

SUBURBAN ESSEX

September 2007

MAGAZINE

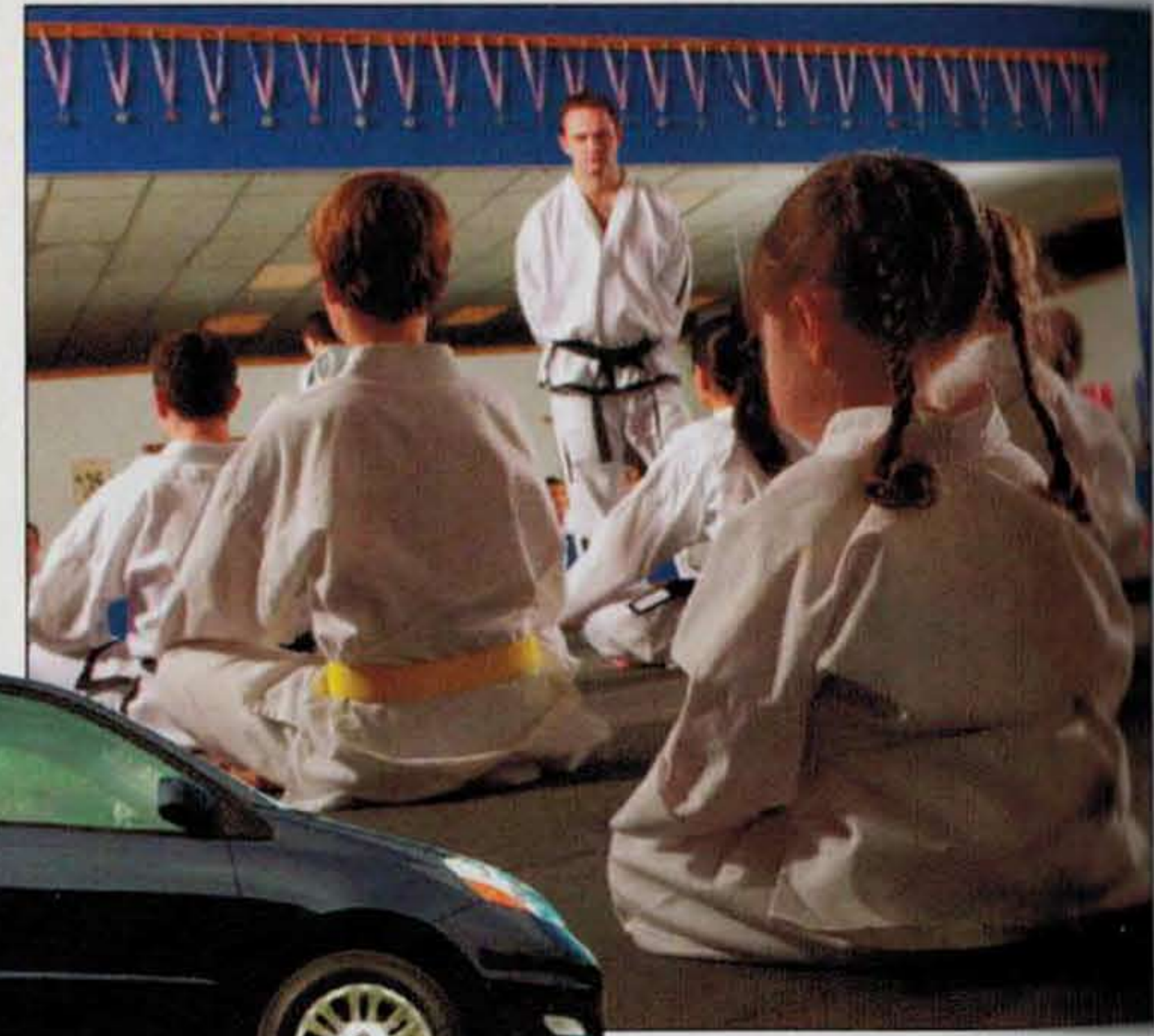


Get Organized

By Deborah Gussoff

Take the Stress Out of

AFTER SCHOOL SCHEDULING



September brings not only the beginning of a new school year, but also the start of a variety of extra-curricular activities for your children. Trying to manage your children's busy schedules can be challenging; trying to fold their lives into your own busy life can be downright difficult. How can you do it without losing your mind in the process? Here's one suggestion: a comprehensive calendar system, and a little pre-planning.

To come up with a plan, the first step is to figure out how many activities you are willing to let your child do. Questions to consider include:

If you have more than one child, should you stagger or alternate their activities? How much schoolwork do you anticipate your son or daughter will have this year and how will after-school activities impact that? (For example, a sport that holds practice every day after school and has a game every weekend

is a bigger time commitment and will interfere with studies more than a one-hour per week art class.) Are there certain activities you consider non-negotiable, in which your child must participate, i.e., CCD or Sunday School? How many activities can you afford to pay for this semester and do you need to purchase any additional equipment or supplies?

Once you've answered these questions, sketch out what a sample week schedule will look like. Make a grid listing each day of the week across the top; going down the left-hand side of the page, list times, by hour, from school dismissal until evening (i.e., 3pm, 4pm, 5pm, etc.)

Pencil in each activity your kids are considering, and make sure to include travel time. But don't forget to include your own activities so you don't commit Johnny to karate lessons at the same

time you have yoga class.

After you've finished, take a look at your grid and decide if it is reasonable: are you over-committing either your children or yourself? Did you schedule in some downtime and study time? If not, make any needed changes now.

To make your schedule work, everyone then needs to know where they should be and at what time each day. A family calendar hung in a prominent place, such as the kitchen, can accomplish this—just make sure the calendar has large boxes for each day that allow plenty of room to write. That's far more important than pretty pictures, though some calendars do offer both.

If you have several kids, assign each child a specific color marker and color-code their activities. You can simplify things by tying the markers to a string and attaching them to the calendar—you'll always have the correct marker at hand. Jot down every day each activity meets, and if there are make-up snow days listed, pencil those in too. Also, be sure to check for weeks when classes don't meet (i.e., winter vacation, President's Day, etc.) and mark your calendar accordingly.

And here's something you may want to consider, especially if you have more than one child: set up a carpool and share transport with other families. If that's not possible, hire someone to drive your children to and from functions.

Wishing you a fun-filled, stress-free school and extra-curricular year!

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
3pm	Johnny piano		Jenny Mathletes		
4pm		Jenny Violin	Johnny & Jenny CCD	Drive Johnny to Karate	
5pm				Johnny Karate	Mom pilates
6pm				Pickup Johnny from Karate	

Deborah Gussoff is President & Founder of Montclair-based In Order, Inc., a full-service organizing firm. She serves on the Executive Board of the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPO), is a member of the National Study Group on Chronic Disorganization, and a life coach. For more information, call 973-744-4835 or visit www.inorder.com