

55%

OF YOU VOTED
FOR THIS
STORY

LEADING THE WAY

*Meet the 10 most influential
people in family life today*

THEY IMPACT EVERYTHING
FROM THE FOOD OUR CHILDREN
EAT IN SCHOOL TO THE MOVIES
THAT OUR FAMILIES WATCH TO
THE WAY MOMS CONFIDE IN
EACH OTHER

by Maria Speidel



MOMS

YOU CALL THE SHOTS AT HOME

Don't get us wrong—dads are a key part of family life, with many more involved in parenting than ever before. But (and this probably won't surprise you) research shows that mothers still handle the bulk of family decisions.

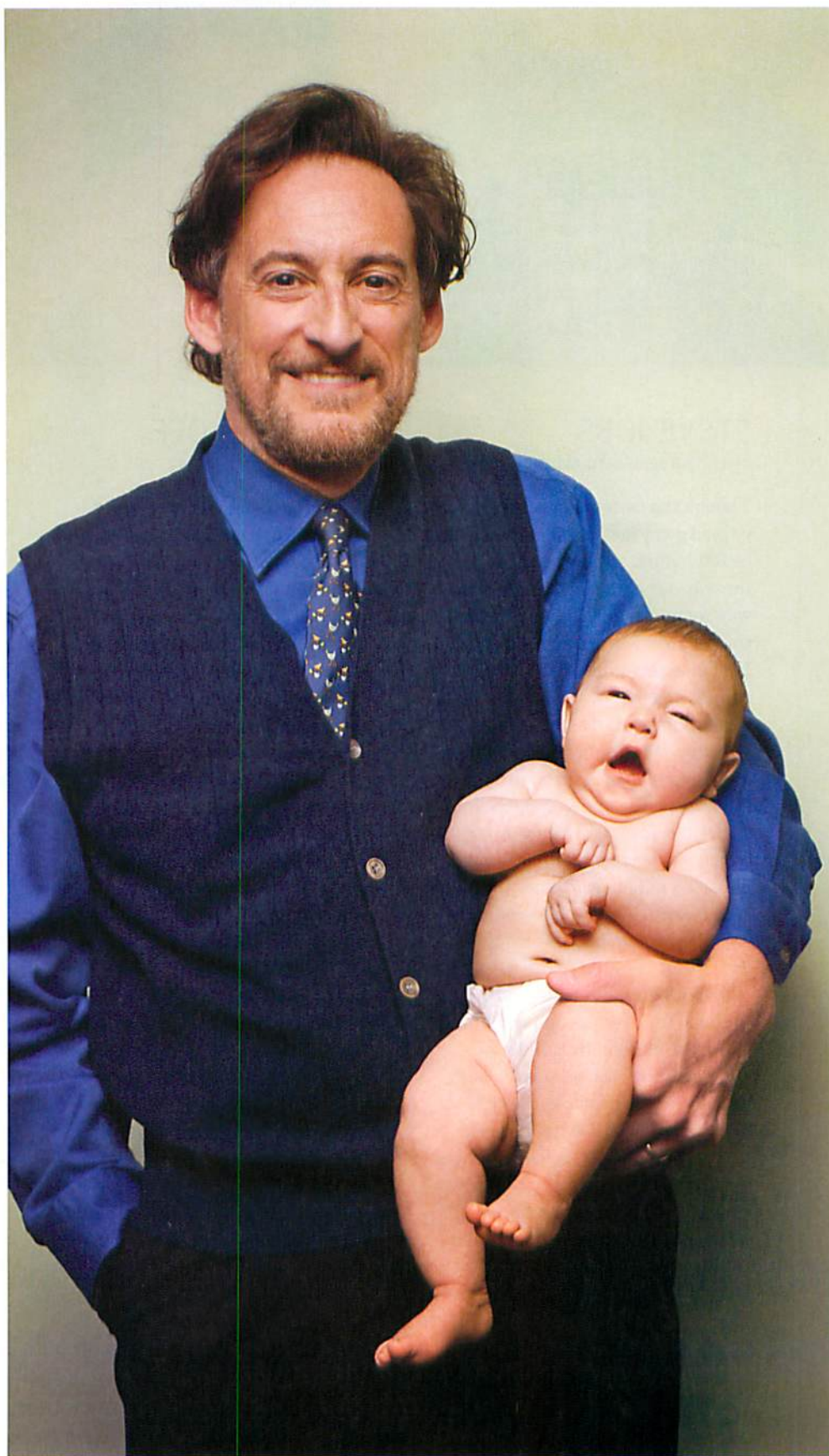
According to surveys, Mom, 85 percent of you control your household's spending; the same number of you choose your children's doctor. And mothers make up 90 percent of the local PTA (though the presence of dads is growing). You are fitting this all in despite the fact that the number of moms who work outside the home has shot up to 71.6 percent from 47.4 percent four decades ago. Whew!

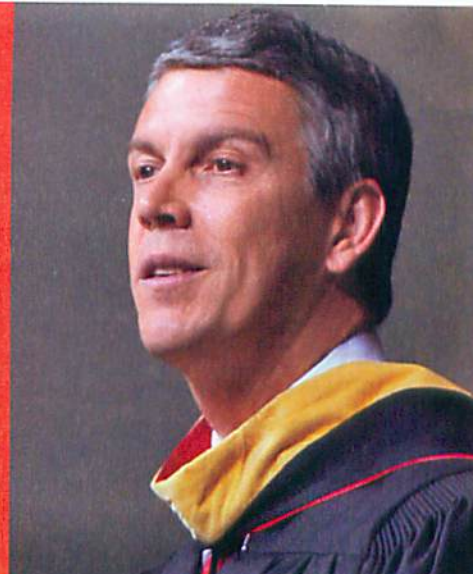
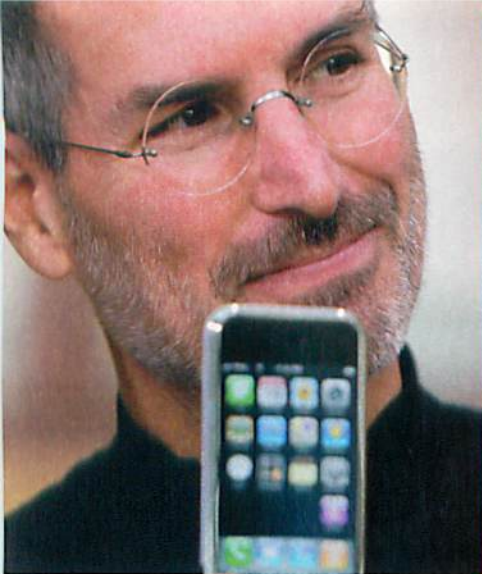
HARVEY KARP

WORLD PEACE, ONE BABY AT A TIME

For millions, this pediatrician and UCLA professor is a life-saver. His book and DVD series *The Happiest Baby on the Block* helps new parents accomplish one crucial, yet often elusive, thing: get their infants to sleep longer at night. No wonder the book is published in 20 languages and often tops Amazon's best-selling parenting titles.

Dr. Karp's simple methods are taught everywhere—from neonatal wards to prisons. His lofty goal is to make the world a better place through sleep. "Crying babies make for exhausted parents, and exhaustion is a trigger for marital conflict, shaken baby syndrome, and postpartum depression," he says. "We are all working toward better human relations. And it starts in your family."





STEVE JOBS

INJECTING TECH INTO ALL OUR LIVES

Though the co-founder of Apple passed away last October, the legacy he left behind so profoundly affects the way our children learn and the way we interact with them that we couldn't leave Steve Jobs off the list. His company, whose name is practically synonymous with innovation, revolutionized the home technology industry. We now help our toddlers learn about shapes through apps for the iPhone (the number one selling smartphone ever), we curl up to watch movies together using our iPads (59 million sold since its June 2010 launch), we listen to podcasts and flip through photos on our iPods, and more.

Jobs's legacy has had—and will continue to have—an unquestionable impact on our children's education, too. When school started last September, for example, the relatively affordable iPad had already been adopted by 600 school districts (according to the Associated Press) to replace some of their traditional textbooks with online versions that can be customized and updated with ease. More schools will surely follow.

HEIDI MURKOFF

GODMOTHER TO MILLIONS

Even in the instant answer world of the Internet, the modern classic *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, first published in 1984, still holds an exalted spot on bookshelves. Its author, Heidi Murkoff, is the unofficial godmother of millions of babies whose parents rely on the month-by-month guide leading up to the big event.

The numbers astound: *USA Today* has said that 93 percent of pregnant women who will read a pregnancy book choose Murkoff's. There are 17 million copies in print in 30 languages. Murkoff, who began the book when pregnant with the first of her two children, presides over an empire of resources that covers fertility, pregnancy, babies, and toddlers. The What to Expect Foundation provides assistance to low-income moms. A movie out this month loosely based on Murkoff's work stars Cameron Diaz, Jennifer Lopez, and Chris Rock.

Murkoff's unwavering dedication is touching. "The highlight of every day is sitting down with my iPad after dinner," she says, "and answering questions, gobbling up baby photos, and talking shop with parents."

ARNE DUNCAN

CHANGING THE SCHOOL GAME PLAN

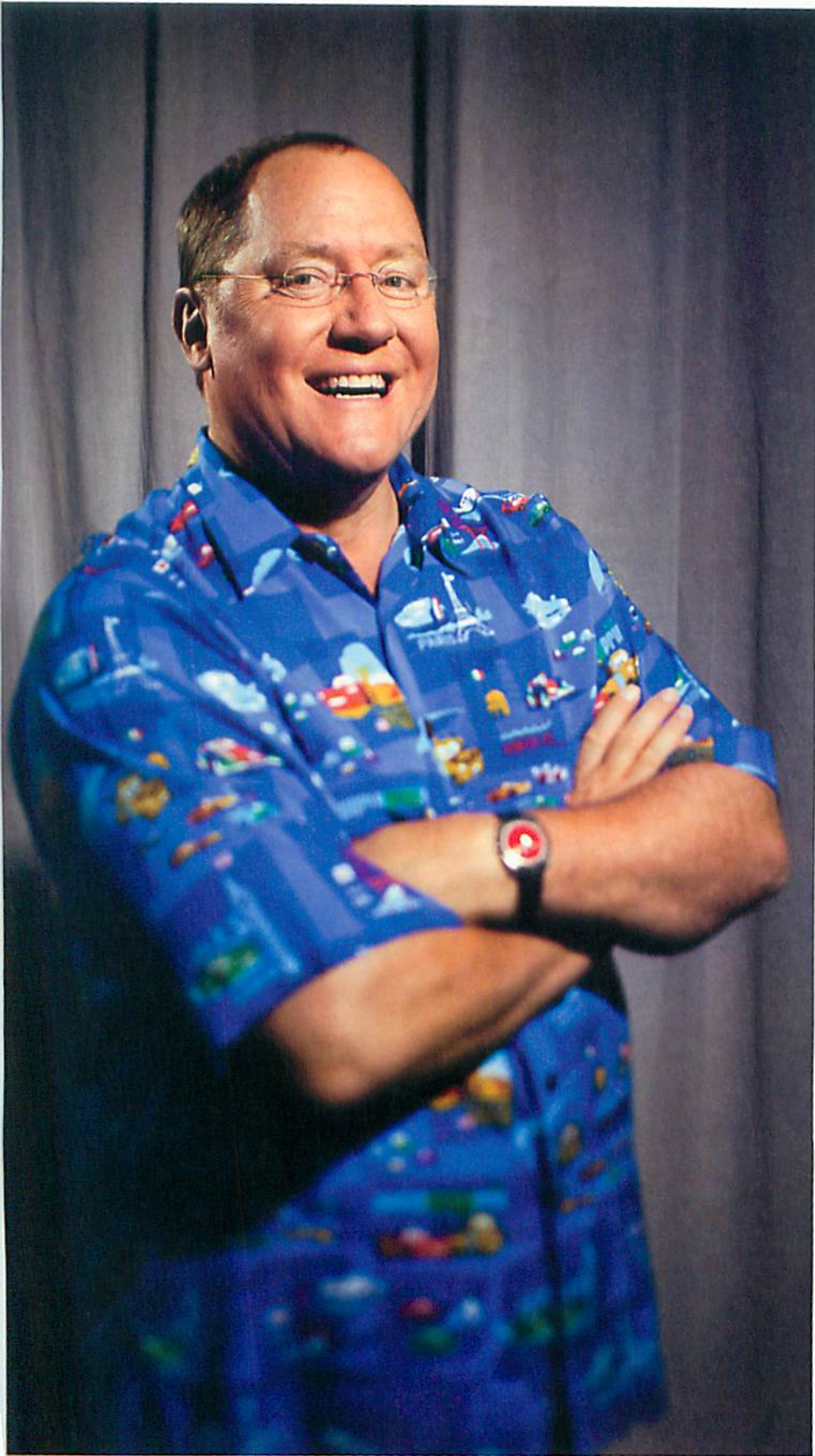
Secretary of Education Arne Duncan is working to make your children (and the nation's other 49 million public school students) power players in the global marketplace of the future. "We have to educate our way to a better economy," he likes to say. Duncan is overseeing Race to the Top (R2T), a Department of Education competition created to encourage innovative thinking and reform in school districts.

What does it mean for your child's classroom? Immediately, not much. However, changes over the next few years will include new standardized tests, new methods for evaluating the effectiveness of educators, and the development of more charter schools. Twelve states have already implemented R2T steps and earned big chunks of the \$4.35 billion set aside for the new program.

Duncan, a former basketball player, believes education starts at home. His own two kids, 8 and 10, "watch very little TV," and the family reads together nightly. They just finished *Wind in the Willows*. "It's good for me. It's good for the kids," he says. "I love it."



FAMILY FACTS Married couples with children make up only 20 percent of all U.S. households, half of what they did in 1970. Twenty-three percent of married couples with children younger than age 15 have a stay-at-home mother; the percentage before the recession began in 2007 was 24 percent. —*U.S. Census Bureau, 2011*



JOHN LASSETER

THE PEOPLE'S MOVIE MAKER

Cowboys, astronauts, and toy cars have been staples of childhood play for decades, and bugs since time began. But when John Lasseter, chief creative officer of Pixar Animated Studios, reimagined their hidden worlds in the blockbusters *Toy Story*, *Cars*, and *A Bug's Life*, he defined movies for an entire generation. Each new Pixar movie seems to top the last and creates an instant buzz of anticipation. (Total global sales of Pixar films are more than \$7 billion.)

Almost always seen in a signature Hawaiian shirt, the playful father of five lives in a magical California house complete with a secret staircase and toy train sets that run throughout the house.

MICHELLE OBAMA

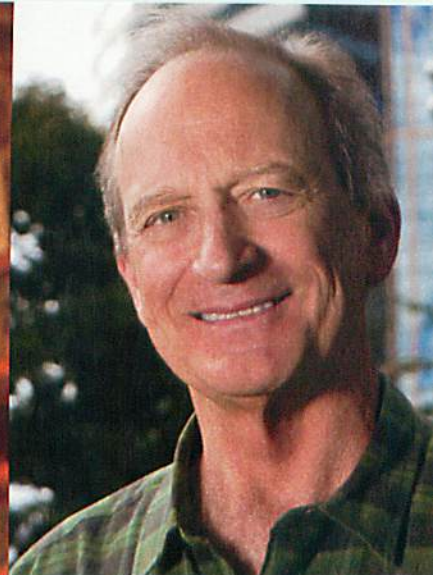
GETTING FAMILIES FIT

Statistics show that 25 million U.S. children—that's nearly one in three—are overweight or obese. First Lady Michelle Obama has boldly stepped to the forefront to raise awareness about the issue. Her Let's Move program, launched in 2010, provides guidance for making healthier lifestyle choices. She has successfully lobbied Congress to make school lunches healthier and pressured the restaurant industry to improve the quality of kids' meals.

The First Lady pulls no punches about her mission to get families to move. On the program's second anniversary, she told Scholastic that there is no excuse for not exercising. "Even if you're watching TV, on the commercials you can drop and do 20 push-ups, right?"

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DANIEL GOLEMAN

EXPANDING IDEAS ABOUT HOW KIDS LEARN

His name may not ring a bell at home, but in the classroom, he's a star. Goleman, a two-time Pulitzer Prize nominee, is the psychologist behind the theory that supporting a child's emotional intelligence results in a higher intellectual intelligence. Since his landmark book *Emotional Intelligence* first appeared in 1995, his ideas have made their way into schools in all 50 states. Does your child's teacher use a traffic light system to promote good behavior? (Red means stop for a problem. Yellow is for brainstorming. Green means go.) This is a classic Goleman-inspired social and emotional learning (SEL) exercise.

Social and emotional intelligence (EQ) is a measure of how a person operates in the world as opposed to how he scores on tests, which measures intellectual intelligence (IQ). Goleman believes EQ informs IQ. "The better you can handle your anxiety, the better your brain can take in knowledge and learn," he says. A recent study by Goleman's nonprofit group shows an 11 to 17 percent gain in test scores among students whose schools use SEL teaching methods.

LISA BELKIN

CONNECTING MOMS IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Once moms turned to each other for advice over the backyard fence. Today, they turn on a computer. Lisa Belkin, family life columnist for the *Huffington Post*, represents the explosion of online community voices who are redefining the way mothers (fathers, too!) find and share advice on raising their children.

Exact figures are difficult to nail down, but the sheer number of websites and blogs devoted to or written by moms is staggering. From popular advice sites like Babble.com, which boasts 5 million unique viewers a month, to individual star bloggers like the Pioneer Woman (Ree Drummond), there are thousands of online spots where moms connect virtually.

Belkin doesn't speak for every mom, but she understands the impact of the movement. "It's changing family life," says the mother of two sons. "Our moms didn't have places like this to go for advice. Now you can go online and find an entire world that is dealing with the same thing. That is where the Internet and parenting meet in its sweet spot. And that's what I have great respect for."

DENIS HAYES

GREENING OUR CHILDREN'S FUTURE

Next time your child tosses a plastic bottle into the recycling bin, thank environmentalist Denis Hayes. Hayes helped to organize the first Earth Day in 1970—when the United States was recycling about 7 percent of its trash. More than 32 years later, Earth Day is the biggest secular holiday in the world, with some 180 countries participating. (The United States now recycles about 34 percent of its waste, says the Environmental Protection Agency.)

It's clear we're more aware than ever of the environmental issues that affect our children's health. Hayes, a grandfather, is a driving force behind the movement that brought them to our attention. His advocacy led to curbside recycling, now standard in many parts of the country, and he has promoted the teaching of ecology in schools. The "green" movement continues to grow stronger. On April 23, one day after Earth Day 2012, the U.S. Department of Education announces its first-ever Green Ribbon awards, given to schools that have met a high standard of teaching environmentalism and practicing recycling. **P&C**



FAMILY FACTS Of the 74.6 million children in the United States younger than 18, 69 percent live with two parents, while another 27 percent live with one parent. Among the children who live with one parent, 87 percent live with their mother: —*U.S. Census Bureau, 2011*

Maria Speidel is a former reporter for *People* magazine. She lives in Los Angeles with her husband and two sons.