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**GREAT
GIFT
IDEAS**



CELEBRATING
OUR 20th YEAR!

HOLIDAY
STRESS
BUSTERS
FOR NEW
PARENTS

CHAT ROOM:
'MYTHBUSTER' MOM
& HER NEW EXPERIMENT



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**+ HOLIDAY EVENTS
& OUTINGS**

Kari Byron: The Art of Science

Whether the team is testing a car's resistance to jet-propelled, tornado-force winds or figuring out how far a human sneeze propels snot, Discovery's *MythBusters* is one of those shows that piques – and retains – our entire family's interest (even when Grandpa comes to visit). And I guess we aren't alone.

"We realized that families were watching together and started hearing from viewers that *MythBusters* was inspiring kids to be interested in science," says co-host Kari Byron. "It wasn't our original intent, but an amazing side effect!"

While some of the *MythBusters* experiments aren't exactly classified as kiddie fare (take the upcoming test of the *Lethal Weapon 2* stunt where a surf board flies off a car and decapitates someone, for example), the Science Channel's new *Head Rush* fits the bill. "By middle school, kids tend to either continue liking science or abandon it," says Byron. "We figured out a way to bring that *MythBusters* focus to them." And the way they target middle schoolers is, counter-intuitively, to *not* make the show for them. "Talk down in any way you'll lose them!" says Byron.

The mother of 15-month-old Stella Ruby feels a greater responsibility as host of this commercial-free contribution to the White House's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math) initiative. "When girls see a woman interested in science, when they see someone like them, it makes them feel it's OK," she says. "You don't have to be a nerdy scientist, just a regular girl."

What were you like as a kid? Were you always tinkering?

I've always been a "Curious George" and got into trouble for things like that. At age 7, I made skulls out of Cheerios boxes – I loved bones and was just amazed that they were under your skin. When I was in fifth grade, I had a "rocket ship" refrigerator box that I lived in for a week. But my current job is not something I planned – just an amazing thing that became. I was an artist and then wanted to get into special effects. I got an internship at [visual

effects house] M5 just as *MythBusters* started, then I became part of all these crazy experiments. All of us [on *MythBusters*] love what we do. We're really excited about our experiments and bringing people on the ride with us.

How can parents inspire their kids to love science?

Explore science with your kids. Don't push it on them, just be involved. They're looking up to you as their role model, so if you're interested, your kids will be, too. If you push, then they sometimes don't want to do it. I often say it's like "broccoli in cheese sauce" or "spinach in spaghetti sauce." (I really use those on my husband, too!) If you make science fun, they'll learn in spite of themselves.

What has the response to *Head Rush* been so far?

People seem to really like it. It's fun to have parents coming up you, saying, "Hey, you taught us how to stop a grease fire – we had no idea" (Answer: Air feeds fire, so cover it with a lid. Putting water on a grease fire is dangerous!)

What are some of your favorite experiments?

It's always the smaller stuff that gets me, like tornado in a bottle. You take a tubular bottle and twirl the liquid to create a whirlpool, then it empties twice as fast versus just pouring it out without twirling. The air is going in at the same time that the water is coming out. It's interesting *and* pretty. Or balloon on bed of nails – it doesn't pop because the surface area is spread out over all the little points. And there's a friction experiment with two pencils, a shoelace and a weight ... but that one's tough to describe without showing you! Check out our very interactive *Head Rush* website. ♦

Head Rush airs on the Science Channel, Mon. through Fri. from 4-5 p.m. and Saturdays from 7-9 a.m. Find videos, "DIY" experiments and games at: <http://headrush.discovery.com/>.

Chat Room columnist Vivien Santana Hughes is a former *L.A. Parent* editor and the mother of three – two sons in college and (surprise!) a 5-year-old daughter. She lives with her patient husband in La Cañada Flintridge.

Kari Byron hosts Science Channel's new *Head Rush*, a fast-paced block of science, tech, math and space experiments, games and quizzes. Says Byron, "We're curious people using science as a tool. Pretty darn fun!"

