

# TODAY'S family

October 2025

Cuyahoga

**FREE**  
Movie Tickets  
(NOT A CONTEST!)  
See page 7 for info

## Trick or Treat!

The story behind  
Halloween and its  
sweet traditions

## Are you a people-pleaser?

Tips to rebuild your identity  
and make real connections

## Plus

Book Club  
Fun Events  
Patterson Fun Fest  
Humor Essay

## Halloween Happenings

## Magic

Why learning magic can  
spark creativity, confidence,  
and connection




**Doctor Bedtime's SLEEP MAGIC:  
Superpowers for Super-Sleepers**

By Dr. Roger Washington, MD  
and Scarlet Nickho

Follow the sleep journey of a diverse, multicultural cast of characters, including babies, toddlers, young children, tweens, and teens. Throughout the story, children will learn about the 'wonders and magic' of sleep, including how it helps them grow, heal, energize, and learn. Ages 1–10 years.



**Robot's First Snow**

Written by Billy Sharff  
Illustrated by Hannah Abbo

Meet Robot: he spends all day and night stacking and sorting at the factory. He wishes the other bots could go and play but all they do is work, work, work... But one day, Robot notices something strange falling outside. His sensors detect SNOW!

Robot's First Snow is a beautifully illustrated picture book that will delight young readers as they follow Robot's adventurous journey to experience the magic of winter, making new friends along the way. Available October 7, 2025. Ages 4–8.



**Cleveland Orchestra 2025  
Halloween Spooktacular**

The Cleveland Orchestra is thrilled to announce its 2025–26 Family Concert Series and Music Explorers Series at Severance Music Center.

Family Concerts, aimed at children ages 7–12, offer performances that blend education and entertainment in the beautiful Mandel Concert Hall.

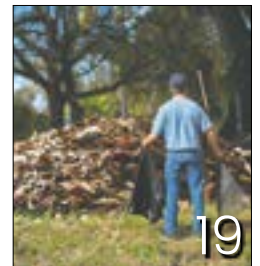
Kicking off the season is the Halloween Spooktacular on Sunday, October 19, 2025. This beloved annual event offers a spooky, family-friendly twist on classical music, giving families the chance to enjoy an afternoon of thrilling music and whimsical fun. The concert encourages kids to wear their Halloween best and join

the orchestra for an afternoon filled with musical treats and playful tricks. Preconcert activities begin an hour before the performance, ensuring an immersive experience for attendees. There are two performances. The first performance at 1 p.m. is sensory friendly with a limited audience size, and the second performance begins at 4 p.m.

For tickets, please visit [www.clevelandorchestra.com](http://www.clevelandorchestra.com) or call the Severance Music Center ticket office at 216-231-1111. The ticket office is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m.–6 p.m.

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# ABRACADABRA!

Why learning magic can spark creativity, confidence, and connection

By Dan Miller

When I was growing up, Saturday mornings weren't just about cartoons — they were about commercials that promised 25 amazing tricks in one box. Marshall Brodein's smiling face convinced thousands of kids (myself included) that we could amaze our friends with a coin vanish or card trick. And if you were really hooked, prime-time magic specials with stars like Doug Henning and David Copperfield made the art feel larger than life. Later came David Blaine's street magic and Penn & Teller's edgy comedy twists, each inspiring a new wave of kids to pick up a deck of cards.

Fast-forward to today: the national spotlight on magic has dimmed. Big network specials are rare, and there aren't many household names drawing kids in by the millions. Instead, magic lives online in YouTube tutorials, TikTok tricks, and Netflix series. The stage may have changed, but the wonder is still there — waiting for kids to discover it in a new way.

### Why magic still works

Magic has a timeless appeal. It's portable, it fits in a pocket, and with a little practice it can create a gasp of delight from friends. For kids, it's more than entertainment — it's a confidence booster. Performing a trick teaches storytelling, public speaking, and quick thinking. And in a world where everything is on-demand, there's something refreshing about a skill that takes patience and practice.

Even better, magic is social. Instead of sitting alone with a device, kids get to share their tricks with family, classmates, and friends. That sense of connection is something children — and parents — are craving more than ever.

### Where to learn today

While magic shops are rare, getting started has never been easier. Affordable starter kits are sold online on Amazon, usually including trick cards, vanishing coins, and sometimes even a wand (cape optional!).

The internet has also become the new "Saturday morning magic show." World-renowned magician Rick Smith Jr. recommends starting with online tutorials and beginner kits. His YouTube channel @RickSmithJr features step-by-step lessons, and creators like @SeanDoesMagic make learning approachable and fun. For higher-quality gear, PenguinMagic.com is one of the most trusted resources, offering everything from simple tricks to professional-grade illusions. Libraries are another hidden gem, often stocked with beginner books filled with clear illustrations and easy-to-follow instructions.

Parents who want more structure can even enroll their kids in virtual classes to learn directly from working magicians — a perfect blend of modern tech and old-fashioned showmanship.

### Tricks to try first

The best part of magic is that kids don't need a stage, a top hat, or even much equipment. A few classics they can learn in an afternoon include:

**Disappearing coin** – Make a coin vanish under a handkerchief.

**Pick a card** – The classic "force" trick that never gets old.

**Rubber band escape** – A simple illusion that always gets a laugh.

Starter kits and household items like coins or rubber bands are more than enough to launch a child's magical journey. The real magic comes when kids make the tricks their own.

### Bringing back the wonder

Magic won't replace video games or cell phones, but it can add balance. It gives kids something tangible, creative, and social to carry with them — whether it's a quick trick at the lunch table or a mini show after dinner.

Maybe it's time to dust off those old routines or surprise your kids with a starter kit. Because in the end, the real magic isn't the disappearing coin — it's the look on a child's face



The floating pencil is an easy trick that costs nothing. A quick online search will show you how it's done.

when they realize they can be the one to create wonder.

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# halloween happenings

## PUMPKINS & PIRANHAS at Greater Cleveland Aquarium



Get ready to explore Lake “Eerie” and the deep “BOO” sea at the Greater Cleveland Aquarium’s Pumpkins & Piranhas. This not-too-spooky experience the whole family can enjoy runs from 6–8 pm on October 17, 18, 24 and 25 with a special sensory-friendly Sunday evening on October 19.

Eventgoers can dive into the Halloween spirit with a variety of festive activities, including a four-page activity book, themed décor and music, underwater jack-o'-lanterns, scuba diver interactions and encounters with the friendly landshark mascot, Finn. Kids can take part in a make-and-take pumpkin craft, get temporary tattoos and collect a treat bag.

“There’s no age limit on being impressed by a red-bellied piranha’s shiny scales, admiring the camouflage capabilities of a mossy frog or wanting to snap a photo of a potbelly seahorse wrapped around a skeletal hand,” says GM Stephanie White, noting that because it is an event protected from the elements, she’s seen multi-generational groups turn up in elaborate and creatively coordinated attire ranging from a band of superheroes to a deep-sea menagerie. Adults and children are invit-

ed to come costumed for this after-hours event as long as their attire is family-friendly and does not obstruct their field of vision.

A KultureCity Sensory Inclusive™ certified venue, on October 19, Greater Cleveland Aquarium is offering a Pumpkins & Piranhas sensory-friendly Sunday evening where noise is limited, lighting softened and activities adjusted to provide a comfortable environment for those who could benefit from a reduction in external stimuli.

Capacity is limited. Advance registration is strongly suggested to ensure entry and enough take-home treat bags for all costumed kiddos. Admission is \$15 for adults and children, \$5 children and free for guests younger than 2.

Visit [greaterclevelandaquarium.com](http://greaterclevelandaquarium.com) for details and tickets.



## BOO AT THE ZOO

Boo at the Zoo, the family-friendly after-hours Halloween celebration, begins October 2 and will be held Thursdays through Sundays from 5–9 p.m. through October 26.

Cleveland Metroparks Zoo will be transformed after dark, with immersive Halloween displays and photo opportunities. Guests can enjoy trick-or-treating at a dozen candy stations, meet-and-greets with costumed characters, dance the Monster Mash Dance Party and enjoy free rides on the Boomerang train. The first 1,000 guests each night receive a complimentary trick-or-treat bag.

Boo at the Zoo tickets are on sale now at [FutureForWildlife.org/Boo](http://FutureForWildlife.org/Boo). Tickets are \$21 or a four-pack is \$76. Children under two enter free.



## SKELETON GROVE at Holden Arboretum

Now through November 2

This fall, the forest comes alive in the most unexpected way. Wander through Skeleton Grove at the Holden Arboretum in Kirtland, where towering, artist-designed skeletons strike playful poses among vibrant fall foliage.

A group of twelve-foot skeletons has found a new home in the main display garden, creeping towards the Corning Visitor Center. The horticulture team insists they’re friendly, but you’ll have to find out for yourself. Each skeleton has its own style and personality. Come find your spooky best friend! Included with admission. Tickets available now at [holdenfg.org](http://holdenfg.org).



## HALLOWEEN DRIVE-THRU Lake Metroparks Farmpark

Travel Farmpark’s trails and roadways after dark in the comfort of your own vehicle and experience many playfully frightful sites throughout the park—some that you have come to love and some new surprises. Tickets are sold online only at [lakemetroparks.com](http://lakemetroparks.com).

Event dates are October 10–12, 17–19, 24–26 • 6:30–8:30 p.m. each evening. The event runs rain, snow or shine!

Lake Metroparks Farmpark is located at 8800 Euclid Chardon Rd. (Rt. 6) in Kirtland.



# TRICK OR TREAT

## The sweet story behind Halloween traditions

Every October, kids across the country slip into costumes, grab their buckets, and head out to collect piles of candy. But have you ever wondered how this tradition started? The history of Halloween and trick-or-treating is a colorful mix of ancient customs, old-world superstitions, and modern-day marketing.

### Ancient roots

Halloween's story begins more than 2,000 years ago with the Celtic festival of Samhain (pronounced sow-in). Celebrated at the end of the harvest season, Samhain marked the start of winter and was believed to be a time when the boundary between the living and the dead was thinnest. People lit bonfires, wore disguises to ward off wandering spirits, and left out offerings of food to keep the ghosts happy.

When Christianity spread through Europe, many pagan traditions were blended into church celebrations. November 1 became All Saints' Day (or All Hallows), and the night before was known as All Hallows' Eve—which eventually became Halloween.

### Costumes and mischief

By the Middle Ages, people in Ireland, Scotland, and parts of England kept alive the practice of dressing up and going door-to-door. Instead of candy, children and poor adults performed songs, recited prayers, or told jokes in exchange for food or money. This was called "souling" or "guising." Mischief was also part of the fun—youngsters would play pranks, often blamed on mischievous spirits roaming about.

### Crossing the Atlantic

When Irish and Scottish immigrants came to America in the

1800s, they brought these customs with them. At first, Halloween in the U.S. looked more like a rowdy community party, complete with games, pranks, and ghost stories. Costumes grew more popular by the late 19th century, but they were often handmade and inspired by spooky folklore—think sheet ghosts, witches, and scarecrows.

### The birth of trick-or-treating

The phrase "trick or treat" didn't appear until the 1920s and 1930s. At the time, Halloween mischief was getting out of hand—broken windows, vandalism, and noisy antics were a real problem in many towns. Communities began promoting a friendlier tradition: instead of causing trouble, kids were encouraged to go door-to-door in costume and receive candy as a reward.

By the 1950s, with the postwar baby boom in full swing, trick-or-treating became a family-centered activity across America. Candy companies quickly jumped in, launching Halloween-themed packaging and advertisements. The rest is sweet history—today, Americans spend billions of dollars each year on costumes, decorations, and, of course, candy.

### Fun facts to share with your kids

- The top-selling Halloween candies in the U.S. are Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, M&M's, and Skittles.
- Orange and black became Halloween's signature colors because orange represents harvest and black symbolizes the "dark side" of the season.
- The world record for the largest pumpkin ever grown weighed over 2,700 pounds!

### Bringing back the spirit

While costumes and candy get most of the attention, Halloween has always been about community and creativity. From carving pumpkins together to hosting neighborhood parades or trading candy at the kitchen table, these traditions connect us to centuries of history—reminding us that sometimes the sweetest moments are the ones we share.

~Article by Dan Miller

### Halloween by the Numbers

- **\$12.2 billion** – Estimated U.S. spending on Halloween in 2024
- **\$3.6 billion** – Amount spent just on candy
- **160 million** – Number of Americans who participate in Halloween
- **41 million** – Estimated trick-or-treaters (ages 5–14) hitting the streets
- **\$35.04** – Average household candy spend
- **2,749 pounds** – Weight of the world's largest pumpkin (2023 record!)



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# Memories of Halloweens past

Halloween costumes have come a long way since I was a kid. These days, costumes hit the shelves almost as soon as the back-to-school displays go up, and seasonal pop-up shops make it easy to find just about anything in any size. But back then, options were far more limited. Costumes were usually homemade—a creative mix inspired by something from TV or a favorite book, pieced together from whatever we could find around the house. We roamed the neighborhood as cowboys, Indians, gypsies, or pirates, pillowcases in hand to haul home our loot.

That all changed the year my younger siblings received the first store-bought costumes in our family. Mom decided her “Irish twins” would be superheroes. They were thrilled, having watched Superman cartoons and Linda Carter’s Wonder Woman on TV. Mom presented the costumes in two rectangular boxes, each with a clear plastic window. Behind the windows peered brightly colored faces with hollow eyes and perfectly sculpted hair, frozen in



plastic. Inside lay neatly folded vinyl suits, complete with bold superhero insignias. The shiny packaging and vivid colors promised a night of excitement.

The reality, however, was less glamorous. Wrestling squirming kids into vinyl suits was no easy task, especially once potty breaks were thrown into the mix. The masks were worse—tiny eyeholes, a pinhole for breathing, and a flimsy rubber band stapled at the sides to hold them in place. By the time both kids were dressed, one was already sweaty and miserable while the oth-

er was itching to escape. No surprise there are no photos from that year. In the end, the adventure lasted only a short while before they abandoned trick-or-treating altogether, happily handing out candy at home while sneaking plenty for themselves.

Costumes today are a different world. When my daughters both chose to be superheroes, we found Batman and Captain America masks at the very first store. They looked just like the movie versions, and the outfits were made of breathable fabric—comfortable enough for parades, school parties, and a full night of trick-or-treating. Nothing like the stiff plastic and vinyl from years ago.

It makes me wonder how Halloween will look when my kids have kids of their own. Whatever the changes, I hope the magic remains—the thrill of choosing the perfect costume and the joy of becoming, for just one night, a hero, a villain, or anything the imagination dares to dream.

~Article by Stacy Turner



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## Beck Center For The Arts 2025-2026 Youth Theater Season

Beck Center for the Arts, home to one of the oldest continuously operating youth theater programs in the country, is thrilled to announce its 2025–2026 Youth Theater Season — a lineup full of heart, humor, mystery, magic, and music. From off-the-wall comedy and nostalgic storytelling to fantastical journeys and poignant musical theater, this season offers something for every family member to enjoy — and may even win some bingo prizes along the way.

The 2025–2026 season opens with “Bringing Down the House,” a show within a show directed by Beck’s own Russel Stich. This hysterical production will quite literally bring down the house.

The second production, “Holy Mother of Bingo,” directed by Beck Center alumnus and instructor Kierstan Conway, features preteen students in a murder mystery that will have you guessing — all while having a blast playing live bingo games.

The season continues with the beautiful story of found families and



fantasy in Roald Dahl’s “James and the Giant Peach.”

Concluding the season, teens will tackle a story of love, loss, and coming of age with “Alice by Heart.”

Ticket prices are \$15 for adults/seniors and \$13 for children/students (ages 18 & under). Please purchase tickets at [beckcenter.org](http://beckcenter.org), call 216-521-2540, or simply stop by Beck Center customer service in person.

Find the entire season lineup at [beckcenter.org/youth-theater](http://beckcenter.org/youth-theater). Beck Center for the Arts is located at 17801 Detroit Ave. in Lakewood.

# Dear Readers

Do you know someone who deserves a little spotlight?

If so, let us know about them and we will thank you with

## FOUR FREE MOVIE TICKETS!

We're always looking to share inspiring stories—whether it's a young entrepreneur chasing a dream, a child who's pushed through challenges, a teacher making a lasting difference, or just a feel-good story. If you have a story idea, we'd love to hear from you!

Got someone in mind? Just send us a quick email about who you think deserves a little recognition. If your idea is a fit, we will have one of our writers reach out to do an official article.

And as "thank you" we will send you four tickets to Atlas Cinemas along with some vouchers for concessions! Please note: if more than one person suggests the same idea, the tickets will go to whoever sent it in first.)

SCAN FOR EMAIL



## Patterson Family Fun Fest runs through November 2

When it comes to nature at its best, the beautiful days of autumn speak to our senses. Crisp fresh air and colorful scenes with leaves ablaze wherever you turn welcome you to celebrate the climax of the growing season at Patterson Fruit Farm. Harvest is in full gear with an abundance of apples leading the way. Stop by the farm market to shop and to enjoy the scenes overlooking Lake Erie on Caves Road or bring the family to the Family Fun Fest on the Mulberry Road farm to play for a while — both in Chesterland.

While the market is open year round, Patterson's adds their Family Fun Fest to the action September 13 through November 2, 2025. This area costs: \$8 per person weekdays (10

am–6 pm) for children and adults; \$12 per person Saturday–Sunday (10 am–5 pm). Seniors are \$7 every day. Children 2 and under are free every day. Note: NEOEA Day is Friday October, 10, 2025. While our educators are hard at work away from the classroom, this is a perfect day to bring the kids out.

This gives families of children preschool through elementary ages a place to enjoy hiking, sliding, playing in straw, climbing and "driving" tractors, viewing the world from the top of their tree house, disappearing in the silo and, in general, enjoying the out-of-doors filled with fun. No reservations needed.

For more info, call 440-729-1964 or visit [pattersonfarm.com](http://pattersonfarm.com).



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Sensory Friendly Night - October 19

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216.862.8803 | [greaterclevelandaquarium.com](http://greaterclevelandaquarium.com)  
Advance tickets required.

# Why people-pleasing isn't kind (and what real connection looks like)

By Rebecca Fellenbaum

For years, I was proud of being one step ahead of everyone's needs. I couldn't stand it if people were mad at me. If a friend gave me the cold shoulder, I would turn into a puppy dog following them around, trying to make it right by asking what I did and how I could fix it.

It was exhausting, unsustainable, and controlling.

My people-pleaser was running the show. This part of me internalized the false belief that if I kept others happy, I'd stay safe.

If you relate, you're not broken and you're not alone. When we bring our conscious, grounded self online, we can move out of people-pleasing and into real connection.

## What is people pleasing?

People pleasing is a type of fawning, a nervous system response. It says: "If I keep everyone else happy, calm, and satisfied, I'll be okay." As people-pleasers, we sacrifice our own needs, preferences, and boundaries. We don't know where we end and others begin. And over time, we stop recognizing ourselves. It's also not honest or nice to be on the receiving end of this treatment.

## Signs you might be a people-pleaser

- You feel responsible for others' emotions
- You feel anxious if someone is upset with you
- You feel guilty doing things for yourself
- You often feel resentful or overextended.

People-pleasing is a mask we wear to feel safe, accepted, and loved. It keeps us stuck, disconnected, and exhausted.

## Beginning to shift

If you're ready to let go of people-pleasing, here are five powerful steps to move towards healthy connection:

### 1. Spot it

Awareness is key. Start noticing when you go into people-pleasing mode. Do you feel pressure to say yes? Do you feel tension in your chest or a sinking feeling in your gut when slipping into this role? Our bodies are a great barometer revealing when this part takes over.



Ask yourself: Does this make me feel expanded and open or tight and closed?

### 2. Get curious

The people-pleaser part of you likely came online when you were young and learned that being helpful, good, or agreeable helped you fit in. That part is not bad, but you're an adult now. Your wise, grounded self can start to take the lead.

Ask yourself: What does this part want me to know?

### 3. Rebuild your identity

When you spend years prioritizing everyone else, you lose track of what you want or need.

Start by asking yourself:

- What do I like to do just for me?
- What are my values and interests?
- What makes me feel most like myself?

These small choices: coffee or tea, music or quiet, alone time or company, are powerful acts of self-connection. When we get to know ourselves, we build self-trust.

### 4. Practice boundaries

Boundaries protect your time, energy, and emotional well-being. They teach others what we're okay with. They are ways of saying, "This is what I can offer right now" or "This is what I need."

Boundaries might sound like:

- "I can't make that commitment right now."

- "No, thanks."

- Or they may not be spoken. You can leave the party early, take a break from a group chat, or turn off your phone for the evening.

Boundaries don't have to be loud to be firm.

Upholding boundaries is another way of building self-trust.

### 5. Anchor new truths

If our people-pleaser thought that we needed to abandon ourselves to stay safe, our new truth could be, "I am enough." If we devote all our time and attention to others and leave ourselves with the scraps, our new truth is, "I matter."

Look in the mirror and speak your new truth out loud. Stomp your feet to ground it in. We need to shift our beliefs to loosen the grip these parts hold.

## What people pleasing is not

The opposite of people-pleasing isn't selfishness. It's not about pushing people away or doing whatever you want without regard for others.

The opposite of people pleasing is genuine kindness and standing in our truth to connect with others from our hearts.

When you're not trying to manage everyone else's emotions, your generosity becomes authentic. You are able to be yourself, and that builds the kind of connections we're all deeply craving.


## You are worthy as you are

Sometimes, people-pleasing feels easier because it allows you to avoid going inward. Spending all of your time focused externally helps you not face your sadness, anger, or fear. If that's the case, you deserve support.

You're allowed to have needs and express them. You're allowed to change your mind, rest, speak up, and have opinions and preferences.

You don't need to earn your place in the world, or in your family, by keeping everyone else happy. Now that that's off your plate, relax and know that you are already enough.

*Rebecca Fellenbaum is a certified life coach, writer, and Cleveland area mom who helps parents enjoy this time in their lives. You can find her at [rebeccafellenbaum.com](http://rebeccafellenbaum.com).*




## A NEW TODAY'S FAMILY ADVICE COLUMN!

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### HAUNTED HALLOWEEN

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3–4.5 years / 1 hour

**Tumbling Twisters**  
4–5.5 years / 1.25 hours

**SuperSonic Twisters**  
5–6.11 years

#### FLIPS FOR GIRLS

7–10 years old

#### FLIP AND SALUTE

### FOR TEENS & BETWEENES

10–17 years old

### GYM SKILLS FOR BOYS

8–14 years old

### COMPETITIVE TEAM

Call for details!

### OPEN GYM

Follows session calendar dates.  
\$10 per participant.

#### YOUTH

Sundays / Call for times.

#### ADULT

Thursday 7:45–9:00 pm



### Birthday Parties



Jump Start is a great place to celebrate that special occasion! Our coaches will tailor the party activities to the age of the birthday child. All of the guests are sure to enjoy our gymnastic games and equipment, including our 50 feet of trampoline and in-ground foam pit! Party guests will enjoy organized and loosely-structured instruction on the gymnastic equipment.

**An hour of gym time and a half-hour of celebration time**  
\$195 for 10 children & \$20 for each additional child. JSG provides white paper plates, forks, tablecloths, napkins, and clean-up.

# Jump Start Gymnastics

**23700 Mercantile Road, Beachwood**

Rear of National Biological Building

**(216) 896-0295**

**Website: [jsgymnastics.com](http://jsgymnastics.com)**

**Email: [jsgymnastics@jsgymnastics.com](mailto:jsgymnastics@jsgymnastics.com)**

# Raise lifelong readers

## Start building a love of books from baby's first story

Every parent dreams of seeing their child curled up with a favorite book, fully immersed in a story they love. But how do we inspire a lifelong love of reading at every age?

Here's how you can inspire independent reading habits from babyhood through the kindergarten years—nurturing not just literacy skills, but a true joy of reading.

### Infants & Babies: Lay the Foundation

#### 1. Start reading aloud from day one

Reading to your baby builds brain connections, introduces the rhythm of language, and creates powerful emotional bonds. Even newborns benefit from hearing your voice in story form. Repetition and simple sentences help babies anticipate and engage. Make it part of your bedtime routine—it's a calming, connected way to end the day.

**Tip:** Choose durable board books or lift-the-flap stories like Peek-a-Flap titles that invite your child to touch, interact, and explore while you read aloud.

#### 2. Create a book-positive environment

Make books part of your child's daily surroundings. Set up baskets of books in the nursery, living room, and anywhere your child plays. Familiarity builds comfort and curiosity—even before they can turn pages.

**Tip:** Consider options that are washable, rip-proof, and baby-safe for early "book handling" behaviors.

### Toddlers: Encourage Interaction & Imitation

#### 3. Make reading interactive and fun

Toddlers are movers, shakers, and doers. They love to explore with their hands and voices—stories that encourage finding hidden objects or making animal sounds are big hits at this age! Books should invite little ones to play and participate—not just sit and listen. Participation lays the groundwork for comprehension and confidence.

**Tip:** Look for books with textures, flaps, questions, sounds and songs, or even familiar characters like PAW Patrol or Daniel Tiger.

#### 4. Model reading as a joy, not a chore

Your toddler watches everything you do—so show them that reading is something you enjoy, too. Let them see you reading. Talk about what you like to read and why. The more routine and joyful reading seems, the more likely your little one will want to join in.

**Tip:** Set aside 10 minutes for "read alone together" time—each of you with your own books, side by side. This creates a moment of quiet connection and helps build independent habits.

#### 5. Follow your child's interests (and let them take the lead)

At this stage, independence begins to blossom. Let your child gravitate toward books they love—whether it's trucks, bugs, princesses, or the color yellow. Offering choice makes them feel empowered and invested in their reading journey.

**Tip:** Make a weekly or monthly trip to the local library part of your routine. Give your child time to browse and pick their own books.

### Preschoolers: Build Independence with Support

#### 6. Let them listen first:

##### Use audiobooks to bridge the gap

For children on the verge of independent reading, audiobooks are a fantastic bridge. They promote comprehension, vocabulary, and storytelling flow, all while giving kids the feeling of "reading" by themselves.

**Tip:** Play an audiobook of a favorite picture book and let your child follow along with the physical copy. It supports word recognition and helps them internalize sentence rhythm and structure.

#### 7. Introduce tools that support independent exploration

As your preschooler develops more autonomy, look for ways to let them enjoy stories on their own—even if they're not reading yet. This helps children transition from being read to—to reading their own way.



Luna StoryTime Projector  
Photo credit: Cottage Door Press

**Tip:** Consider interactive storytelling devices like Luna StoryTime Projector that magically projects stories on walls and ceilings with expressive narration, beautiful illustrations and sing-along songs.

### Kindergarten-Ready: Make Reading an Experience

#### 8. Set up a designated reading zone

Creating a relaxing screen-free space for reading helps your child focus, unwind, tune out distractions and get lost in all the great stories. This spot becomes part of their daily reading ritual and routine. Avoid using the same spot where they do their homework, as reading should feel like an adventure, not a chore.

**Tip:** Make it special, cozy and fun! Create an inviting nook—a bean bag in the corner, a comfy chair, a pile of pillows or even a blanket fort. Add soft lighting and let your child personalize the space so it feels like their own special world.

The love of reading is one of the greatest gifts we can give our children. It fuels imagination, builds empathy, and sets the foundation for academic and personal success. With the right tools, a nurturing environment, and a little creativity, we can help our children discover that reading is not just something they have to do—it's something they want to do. And it all starts with a story.

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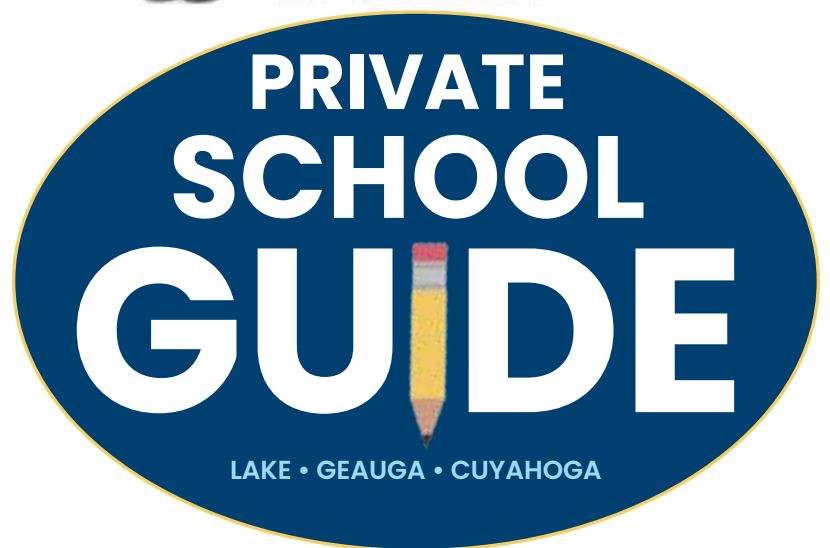


SAINT JOAN OF ARC  
CATHOLIC SCHOOL

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To schedule a tour, visit [stjoanofarc.org](http://stjoanofarc.org)**

Saint Joan of Arc is a Catholic, Parish school with a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence designation. | Kindergarten thru Grade 8



Parents considering private school for their children have an overwhelming number of choices. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, there are over 34,500 private schools in the USA. Some major metropolitan areas have well over 1,000! These schools belong to dozens of different associations, religious and nonreligious. Each association has its own feel or flavor, and the schools within them do, too.

**Read on for tips on selecting a school for your child and for a listing of participating schools.**



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HIGH SCHOOL  
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VIKING  
SPIRIT!**

**JOIN US AT OUR FALL  
OPEN HOUSE:**

**Sunday, October 12  
12-2 PM**

# Finding the right private school for your family

**Y**ou want a top-notch education for your children and choosing the perfect school is probably one of the biggest decisions you'll ever make. Depending on your location, you may find your public schools offer everything you want. If not, you'll need to embark on a search for the right private school.

In general, private schools exist to provide smaller class sizes with greater individual attention to each student and a safe, focused environment free of discipline problems. They tend to set a higher bar than public schools in academics, and build a culture of shared values. They offer a strong sense of community and may tailor lessons to the needs of the student.

In reality, each private school is a world unto itself. It may or may not hold accreditation with a national education association, or hire credentialed teachers. It may have many extracurricular offerings or just a few. It may charge a very large tuition plus additional fees, or may be more affordable, offering scholarships and sliding scales. It may have a long history in your community or be a brand new charter school.

To find the right private school, you'll need to consider the following:

## 1. What are your educational priorities?

Some private schools are faith-based and some are not. You'll want to decide as a family your basic priorities. Is it most important to find high academic standards, or more important to support your family's faith? Do you expect accelerated programs such as advanced placement classes or extensive access to STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) programs? How important are extracurricular activities? Are you comfortable with homework policies and school rules?

## 2. What is the culture of the school?

In a faith-based setting the culture of the school will place



religion at the forefront. There will be religious studies as part of the curriculum. The school may be all boys or all girls. Does this suit your goals? What is the relationship of staff to students? Is it casual and friendly, formal and strict? How are parents involved? What is the balance of academics to sports, the arts, clubs and other activities? Does the culture "feel right" for your children?

## 3. What role do parents play in the school?

Some private schools make great use of parent volunteer time and emphasize whole family participation in their programs. Others minimize parent involvement to occasional visits or conferences to report progress. Which best suits your family's needs?

## 4. Is the staff credentialed and the school accredited?

Some faith-based schools and newer charter schools don't require their teachers to be credentialed. How important is this to your family? In addition there are many different education associations nationwide offering accreditation. If a prospective school has received accreditation, they've shown the initiative to meet high standards.

## 5. What are the costs? Are there scholarships available?

It's a sacrifice to pay for your child's education when public schools are free. And there are

huge variations in the expenses involved. When researching possible schools, be sure to check not only the tuitions, but also book fees, sports or other extracurricular expenses and possible transportation fees. Check on scholarships available and the possibility of a sliding scale based on family income.

## 6. Is the curriculum up to date?

In this technological age, you'll want to be sure your private school has kept up with the times. Do they offer appropriate college preparation standards in science, math, languages, writing and more? Do they offer a well-rounded education in art, drama and music? Are textbooks current and in good condition? Are computer labs or individual screens available to students?

## 7. Does the school provide transportation?

Do buses transport students to school? Are they available for after-school activities? Does the school coordinate carpools? Are there extra expenses charged for transportation?

## 8. How well do students transition into or out of the school?

If a particular school offers classes such as K-6 or K-8, do they work closely with a sister high school? What provisions are made to make a smooth transition from one school to another? If students transfer into the school

either at the beginning of a year or mid-year, what provisions are made to welcome them? How do children fare when they need to move from this school to another?

## 9. What is the school's reputation?

Most private schools have a reputation to uphold. Are they the best in college prep? Are they known for a friendly, family community spirit? Who do you know with firsthand information and experience with the school? What recommendations can you find amongst friends/acquaintances?

## 10. Is the school open to visits and drop-in observations?

All schools need to make sure their campus is secure and will have procedures to follow when visiting. But as a parent, you want to feel comfortable visiting the building to observe or take care of business. You'll want to find a school that makes parents welcome and is proud to show them around.

When you've narrowed your search to several schools, be sure to take the time for a personal visit. Talk with an administrator, take the tour and gather any written information they've prepared for prospective students. Discuss pertinent questions and voice any concerns you may have about your child's specific needs. Above all, gauge your "feel" of the school. Is it the right place for you and your family?

Selecting the right private school is worth the time it takes to research, visit and make your selection. This is the place your children will learn, grow, make lifelong friends, and pave the way to their bright futures.



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Get ready to do school differently!

## Plan your visit this fall!

### Early Childhood, Lower, and Middle School

Wednesday, 10/22/25, 9:00 am, Parent Visit  
Saturday, 11/22/25, 10:00 am, OPEN HOUSE  
Toddler – Grade 8 | Lyndhurst Campus

### Upper School

Thursday, 10/9/25, 9:00 am, Parent Visit  
Saturday, 11/1/25, 1:00 pm, OPEN HOUSE  
Grades 9 – 12 | Gates Mills Campus

### Birchwood School

Sunday, 10/19/25, 2:00 pm, OPEN HOUSE  
Preschool – Grade 8 | Cleveland-West Campus

### Mastery School

Tuesday, 10/14/25, 7:00 pm,  
Parent Visit (virtual)  
Saturday, 11/8/25, 1:00 pm, OPEN HOUSE  
Grades 9 – 12 | University Circle Campus

HAWKEN  
SCHOOL



COEDUCATIONAL,  
TODDLER – GRADE 12

hawken.edu

Lyndhurst Cleveland-West Gates Mills University Circle

## Benedictine High School

2900 Martin Luther King Jr. Dr.  
Cleveland  
(216) 421-2080  
www.cbhs.edu

Benedictine High School has been a cornerstone of academic excellence and faith formation since 1927. Located in Cleveland, Ohio, Benedictine offers a transformative, all-boys Catholic education rooted in the Benedictine hallmarks: community, hospitality, humility, prayer, work, and discipline. Through rigorous academics, competitive athletics, and a vibrant arts program, students are empowered to excel in their pursuits while growing spiritually and emotionally.

The school's innovative Beacon Program and Pathways initiative guide students before, between, and beyond their high school years, fostering leadership, critical thinking, and a commitment to service. With personalized learning plans, leadership development through the Heroic app, and unique pathways in fine

arts, entrepreneurship, STEM, & vocations (construction/manufacturing, healthcare, and technology), Benedictine prepares young men to thrive in college, careers, and life.

Join a brotherhood of tradition, faith, and success at Benedictine High School, where boys become Men of Benedictine and leaders in their communities.

## Creative Playrooms Montessori & Child Care Centers

Solon (440) 248-3100  
Independence (216) 524-8008  
Parma (216) 898-9520  
Strongsville (440) 572-9365  
Westlake (440) 835-5858  
Maple Hts. (216) 475-6464  
www.creativeplayrooms.com

Creative Playrooms Montessori and Child Care Centers have been a part of the Greater Cleveland community for over 50 years. These unique learning centers provide families with Montessori and traditional programs, swimming lessons, cafeteria-like lunch-

# An environment for active and engaged learning.

At University School, boys thrive in an environment with the freedom to explore, create, and play. Register today for our All-School Family Open House on Sunday, November 2!

[www.us.edu/visit](http://www.us.edu/visit)



UNIVERSITY  
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For Boys, Junior K - Grade 12

NEW MIDDLE SCHOOL  
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#1 Private K-12  
School in Ohio



**Creative Playrooms cont'd**  
rooms, and expansive outdoor play spaces.

They understand that today's active families need a partner that really understands the need for safe, reliable, and loving care. At the core of their schools, you'll find dedicated and highly-trained staff who are deeply committed to providing children with the skills they need to reach their individual potential.

Additionally, Creative Playrooms is part of the Early Learning Academies (ELA) family, a network of trusted early childhood learning centers led by a team of seasoned and committed child-care professionals.

For more information about their six locations and program offerings, visit [creativeplayrooms.com](http://creativeplayrooms.com).



**Gilmour Academy**

34001 Cedar Road, Gates Mills  
(440) 473-8050  
[www.gilmour.org/admissions](http://www.gilmour.org/admissions)  
[admissions@gilmour.org](mailto:admissions@gilmour.org)

Gilmour Academy is home to students from 18 months to 18 years. Founded by the Brothers of Holy Cross, the school welcomes all faiths, encouraging critical thinking, tough questions and spiritual growth. With small class sizes and real-world learning, Gilmour delivers a personalized education that develops the whole person through rigorous academics, experiential learning, leadership and service.

The Montessori program fosters curiosity and independence, while Lower School students engage in hands-on learning through nature-based instruction, energy research, robotics, music and more. Middle Schoolers test new passions, access advanced coursework and join Upper School clubs for a seamless transition.

Upper School students pursue electives from molecular genetics

to entrepreneurship and engage in unique experiences like semester-long science internships. The signature VECTOR program blends coursework, mentoring, and professional networking, preparing graduates with real-world portfolios. As the only independent, Catholic, coed school in northeast Ohio, Gilmour is uniquely qualified to educate the mind and empower the heart of every student.

**Hawken School**

[www.hawken.edu](http://www.hawken.edu)  
Lyndhurst Campus  
(Preschool–Grade 8)  
5000 Clubside Road  
(440) 423-2950

Gates Mills Campus  
(Grades 9–12)

Mayfield and County Line Roads  
in Gates Mills  
(440) 423-2955

The Birchwood School of Hawken  
(Preschool–Grade 8)  
4400 West 140th Street  
Cleveland  
(216) 251-2321

The Mastery School of Hawken  
(Grades 9–12)  
11025 Magnolia Drive, Cleveland  
(440) 423-8801

Hawken School is an independent, coed day school of 1,600 students, toddler through grade 12, located on two campuses in the eastern suburbs of Cleveland, a campus on Cleveland's west side, and a campus in University Circle that is home to the Mastery School of Hawken, which takes the school's problem-based programming to scale.

Hawken was founded in 1915 as an educationally progressive school, and remain academically progressive—because that's what it takes to prepare students to thrive in a changing world. From recognizing the value of a coeducational environment to designing programs, learning spaces, and innovative schedules that support learning by doing, Hawken boldly adapts to prepare students for a promising future.

Hawken's nationally-recognized programming and nontraditional

**Laurel girls today.  
Leaders tomorrow.**

**Explore a Laurel education for your daughter.** Learn about how Laurel's Center for Research on Girls puts cutting-edge research into action to create an environment in which girls thrive.

**Join us at an admissions event to see how we develop tomorrow's leaders today.**

**RSVP today!**

[Admissions@LaurelSchool.org](mailto:Admissions@LaurelSchool.org)  
216.464.0946

**Lyman Campus Open House  
Grades 6-12**

**October 9 | 5:00-7:00 pm**  
Shaker Heights, Ohio

**Butler Campus Open House**

**October 23 | 5:30-7:00 pm**  
Novelty, Ohio

**LAUREL**  
[LaurelSchool.org](http://LaurelSchool.org)



# SAINT PASCHAL BAYLON CATHOLIC SCHOOL

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## Fall Open House

Wed., November 19, 2025  
6:00–7:30 p.m.

*Enriching Minds...Nourishing Souls*  
**Preschool through 8th Grade**

To register, contact us at 440-442-6766 or [office@saintpaschal.com](mailto:office@saintpaschal.com)

5360 Wilson Mills Road, Highland Heights, OH 44143 • [www.saintpaschal.com](http://www.saintpaschal.com)

## PRIVATE SCHOOL GUIDE

**Hawken School cont'd**  
schedules support partnerships with world-renowned institutions that provide real-world learning opportunities, including interdisciplinary honors-level courses and STEM internships. These experiences instill in students the skills needed to thrive in an increasingly complex and dynamic world.

### Laurel School

[www.LaurelSchool.org](http://www.LaurelSchool.org)

(216) 464-0946

Lyman Campus

1 Lyman Circle, Shaker Heights

Butler Campus

7420 Fairmount Road, Novelty

Laurel School, founded in 1896, is a nationally-recognized college preparatory, independent day school for girls, kindergarten through grade 12, with a coeducational early childhood school. Laurel is a top all-girls school in Ohio as ranked by Niche.com. Its 11-acre Lyman Campus is in Shaker Heights and its 150-acre Butler Campus is in Novelty. The Butler Campus is home to competitive

athletics, full-time outdoor experiential learning for grades 3–5, northeast Ohio's first outdoor prekindergarten, and the new 10,000-sq.-ft. Ruhlman Family Center, opening in January 2026!

Laurel's Center for Research on Girls (LCRG) was established in 2007, drawing on the school's long history as a site of pioneering research on girls. LCRG conducts and sponsors original research on girls, harnesses existing research to shape the day-to-day education of girls, and connects parents and teachers with research findings relevant to raising and educating girls.



## We teach the child. We reach the heart.

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EDUCATING THE MIND  
EMPOWERING THE HEART



As Northeast Ohio's only independent, Catholic, coed school, Gilmour creates endless possibilities for students to not only learn about the real world, but how to positively impact it.



◀ **LEARN MORE**  
[gilmour.org/inquire](http://gilmour.org/inquire)



◀ **REGISTER AND ATTEND OUR OPEN HOUSE**  
Grades 7-12  
Sun., Oct. 26 12:30 - 2:30 p.m.  
Optional info session 11 a.m. - noon  
[gilmour.org/openhouse](http://gilmour.org/openhouse)

Gilmour Academy is an independent, Catholic, coed school in the Holy Cross tradition. Grades K-12 and Montessori (18 months - PreK)



**Lawrence School**

www.lawrenceschool.org  
admissions@lawrenceschool.org

Lower School Campus

(Grades K–6)

1551 E. Wallings Road  
Broadview Heights  
(440) 526-0003

Upper School Campus

(Grades 7–12)

10036 Olde Eight Road  
Sagamore Hills  
(330) 908-6800

Lawrence School is among the best schools in the United States for students with dyslexia and language-based learning differences. Lawrence provides a comprehensive elementary lower school program and an upper school program serving students in grades 7–12, which features specialized and personalized attention, organizational strategies and aids, mutual accountability, encouraged self-advocacy, and an engaged faculty of learners.

Every child learns differently—and the right school environment can make all the difference. If

you’ve ever wondered whether your child’s school understands how they learn best, you’re not alone. Students are at their best when learning differences are understood and accepted, appropriate accommodations are made available, and, most importantly, when their strengths as learners are defined, affirmed, and cultivated.

For more than 50 years, Lawrence School has been opening doors and changing lives by delivering academic excellence to northeast Ohio students with dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, and ADHD.

Visit Lawrence School at one of these open house events:

Upper School

(Grades 7–12)

Wednesday, October 29, 2025

9:00 - 10:30 AM

Lower School

(Elementary to grade 6)

Thursday, October 30, 2025

9:00 - 10:30 AM



**Montessori School of University Heights**

23599 Cedar Road, Lyndhurst

(216) 381-8388

www.ms-uh.org

The Montessori School of University Heights, established in 1968, is a preprimary school dedicated to helping the child become the unique person his/her Creator intended in a Christian atmosphere of peace, love, and respect. Their approach involves:

- Providing comprehensive, individualized opportunities for growth. Each child is introduced to the materials as the child becomes ready for the concepts that the material embodies. Children develop order, concentration, coordination, independence, and self-discipline.
- Engaging children in a caring, supportive community. Their multi-age environment, serving children ages 3 through 6 years old, provides a family-like atmosphere. Children develop compassion and confidence.
- Respecting each child’s devel-

opmental abilities and personality. Montessori children enjoy choosing their own work each day guided by adults who are sensitive to each child’s unique personality. Children experience joy in learning.

They warmly encourage interested parents to schedule an in-person or virtual tour.

**Saint Joan of Arc Catholic School**

498 E. Washington St.

Chagrin Falls

(440) 247-6530

www.stjoanofarc.org

Best-in-class academics, vibrant programming in technology, science, music and life skills, a safe and secure campus in the heart of Chagrin Falls and a community of faith that is actually part of a parish — St. Joan of Arc School is everything your student needs to develop a lifelong love of learning and grow as a person of faith. St. Joan of Arc School. Driven by excellence. Guided by faith. Grades K–8.



# A Lifetime of Learning Starts Here!



Give your child a head start this fall! Our experienced educators are committed to creating an environment where children can thrive and learn.

- Engaging programs for children 6 weeks -12 years
- Creative play areas that spark imagination
- Healthy meals and snacks to fuel young minds
- A secure facility with a focus on safety
- Traditional and Montessori options are available



**Creative Playrooms.com**  
440-349-9111

**Now Enrolling!**



## Lawrence School Knows Great Minds Don't Think Alike

### Is Your Child's School Supporting Their Learning Style?

Every student learns differently, especially those with dyslexia, ADHD, or other learning differences. If your child feels lost or unsupported, it may be time to ask new questions about their school environment.

Lawrence School partners with families to explore whether their student's needs are being met in ways that ignite confidence and success—supporting self-esteem, equipping teachers with specialized training, and providing evidence based reading instruction such as Orton-Gillingham.

For families who want to explore a better fit, Lawrence School is here to help. Our mission is to empower students who learn differently with the instruction, community, and confidence they need to thrive. Your student's learning style matters. And when schools recognize that, everything can change.

CONTACT US: [ADMISSIONS@LAWRENCESCHOOL.ORG](mailto:ADMISSIONS@LAWRENCESCHOOL.ORG)  
| 440.526.0717 | [WWW.LAWRENCESCHOOL.ORG](http://WWW.LAWRENCESCHOOL.ORG)

### OPEN HOUSE EVENTS:

**Upper School (7-12):**  
**Wednesday, Oct. 29**  
**9:00 - 10:30 AM**

**Lower School (2-6):**  
**Thursday, Oct. 30**  
**9:00 - 10:30 AM**



GRADES 2 - 6 / BROADVIEW HEIGHTS • GRADES 7 - 12 / SAGAMORE HILLS

### Saint Paschal Baylon Catholic School

5360 Wilson Mills Road  
Highland Heights  
(440) 442-6766  
[www.saintpaschal.net](http://www.saintpaschal.net)

Recipient of the Governor's Thomas Edison Award for Excellence in STEM Education and Student Research for eleven years, Saint Paschal Baylon Catholic School educates students in pre-K through grade 8. Their mission is to focus on Christ-centered values and to develop the unique potential of each student through a rigorous and engaging curriculum.

Offering a program that prepares students for their secondary education and beyond, the faculty and staff recognize each student as an individual with unique gifts. They truly care about their students and are dedicated to helping each child succeed and attain his or her academic and spiritual potential.

The academic program is aligned with diocesan, state, and national standards. In addition, Saint Paschal Baylon offers daily religion instruction, Spanish (pre-K through 8), fine arts, service learning opportunities, cocurricular activities, gifted education classes, as well as psychological, speech/language, intervention, and learning disability services. Call to schedule a tour.

### University School

[www.us.edu](http://www.us.edu)  
Junior kindergarten to grade 8  
20701 Brantley Road  
Shaker Heights  
(216) 321-8260  
Grades 9 to 12  
2785 SOM Center Road  
Hunting Valley  
(216) 831-2200

Young boys have boundless energy and a natural tendency to explore. At University School, boys thrive in an environment with the freedom to explore, create, move, and play. Their teachers understand and support the needs of young boys and small class sizes allow students and teachers to build close and trusted connections.

The 32-acre campus in Shaker

Heights, for boys junior kindergarten through grade 8, includes outdoor learning and play areas, including a newly renovated arborium and amphitheater, plus an exciting new play park with climbing structures and a turf field. Indoors, their facilities include a pool, auditorium, cozy libraries, and a modern makerspace. A renovated and expanded middle school wing opened this fall.

University School is a vibrant and welcoming community where each boy is known and loved. A visit to their campus is the best way to get to know US.

Join them November 2 for their All-School Family Open House or for Discovery Days, Saturday mornings of adventure this fall for boys ages 4-8.

Learn more at [www.us.edu/](http://www.us.edu/) visit.

### Villa Angela-St. Joseph High School

18491 Lakeshore Boulevard  
Cleveland  
(216) 481-8414  
[www.vasj.com](http://www.vasj.com)

When you become a student at Villa Angela-St. Joseph High School, you become a member of a family where everyone knows you. It is a place where you can grow in your faith, be challenged academically, follow your passions, and create high school memories and friendships that will last a lifetime.

As the only school in the world that is cosponsored by the Ursuline Sisters and Marianist Brothers, a VASJ education is uniquely different. Their students proudly embrace the diversity, and it shows in their school pride and the family spirit that makes Viking Village something truly special.

Learn more about VASJ by attending their upcoming open house on October 12, 2025.



**benedictine**  
High School

JOIN US FOR OUR  
**OPEN HOUSE**

**Sunday, November 2**

**Mass 10am** ..... **Open House 11am - 1pm**

*They Chose Benedictine — See Why:*

For admission related questions, please contact **Mike Stircula** at [admissions@cbhs.edu](mailto:admissions@cbhs.edu) or 216.421.2080 ext. 325.



## YAY! Fall Fun returns to Wade Oval Saturday, October 18 • 1–6 p.m.

Looking for an easy, family-friendly Saturday plan? YAY! Fall Fun has everything in one place: kids' activities, live entertainment, local food, and plenty of space to spread out and enjoy the season, all for FREE!

YAY! Fall Fun will feature participation from local institutions and organizations, including The Music Settlement, NASA Glenn GVIS, the Cleveland History Center, The Cleveland Orchestra, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Sears think[box], and so many more, all of whom will provide engaging activities and performances throughout the day.

Here's what you'll find around

Wade Oval this year:

- STEM Zone – build, create, and innovate with hands-on science activities
- Arts & Culture Zone – enjoy live music, theater, and dance
- Discovery Zone – explore the wonders of nature and history
- Play Zone – jump, run, and play in our open-air grassy area
- Enjoy live performances all day and an outdoor showing of Hotel Transylvania at 4:30 PM. Plus: the Kids' Costume Parade is back — no registration needed!

Visit [www.universitycircle.org](http://www.universitycircle.org) for more info.



## Just For Laughs



"I think it is our son, but I can't be sure until the results of the DNA testing are in."

## HUMOR ESSAY



## The Leaf-Raking Olympics

Every October, as the trees turn glorious shades of orange and red, my yard transforms into the world's least glamorous sporting arena: the Leaf-Raking Olympics. Competitors (otherwise known as homeowners) spend entire weekends training for the grueling events of Pile Building, Bag Stuffing, and Blower Wrestling.

I remember my first "competition" as a kid. My parents convinced me that raking leaves was fun because the pile could be used to stuff a scarecrow. The idea sounded magical: a life-sized figure propped up in our yard, waving at neighbors and terrifying squirrels. I spent hours dragging armfuls of leaves into a mound, sweating through my sweatshirt, only to discover that stuffing pants and shirts with crinkly leaves was neither magical nor fun. My scarecrow sagged in the middle, leaked leaves from every opening, and eventually blew into the street. In hindsight, I think my parents just needed the yard cleaned and used the scarecrow as bait.

Now, as an adult, I understand their genius. Leaf raking is less about art projects and more about survival. If you don't keep up, your yard quickly becomes a crunchy carpet that swallows small pets. Worse, neighborhood kids see a massive pile and take it as an open invitation to leap into it, scattering your hard-earned progress like confetti.

Modern technology has introduced new Olympic events. Leaf blowers, for instance, promise efficiency but often deliver chaos. I've spent more than one Saturday chasing a rogue leaf that refused to budge, only to watch it triumphantly swirl back to its original spot the second I turned off the blower. Bagging leaves is another endurance sport. The official rules seem to require one more leaf than the bag can hold, ensuring that every final scoop results in an eruption of debris.

And then there's Pile Jumping — still the crowd favorite. Even after swearing that I was too old for it, I admit there's something irresistible about running full speed into a mountain of leaves, feeling them cushion the landing, then realizing too late that you just flattened hours of work. Judges (neighbors leaning on rakes) deduct major points for this maneuver.

The truth is, raking leaves is a yearly ritual that combines equal parts frustration, exercise, and nostalgia. Sure, the piles don't last, the bags never close right, and the scarecrows sag. But there's a certain satisfaction in stepping back, surveying a leaf-free lawn, and breathing in that crisp October air. For a moment, you feel like you've conquered nature itself.

Until, of course, the next gust of wind resets the scoreboard.

~Article by Jeannine Todd



# ICYMI

## In Case You Missed It!

Visit [www.TodaysFamilyMagazine.com](http://www.TodaysFamilyMagazine.com) or scan the QR code to access hundreds of family-related articles and events. Our site is keyword searchable and is mobile friendly. Whatever local family information you need, you will most likely find it at [www.TodaysFamilyMagazine.com](http://www.TodaysFamilyMagazine.com)!





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