plain white walls that are often necessary in rented dwellings, the rug design can instantly spark up the look of a child's room.

#### 4. Themes.

Avoid trends such as the newest animated movie character for the bedspread, curtains and wallpaper. These quickly become dated and are expensive to replace. Save them for their birthdays!

#### 5. Go wild with the rest!

Accessorize (inexpensively) reflect your child's current interests! Match the bedspread or throw pillows for a coordinated look.

