

Over The Top

Posted on Nov 11, Posted by [Webmaster](#) Category [Telling Tales](#)

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Not long ago it was a laid back acknowledgement of one's entry into this world with close family. A birthday party has now turned into weeks (or months) of planning, an endless guest list and goodie bags that put the Oscar Swag Bag to shame. The birthday party our generation grew accustomed has gone the way of beanies babies. And if you didn't already know, the birth "day" is no longer a one day event. This "day" can stretch into a weeklong celebration- turning a 5 year olds simple shindig into something that rivals Mardi Gras.

Like many mothers I balked at some of the wild displays of "Over the Top" birthday parties we attended or heard about. In an effort to show my defiance I skipped over Martha Stewart Living-Children Birthday Party Edition in favor of 101 Ways to Lose Weight without diet or exercise. I promised the only money I would spend on a birthday for my children would be on a

savings bond. Then I met my competition, i.e. The Other Mothers. The Other Mothers-if you didn't already know-are the moms that set the bar for everything child related. While I've always loathed these perky perfectionists with their professional planners, engraved invites and multi tiered cakes, I secretly desired a spot on their approval list.

A few years ago after I spent a Kings Ransom (and some mental clarity) on my oldest child's birthday party the tides magically shifted. On our way home from the celebration my dear sweet little boy turned to me and said, "So, what did you and daddy get me for my birthday?" Before I could say, "You little ingrate! Do you know what this party cost?" I snapped out of my butter cream infused stupor and back into reality- where a child's birthday party needs a professional planner like my husband needs a new power tool. We explained that his party was the present. He looked at us with those big, blue eyes and -with all the wisdom his 7 years could gather- said, "I'd rather have the present."

It's time for parents to wake up! Before paying the "professionals" at Libby Lu hundreds of dollars to transform your 6 year old and all her friends into pint size prostitutes for her birthday, letting the staff at Build-A-Bear talk you into stuffing the Inaugural "Arbor Day" bear or reserving a limousine to haul your 10 year old and 20 or 30 of their closest friends downtown it may be time to reevaluate... yourself. This overindulgence is having a rippling effect on our kids. They don't just expect food, clothing and shelter anymore. They now expect a birthday party with a budget that rivals a small wedding.

Because I've changed my mind about how we celebrate my kid's birthdays everything is better. When it rolls around my palms don't sweat and I almost never feel the onset of a migraine. Instead I order a cake, we only invite close friends and forgo the goody bags. And someday when my children have children of their own they can regale them with stories of how hard it was to have just two birthday parties instead of the eight their children request. To be clear, just because I've opted to downscale our parties doesn't mean we won't happily participate in our friend's "Over the Top" parties.

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Telling Tales

Angel Kane and Becky Andrews live in Wilson County. This is their story (or tale) about their life, families and times that they share. Besides their weekly column Telling Tales Angel and

Becky Co Founded Wilson Living Magazine. The idea of developing a magazine for Wilson County first came to Becky and Angel one afternoon while they sat on her back porch watching their children play in the backyard.

They were discussing the outpouring of emails, calls and responses to their column “Telling Tales” and wanted to find a way to capture that community spirit. People were stopping them wherever they went to share their own “tales.” They suddenly realized everyone has a story to tell and many of these stories were amazing. And in that moment, Wilson Living Magazine came to life. Be sure to check out Wilson Living Magazine at www.wilsonlivingmagazine.com

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