

## Hope for Nicholas fuels their dream

■ A local family heads to Poland for a unique therapy they hope will help their son learn to walk.

Beth Pellerito has told her son, Nicholas, that the family is going to take a long trip on an airplane soon. She's told the tiny 4-year-old that when they arrive at their destination, he'll have to work very hard. She's not sure how much he understands.

Nicholas, a mere 20 pounds, has cerebral palsy, is deaf, and has limited fine and large motor skills due to a congenital birth defect known as CMV. He has never walked without the aid of a walker. His expressive eyes framed by long lashes watch his mother's face and hands as she communicates with him in sign language in their Farmington Hills home.

This Saturday, the Pelleritos will board a plane for Micho, Poland, where Nicholas will undergo a month of intensive physical therapy at the Euromed Rehabilitation Institute. Established in 1994, the Institute helps people who can't walk due to cerebral palsy by utilizing a special suit originally designed to help Russian cosmonauts deal with weightlessness in outer space.

Children in the program undergo six hours of therapy six days a week wearing elastic cords attached to a wide belt worn at the hip and joint area and connected with shoes and kneecaps. The elastic mirror the arrangement of muscles of the body.

Although no miracle cure, research conducted on the 620 patients who went through Euromed treatment show improvement in 604 cases, ranging from small improvement in 196 patients, to intermediate benefits for 312. Another 112 patients showed large improvement.

Beth Pellerito admits she thought the therapy sounded "really out there" when she first heard about it last September from a member of a local support group. But Beth and her husband, Fred, believe in giving Nicholas every opportunity to reach his fullest potential.

For instance, last September they enrolled their son in Fox Hills, a Bloomfield Hills pre-school program for hard-of-hearing kids.



Mom & son:  
Beth Pellerito  
cuddles  
with son  
Nicholas, 4,  
who has  
cerebral  
palsy and is  
deaf. The  
family hopes  
intensive  
therapy in  
Poland will  
help him  
with his bal-  
ance and  
walking  
skills.

Please see THERAPY, B2

### CHAT ROOM



SUE CURTIS

### House rentals are better than hotels on holiday

If you're like me, this lovely spring weather puts you in the mood to go on vacation. But if you have kids, the prospect of holing up in a hotel room isn't your idea of relaxation. There's a great alternative: renting a vacation house.

Rest assured: It's common, above-board, clean and decent. Better yet, it can be more economical, comfortable, private and relaxing than a hotel room.

When traveling with our baby, hotels meant praying that other guests' slamming doors and loud TVs wouldn't awaken her. Then, when trips included my three step-children, the thought of cramming all six of us into one room, or booking two hotel rooms, held little appeal.

### Hooked on houses

On a trip to North Carolina's Outer Banks, we decided to try renting a house. We were concerned about committing to a week's vacation in a house that we had never seen. For all we knew, it could have been, well... a dump. To our relief, the house was clean, very comfortable and well-supplied. Best of all, we could see and hear the rolling ocean waves through the living room windows (just 16 feet from the porch at high tide). After a week of this, we were hooked on houses.

Since then, we've stayed at vacation homes on a mountainside overlooking a pastoral valley in the Smoky Mountains, on a 10-acre plot in Vermont, at a beach house in southern California, and in a beautifully furnished log cabin nestled in the woods in the Arkansas Ozark Mountains.

Weekly prices have ranged from \$500 to \$1,000, although our stays at the more expensive locales (Outer Banks and California) were off-season. In-season rates would cost double.

Benefits to renting a vacation house are many: room to spread out, you don't have to go to bed when the kids do, you can eat some meals at home, more privacy, a comfortable place to relax, and many have a washer and dryer, handy if you want to pack light for air travel or have a toddler who likes to play in the mud.

We found our first house through a real estate agency listed in the Insider's Guide to the Outer Banks book I bought while planning that trip, and our second house through a local real estate and rentals company in the Smokies. It can also be helpful to contact chambers of commerce or department or tourism offices.

Another useful source is the Internet. CyberRentals (www.cyberrentals.com) and International Vacation Homes (www.vacation.com) can link you up to a variety of houses and locations, rented through private owners or management companies. We booked three houses this way. Another place to check is the local newspaper for the area you're seeking.

### Plan in advance

Some things to consider when booking: Plan in advance. Some houses book up months, or even a year ahead. We've typically booked one to three months in advance and done well.

Ask specific questions about location. A wonderful view adds a lot to your vacation. A lesser view or location commands a lower rental price. Ask about amenities: hot tub, jacuzzi, washer/dryer, VCR, game room, ping-pong table, pool table, etc. Hot tubs are great, but when faced with bored kids on a rainy day, a ping-pong or pool table comes in handy.

Ask if pets and smoking are allowed. If you have allergies, or a sensitive nose, you'll want to know this as odors linger, despite the cleaning that takes place between guests.

Ask whether linens are supplied. Some houses include sheets and towels, some don't. You need to know if you must bring your own.

Please see CHAT ROOM, B2

I am very interested in attracting Bluebirds to my yard. Do you have a bluebird feeder pattern that I may have? Also, what do bluebirds like to eat?

Bluebirds enjoy raisins and sunflower seeds. Their favorite food is mealworms. You can buy mealworms at a bait shop or pet shop.

The Bluebird feeder pattern here is courtesy of Birds and Blooms magazine, August/September 1997.

Andrew Troyer has a book called "Bring Back the Bluebirds... Even On Your Hand!" This book has many helpful hints, plans for building a sparrow-resistant bluebird house and instructions on how to raise your own mealworms.

Send \$6.95 plus \$1.60 for shipping and handling to Andrew Troyer at the Birds Paradise, 20335 Morris Rd., Conneautville, PA 16806.

I keep hearing about a parasite called giardia. What is giardia and



how does a dog get this parasite? Giardia is the most common intestinal parasite afflicting humans. Spread through contact with infected feces or contaminated water, this organism is capable of being passed from deer to cattle to dogs, dogs to humans. It is estimated that giardia is present in anywhere from

5 to 30 percent of the dogs in North America.

The way it shows up in dogs is recurring diarrhea. Your dog may have diarrhea for a couple of days, then be okay for a few days, then have diarrhea again. Your dog's coat may be rough. Diagnosis may be difficult. The vet needs to find giardia cysts in your dog's stool sample. It may take more than one stool sample to find the parasite.

Water supplies in many parts of the country are contaminated with giardia cysts, which can survive inside their protective shells for up to a year.

The drug used to rid your dog of these parasites is called Flagyl. It is given in pill form, it has an unpleasant metallic taste. There are side effects from this drug the vet should tell you about. Giardia is now demonstrating resistance to the drug.

The University of Calgary, in Alberta, Canada, has developed a giardia vaccine.

It is still in government regulatory process now. It should be approved in the U.S. sometime this year. This information is from the AKC Gazette in October, 1997.

What oceans do sea otters live in and what do they eat?

Sea otters live among kelp forests close to the Pacific coast in waters 30 to 50 feet deep. The sea otter is the smallest marine mammal. They live almost solely in water, but will come ashore in severe storms. In water, it propels itself by alternate strokes of the broad hind feet, spending much time on its back, eating.

Sea otters can crack open the shells of abalone and sea urchins by floating on its back placing a flat rock on its chest and hitting the shells open against the rock. They also prey on squid and octopus. They have the densest fur of any creature on earth, with up to one million hairs per square inch.



### Build your own bluebird feeder

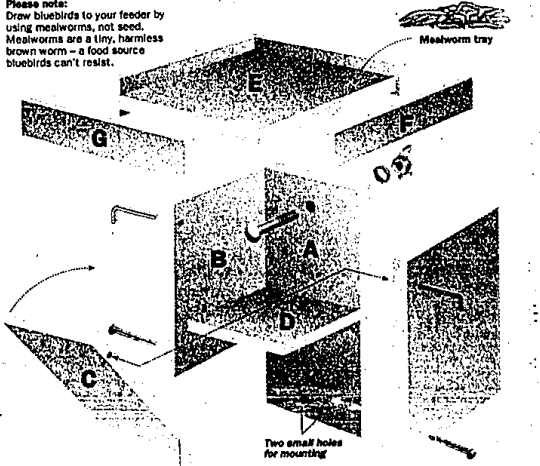
Bluebirds are inquisitive and will investigate any new bluebird house in their territory. Use their natural curiosity to attract them to this easy-to-make tray feeder that resembles a bluebird nest box. The inside compartment can be used for storage.

PART	NAME	SIZE (inches)	PIECES
A	Back	3/4 x 4 x 12"	1
B	Side	3/4 x 5-1/2 x 8"	2
C	Frbnt	3/4 x 4 x 6-3/4"	1
D	Floor	3/4 x 4 x 4"	1
E	Roof	3/4 x 7-1/2 x 7-1/2"	1
F	Side rail	5/16 x 2 x 7-1/2"	2
G	Side rail	5/16 x 2 x 8-1/8"	2

PART	SIZE (inches)	PIECES
Mounting bolt	1/4" diameter washer, nut	1 each
nails or screws	1-1/2"	3 dozen
Bent nail latch	1-1/2"	2

Please note: Draw bluebirds to your feeder by using mealworms, not seed. Mealworms are a tiny, harmless brown worm - a food source bluebirds can't resist.



Source: Birds & Blooms, August/September '97