

# ETCETERA

## *Pinning tails just*



STAFF PHOTO/ROB ALARY

Parents go to great extremes to make birthday parties different, including hiring directors and costume designers or inviting large reptiles into their homes.



## *doesn't cut it, mom!*

BY JENNIFER BROWN  
Staff Writer

**W**ord up, mom, pin the tail on the donkey is passé and musical chairs are simply pedestrian. Birthday parties are big business these days as busy families seek to take the chaos and high-pitch roar of pre-pubescent excitement outside the home, in search of the best party venue in town. Gone are the days of three-layer Duncan Hines cakes and home party games. From

an early age, kids these days know the drill of the "event party." At Rainbow Playland in Richmond Hill, kids run, jump and play in the massive play structure of balls and climbing ropes. But with a flick of the light switch, they know it's time to move on to the lunch room for pizza and cake. Then it's another round of play before time is up — the gifts may not even have been opened yet, but parents have arrived to pick up their kids and staff are preparing for the next shift of party-goers. Unionville mother of three Kathy Smythe

knows the exercise all too well. "We've done Mad Science, Colour It Wild where they make their own pottery, bowling parties, usually something involving an event," said Smythe, whose three children — two boys and daughter Sarah, range in age from 5 to 10-1/2. "This weekend, my daughter is going to a chocolate factory party. You learn about a lot of them through word of mouth and local publications," said Smythe. Like many busy parents, she loves the idea of taking a group of kids "off site" — away from the confines of the family home

to some place where everything is taken care of, from snacks to loot bags. "It's nice to have somebody else entertain your kids," said Smythe, who acknowledges it can be a challenge to keep coming up with a different fun-filled theme for each birthday. "There are lots of different party places available but the focus is really on the children having fun." But depending on the venue and number of children, getting someone else to host

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