

# TODAY'S family

November 2025

Lake Geauga

Great gifts for  
the animal lover  
on your list!  
See page 6 for info!

Chardon teen  
starts his own  
construction  
company

How tutoring  
can help your  
high schooler

Making school  
fundraising  
fun again!

Local schools can skip the candy drives  
and have world-renowned magician  
Rick Smith Jr. perform at their school  
*See page 4 for all the details!*

National  
Adoption  
Month

Help provide a  
forever home to  
children in need

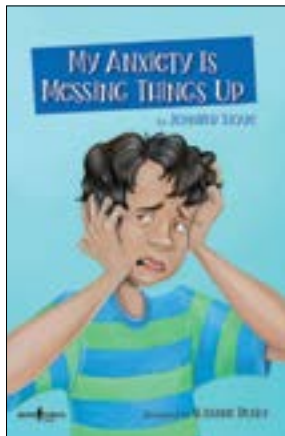
Martial arts can  
make an impact  
at any age

GriffonRawl Combat  
Sports & Fitness can  
help your family get fit

Plus  
Book Club  
Fun Events  
Humor Essay  
Craft & Gift Shows  
Lots more!



# Today's Family BOOK CLUB



## My Anxiety is Messing Things Up

By Jennifer Licata (author) and Susan Beaky (illustrator)

Oscar is a perfectionist with an anxiety problem. He puts pressure on himself to excel in everything he does. That's why he earns good grades, wins awards, plays sports, performs in the band and makes friends easily. But all his accomplishments come at a price...

Oscar is wracked with anxiety. He's so afraid of falling short of expectations or disappointing his parents, his teachers and

his pals, he can't sleep. He tosses and turns every night. The more sleep he loses, the moodier and more irritable he becomes. Exhausted and stressed, Oscar lashes out at his best buddies. Now his anxiety is topped with feelings of guilt and shame.

When a caring teacher notices Oscar's distress, she invites him to join a school support group for students who struggle with anxiety. What will he do? Is Oscar too embarrassed to seek help, or is he so tired of being tired, he'll try anything for some sleep and relief? *Grades 4-8.*



## Dog's First Baby

By Natalie Nelson

Dog likes his routines: spending time with his humans, eating, sleeping, and playing. But one day, the arrival of a new being changes everything. It's hard to know what this creature is—is it a dog, or something else?—but as Dog investigates, he may come to appreciate his loud, silly new sibling. She does drop food

on the ground, after all.

With *Dog's First Baby*, Natalie Nelson captures the wonder and humor of a new family member through a dog's eyes. Sure to delight kids and dog parents alike, this board book promises to be a repeat read aloud. *Ages 2-5.*



### PAINESVILLE HOLIDAY KICK OFF!

*A night out*



**THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 20**  
4:00-8:00 PM  
MAIN STREET AREA

*For the kids!*



**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21**  
5:00-8:00 PM  
PAINESVILLE SQUARE



## contents

**4 MAGIC GIVES BACK**  
A fun way to raise thousands for your school

**7 FREE MOVIE TICKETS**  
If you know someone who deserves a little spotlight, let us know! We will thank you with movie tickets.

**8 TUTORING**  
Huntington Learning Center can help your high schooler to excel

**10 CHRISTMAS CONNECTION**  
Annual show returns to the I-X Center

**11 CHARDON TEEN STARTS OWN CONSTRUCTION COMPANY**  
Mikey Kalman trades textbooks for tools

**16 NATIONAL ADOPTION MONTH**  
Can you provide a forever home to a child in need?

**22 MARTIAL ARTS**  
GriffonRawl Combat Sports & Fitness in Mentor can empower your family



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**Cover Photo**  
iStock / By kazakova0684

## Give the gift of cinema: Atlas Cinemas gift cards

More entertainment for your dollar!

Looking for a holiday gift that's both thoughtful and versatile? Atlas Cinemas gift cards are the perfect choice. Available in any denomination above \$10, these cards can be used for movie tickets, concessions, and even reloaded for future use. Whether it's for a family outing, a date night, or a solo escape, an Atlas Cinemas gift card offers a personalized cinematic experience.

Think theater tickets and snacks are expensive? Let's be real: some fans don't blink to drop \$50 for parking, \$200 for a single Cleveland Browns ticket, \$15 per beer, and \$8 for a pretzel—that in the end just supports a billionaire owner who appears to not care about winning.

Yet when it comes to a movie ticket and popcorn at Atlas, suddenly it's "too pricey." At least at the theater, you get entertainment, comfort, and a warm seat—not frostbite and a side of disappointment. Plus you get satisfaction of supporting a locally-owned business with people who were raised and live in northeast



Ohio.

The magic of the theater experience is unmatched. The immersive sound, giant screen, luxury seating and shared energy of an audience create moments that streaming at home can't replicate. From family adventures to a cozy date night, Atlas Cinemas provides a safe, modern, and fun environment to make memories that last far beyond the credits.

This holiday season, give more than a gift—give an experience. Atlas Cinemas gift cards let your loved ones choose when and how they want to enjoy the magic of the movies, making them a present that's truly worth unwrapping.

Visit [www.AtlasCinemas.net](http://www.AtlasCinemas.net) today.  
~Today's Family Staff

## A Beary Merry tradition returns to Willoughby Hills

Get ready for one of northeast Ohio's most beloved holiday shopping traditions—the 39th Annual Beary Merry Handmade Arts & Crafts Market, returning to La Vera Party Center in Willoughby Hills on Tuesday and Wednesday, December 2 and 3, from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Step into a wonderland of creativity where two full banquet rooms will be filled with handmade arts and crafts from talented local artisans. From cozy winter décor and jewelry to unique gifts that can't be found in stores, this show has become a holiday must for shoppers who love one-of-a-kind treasures.

As always, the event offers plenty of "beary" good fun for a great cause. The Basket Raffle Extravaganza, featuring over 50 themed baskets, will once again raise funds for Susan G. Komen. And thanks to Monreal Srnick Funerals & Cremations of Eastlake, visitors can enter hourly drawings to win a \$25 Beary Merry

Show Gift Certificate—perfect for picking up that special something.

The Beary Merry Show also gives back to the community through its annual toy drive. Guests are encouraged to bring a new toy or cash donation to help brighten the holiday season for local children in need.

Make a day of it by enjoying a delicious lunch or dinner prepared by La Vera Party Center. For those planning ahead, La Vera is also offering family takeout dinners serving four to six people on Wednesday, December 3, with \$10 from each meal benefiting Susan G. Komen. Dinners can be pre-ordered at [la-vera.com/bearymerry](http://la-vera.com/bearymerry).

Admission is just \$4 at the door. For more information, please email [thebearymerryshow@gmail.com](mailto:thebearymerryshow@gmail.com).

Celebrate the season, support local artists, and spread some holiday cheer—it's all part of what makes the Beary Merry Handmade Arts & Crafts Market a heartwarming hometown tradition.



## Donate & Save November 12–18 @CLEAquarium

HUNGER  
NETWORK



Donate food or necessities from Hunger Network's wishlist to **SAVE \$7** on your same-day Aquarium admission.



For details & a list of most-needed items, visit:  
[greaterclevelandaquarium.com/event/nourish-our-neighbors/](http://greaterclevelandaquarium.com/event/nourish-our-neighbors/)

Limit 1 discount per person; cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer.

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

# Making school fundraising fun again

How schools are ditching door-to-door sales and raising thousands with Magic Gives Back

School fundraising has long been a rite of passage—selling chocolate bars, wrapping paper, or magazine subscriptions to family and neighbors. But ask any parent, and they'll tell you: the novelty has worn thin. Families are tired of buying things they don't really need, and schools are looking for fresh ideas that bring real results without placing heavy burdens on students and staff.

Enter Rick Smith Jr. and Magic Gives Back.

If the name sounds familiar, it should. Rick has wowed audiences around the world with his high-energy magic, appearing on America's Got Talent, Shark Tank, and countless TV specials. He's also a Guinness World Record holder for card-throwing (yes, he can slice through celery with a playing card). But beyond the bright lights and viral YouTube clips, Rick has a passion for giving back to schools and communities.

Over the past decade, his Magic Gives Back program has raised more than \$1 million for local schools. This year alone, he's setting his sights on adding another \$250,000 to that total.

## A new spin on school fundraising

Instead of pushing cookie dough or coupon books, Magic Gives Back turns fundraising into an unforgettable event. Here's how it works:

- 1. Kickoff assembly** – Rick and his team host a free, high-energy kickoff at the school. This rally gets students fired up to participate.
- 2. Simple student participation** – Students register online and send email invitations to friends and family to purchase tickets for the big show. No door-to-door sales, no money collection, no product deliveries.
- 3. Prizes and incentives** – Along the way, students earn prizes for reaching fundraising goals. These range from LED light-up pens and pizza parties to meet-and-greet passes with Rick himself. Top performers can even win high-value rewards like TVs, gaming systems, or even the overall grand prize – a \$10,000 trip to

Walt Disney World in Orlando Florida.

- 4. The big show** – The fundraiser culminates in a Las Vegas-style magic and variety show, complete with illusions, audience participation, and state-of-the-art production. Families come together for an evening of world-class entertainment, and schools walk away with thousands of dollars raised.

## Results that speak for themselves

The numbers are impressive. Schools typically raise between \$10,000 and \$25,000 with the Magic Gives Back program. Some recent standouts include:

- Mentor Public Schools: Almost \$40,000 raised over three years of shows
- Chagrin Falls: \$24,000 raised over three years

On average, schools partnering with Magic Gives Back net about \$17,000 per event. The program handles the heavy lifting: ticketing, prize distribution, marketing materials, and event production. For schools, the process is almost effortless.

As one parent put it: "Tickets were easier to sell than cookie dough and wrapping paper. Plus, the whole family had a great night out!" – *Shannon Mitchell*

Another parent shared: "We raised over \$15,000 for our school and had an amazing time. Rick and his crew definitely put the FUN in FUNdraiser." – *Alicia White*

## Why it works

Part of the magic lies in the experience. Unlike traditional fundraisers, where families often feel pressured to buy something they don't want, Magic Gives Back gives them a reason to be excited. Parents get a night of professional-grade entertainment without driving downtown or paying steep ticket prices. Kids get to be part of something big, earning prizes and bragging rights along the way, and schools benefit financially while strengthening community spirit.

The program is also completely risk-free for schools. Thanks to local sponsors like Calvetta Brothers



Floor Show, Window Nation, and Mr. Heater, the production, prizes, and marketing tools are all covered up front. Schools simply pick a date, help promote and share in the proceeds.

## Looking ahead

Rick Smith Jr. has built his career on astonishing audiences, but he's just as passionate about inspiring the next generation. With Magic Gives Back, he's found a way to merge both. "I wanted to create something that was more than just a show," Rick explains. "It's about building excitement, bringing families together, and helping schools reach goals they never thought possible."

This school year, his mission is clear: raise another \$250,000 for local schools and keep growing from there.

## Bringing the magic to your school

For schools searching for a better way to raise money—without overburdening families—Magic Gives Back offers a solution that's both fun and profitable. Imagine turning your school auditorium into a Vegas-style theater for one unforgettable night, and watching your community rally behind it.

As one happy parent summed it up: "It was a great night of family fun. We left entertained, inspired, and proud to support our school."

To learn more or to bring Magic Gives Back to your school, visit [MagicGivesBack.com](http://MagicGivesBack.com), call 440-821-9549, or email [rsj@ricksmithjr.com](mailto:rsj@ricksmithjr.com).

~Article by Dan Miller

~Photos courtesy of Rick Smith Jr.

# November is National Adoption Month



## Call us to learn more about adoption

Adoptive parents are caring people who have opened their hearts and homes to the children of Lake County. These children need a permanent home when reunification with their birth families is no longer possible, nor in their best interest. Adoption is a legal process which creates a lifelong commitment between parents and children who are not born to them. The Lake County Department of Job and Family Services will conduct adoption only home assessments for residents of Lake County only.

Call the adoption line at:  
**(440) 350-4218**  
Or email  
**Eugene.Tetrick@jfs.ohio.gov**



**Lake County Department of Job and Family Services**



## Painesville Holiday Kick Off

It's the most wonderful time of the year and Painesville continues their tradition of a two-day celebration to welcome in the holiday season.

### Holiday Shop and Stroll

On Thursday, November 20 from 4–8 p.m. enjoy local holiday shopping in Downtown Painesville at the Painesville Holiday Shop & Stroll.

This walk-around event features great store/restaurant specials, giveaways, special holiday guests and lots of treats. Support small and local businesses this holiday season! A complete list of participating businesses can be found at [www.painesville.com/shopstroll](http://www.painesville.com/shopstroll).

### Spirit of the Season

Friday, November 21 is all about the kids because Santa comes to town! Visit Painesville Square from 5–8 p.m. and enjoy holiday lights, Santa's workshop, train rides around the Square, indoor kids activity, a performance by Fairport Dance Academy and more. As always, this is a free event and open to the community!

Visit [www.painesville.com/recreation](http://www.painesville.com/recreation) for more information.

## Great gift ideas for the animal lover on your list

Seeking inventive gift ideas for the animal lovers on your list? Look no further. The Cleveland Zoological Society has you covered with five easy gifts that also give back.

### 2026 ZOO SOCIETY CALENDAR

When you give a gift of \$125 or more to the ZooFund, you'll also receive our exclusive 2026 calendar featuring beloved animals at the Zoo. Available while supplies last.

### GIFT A ZOO MEMBERSHIP

Give the gift of memorable Zoo adventures all year long! Use the code TFAM25 online for a \$15 discount.

### SUPPORT A SPECIES — GIRAFFE

What to get for that someone who has everything? Donate to the Support a Species program on their behalf and help support world-class care for the animals at the Zoo. All donors receive a fillable certificate and animal care fact sheet PDF; exclusive enamel pins and/or plushes with some gift levels.

### SHOP AT THE ZOO GIFT SHOP

From cuddly plush versions of beloved species to sustainable jewelry and exclusive Zoo apparel, you'll find a unique array of gifts and stocking



stuffers for loved ones of all ages at the Zoo's gift shop. Members always receive a 15% discount!

### SUPPORT US WITH YOUR AMAZON PURCHASES

Select the Zoo Society to receive a portion of the proceeds from your Amazon purchases (at no cost to you!) with SmileAssociate: [clevezoosociety.org/amazon](http://clevezoosociety.org/amazon).

For more info on any of these holiday ideas, visit [ClevelandZooSociety.org/holiday](http://ClevelandZooSociety.org/holiday) and cross a few people off your "nice" list!

**Cleveland Zoological Society**  
CLEVELAND METROPARKS ZOO

This holiday, give them an **ADVENTURE** for every season

Save \$15 on Zoo Gift Memberships

No matter the season, there is so much to do and see at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. Give them a whole year of unique experiences and fond memories with Zoo membership.



Scan the code or visit us at [clevezoosociety.org/TFAM25](http://clevezoosociety.org/TFAM25)

(the discount code TFAM25 will be applied automatically)

\*Valid for gift memberships only. Not Valid for Senior Plus, Explorer's Club or Wild Savings Pass or any previously purchased items. Offer expires 12/31/2025\*

The membership program is presented by



## Home For The Holidays event

Celebrate the spirit of the season at the 2025 Home for the Holidays event hosted by the Lake County History Center! Enjoy free admission to the museum exhibits and free tours of the beautiful holiday decorations. Savor a delicious lunch, treat yourself to an array of homemade baked goods, and browse the basket and gift raffle fundraiser. Kids will love the craft tables, and guests of all ages will enjoy the festive, old-fashioned charm of this beloved annual tradition.

The event runs Thursday, December 4 through Sunday, December 7,



from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., and welcomes groups and guests of all ages.

The Lake County History Center is located at 415 Riverside Drive in Painesville Township. For more info call Laura at 440-639-2945 or visit [www.lakehistorycenter.org](http://www.lakehistorycenter.org).

**Christmas**  
AT LAKE COUNTY  
HISTORY CENTER

**HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS**  
FREE TOURS OF BEAUTIFUL MUSEUM DECORATIONS  
PURCHASE LUNCH AND HOLIDAY BAKED GOODS  
THURS. DEC. 4 THRU SUN. DEC. 7  
11 A.M. TO 3 P.M.

**SCRUMPTIOUS CHRISTMAS TEA PARTY**  
THURS. DECEMBER 11 AT 11:30 A.M.

**BREAKFAST WITH SANTA AND MRS. CLAUS**  
SAT. DEC. 13 AND SUN. DEC. 14  
9:30 AND 11 A.M. SEATINGS

VISIT WEBSITE FOR DETAILS AND TICKETS  
[WWW.LAKEHISTORYCENTER.ORG](http://WWW.LAKEHISTORYCENTER.ORG)  
415 RIVERSIDE DR. PAINESVILLE TWP.  
PHONE 440-639-2945



## 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  
+\$20 IN CONCESSION  
VOUCHERS!**

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!

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 article.

And as a "thank you" we will send you four tickets to Atlas Cinemas along with \$20 in vouchers for concessions! Please note: if more than one person suggests the same idea, the tickets will go to whoever sent it in first.)

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# From middle school to high school: what students need to succeed

The transition from middle school to high school is one of the most significant steps in a student's academic journey. It brings exciting opportunities—but also new challenges, higher expectations, and increased academic pressure. For the first time, grades earned will count toward a student's overall GPA, which plays a key role in college admissions. The effort students put in from the very beginning of high school truly matters.

Now that we're nearing the end of the first grading period, it's a natural time for families to take stock of how things are going. If your student is struggling to keep up or their grades aren't where you hoped, don't wait to seek help. Early intervention can make a big difference in building confidence and getting back on track before habits and gaps become harder to address.

### High school grades and college readiness

In high school, each class and grade contributes to a student's cumulative GPA. However, college admissions officers look beyond grades alone.

They also consider the rigor of a student's course load, standardized test scores (SAT or ACT), and involvement in extracurricular activities such as sports, clubs, leadership roles, or community service.

Colleges seek well-rounded students who challenge themselves academically—through honors or advanced placement (AP) courses—and show dedication outside the classroom. Building strong study habits, organization, and time management skills early in high school lays the foundation for success in these areas.

### How tutoring can help

If your student is feeling overwhelmed or unsure of their progress, now is the perfect time to take action. A trusted tutoring program can help students:

- Catch up on skills they may have missed in middle school.
- Stay on track with current coursework and manage increased expectations.
- Get ahead by preparing for advanced classes or upcoming test prep.

At Huntington Learning Center, certified tutors provide personalized instruction tailored to each student's unique needs. Whether your child needs help with math, reading, writing, or study skills,

their individualized programs build academic skills, confidence, and motivation for long-term success.

### Support starts now

The shift to high school can feel overwhelming, but your child doesn't have to navigate it alone. With the right preparation and consistent support, students can finish the semester strong and stay motivated throughout their high school years.

If you're wondering how to help your child thrive this year—or searching for tutoring near you—Huntington Learning Center is here to help. Call 1-800-CAN-LEARN or visit them online at [HuntingtonHelps.com](http://HuntingtonHelps.com).

Let's make this school year—and this transition—a success, together.

~Article submitted by Huntington Learning Center

~Photo credit: HuntingtonHelps.com

### Huntington Learning Center – Mentor

8000 Plaza Blvd., Unit H  
440-205-8283

### Huntington Learning Center – Mayfield Hts.

1510 Golden Gate Plaza  
440-683-1784

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### December 6th

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JOIN US FOR A FUN DAY FULL OF HOLIDAY CHEER!

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RACE SHIRT, FINISHERS MEDAL, TOTE BAG & DRINK TICKETS FOR DTW BARS & RESTAURANTS

2025 SPONSORS

# A lesson in gratitude, one little card at a time

One year before Thanksgiving, I stumbled upon what I thought was a great idea to help spark dinner table conversations and introduce my family to the concept of gratitude. I grabbed a small tin, covered it with Thanksgiving-themed craft paper, and added pens and small cards in festive fall colors.

That evening, I explained the idea and pulled out a few cards I'd already written—like “Share something you're thankful for.” I told everyone that, in the days leading up to Thanksgiving, anyone could add a question, comment, or note of thanks to the tin. Each night at dinner, we'd pull one out to read and discuss.

Some cards were heartwarming, like being thankful for having a warm home—or the one my youngest drew with a picture of what she was most grateful for: our dog. Others inspired conversation, such as “What's your favorite Thanksgiving food?” or “What dish reminds you of a special memory?”

And then there were the silly

ones—usually crafted by my giggling daughters when they thought no one was looking. “Would you rather have it rain mashed potatoes or turkey?” “If you had a pet named Potato, what kind of animal would it be?” “Would you rather eat dirt pie or mud pudding?” Their faces lit up as they waited for one of their goofy questions to be drawn and read aloud by Mom or Dad.

Then there were the true head-scratchers, the kind that made us laugh even harder: “Are you more thankful for your family or your couch?” and “Would you rather be a turkey or a pumpkin?”

Maybe the lesson of gratitude snuck in along the way. Mostly, though, those cards encouraged conversation, silliness, and plenty of laughter. And now, each time we pull out the seasonal decorations, that little tin is there—a reminder to be grateful for all the joy and togetherness we've shared around the table.

Maya Angelou once said, “Be present in all things and thankful for all things.” In hindsight, I may have



been the one who learned the most from that tiny tin filled with handwritten notes.

The next time you're gathered around your own table, you don't need a special tin or fancy cards. Time spent listening and laughing with the people you love makes even an ordinary Thursday feel like Thanksgiving. But just in case you need a prompt to start – turn to the person next to you and tell them one thing you appreciate about them.

~Article by Stacy Turner

Create and decorate your own gratitude tin and cards or purchase them online!



## Shaping Hearts, Minds, and Souls



### Our Faith, Their Future



## St-GabrielSchool.org

For part-time 2 to 5-year-old programs call Ann Silvester at 440-354-7574

For full-time 4/5 year-old – grade 8 call Alicia Henrikson at 440-354-7858

# The Cleveland Christmas Connection returns November 21–23

Special guest Karolyn Grimes (“Zuzu” from It’s a Wonderful Life) appears all weekend

Northeast Ohio’s most anticipated holiday shopping tradition, Cleveland Christmas Connection, will return to the I-X Center one last time on November 21-23, 2025—before moving to a new venue next year. The show is not going away; it’s simply saying farewell to the I-X Center after a memorable run. Guests can shop from 550+ unique exhibitors featuring artisan gifts, festive décor, gourmet treats, and more, alongside fan-favorite attractions and new hands-on experiences.

For those that want to be the first to shop, a limited number of early bird shopping tickets are available for Friday from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. Unwrap exclusive vendor discounts and enjoy limited priority shopping away from the crowds. Tickets are available for advance purchase online only. Doors will also be opening at 8 a.m. on Saturday for additional morning shopping.

### 2025 features & attractions:

**550+ Exhibitors & Artisan Marketplace** – Handpicked gifts you can see, feel, and taste—from custom ornaments and handmade jewelry to seasonal décor, stocking stuffers, and gourmet treats.

**Special Guest: Karolyn Grimes (“Zuzu”)** – Meet an actress from the classic holiday film “It’s a Wonderful Life.” Throughout the show, she’ll



be sharing her cookbook filled with 200 recipes inspired by the fictional town of Bedford Falls, memorable stories from the set, and fun trivia.

**NEW: Cookie Connection Classes** – Allie’s Sweet Tooth, a show favorite, will host cookie-decorating classes designed for all skill levels—ideal for families, friends, and festive team outings. Classes will be offered throughout the weekend at the Cookie Connection, reserve your spot in advance online or sign up when you arrive at the event. Spots are limited.

**SantaLand & Holiday Photo Ops** – Stroll a decorated entryway to Cleveland’s tallest Santa—30 feet high—and capture selfies with Santa, Mrs. Claus, and the Elves. Kids can also bring their letters to Santa to mail in the Santa Mailbox.

**Sugar Plum Shoppe** – Curated goodies and gifts sure to delight kids of all ages—featuring over 3,000 prewrapped gifts (under \$9.00 each), perfect for pint-sized wallets.

**Tinseltown Train Area** – A whimsical, family-friendly favorite returns to charm rail fans and little conductors alike. It showcases an extensive model train display and Christmas Village. Guests will have the opportunity to operate the train and receive a junior engineer certificate upon participation.

**Live Entertainment** – The holiday spirit comes to life with live entertainment on the stage where guests can relax and kick up their feet and sing along to festive entertainment. Flower Entertainment will offer face painting and balloon creations all weekend in SantaLand.

**Convenient Shop & Drop** – Guests can leave their purchases and pick them up when they are ready to leave. And when you pick up your purchases, make life easier and take advantage of gift wrapping for a donation to benefit Prayers from Maria.

**Save on Admission** – Bring two cans of vegetables to the event on Friday, November 21 to support The Greater Cleveland Food Bank and get \$4 off general admission.

**Hero Day** – On Sunday, November 23 all active military personnel, veterans, police, fire and first responders are invited to attend the show free of charge. Simply present a valid ID at the box office.

Visit [ClevelandChristmasConnection.com](http://ClevelandChristmasConnection.com) for hours and more info.



# STRUGGLING TO FIND A JOB?

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# Building His Own Path

## Chardon teen trades textbooks for toolboxes

A typical 21st-century middle schooler might be focused on beating a video game high score or posting a daily Snapchat selfie. Few spend their free time doing something that could shape their professional future. But instead of maintaining a social media presence or slaying virtual zombies, Mikey Kalman was learning a trade that would transform his life.

As a young boy, Mikey loved spending time with his father and uncle, learning the ins and outs of construction and landscaping. His father owned a landscaping business, and his uncle ran a construction company. From them, Mikey not only learned to work with his hands, but also to appreciate the essential role that skilled trades play in keeping communities thriving.

Watching his father manage the construction of their family's home was a turning point. "It was eye-opening," Mikey recalls. At just 15, he began working for a family friend's masonry company, with his parents driving him to and from the job each day. As he developed his skills, he saved his earnings—not for video games or gadgets, but to buy equipment for the business he dreamed of starting. That goal taught him the value of discipline, sacrifice, and financial responsibility.

Though he could have pursued a lacrosse scholarship and attended college, Mikey chose a different path. "I didn't want to waste time in class when I could be getting experience," he explains. "I like to be hands-on and build things instead of sitting behind a computer." His parents fully supported the decision. "I'm glad they trusted me to choose my own direction," he says.

In October 2024, Kalman Property Management officially became an LLC. As the company celebrates its first anniversary,

Mikey reflects proudly on launching a business at just 18 years old—a dream four years in the making.

Today, Kalman Property Management offers a wide range of services including new construction, remodeling, landscaping, hardscaping, handyman work, and seasonal services such as snow removal and fall cleanup. "It's nice to do a little of everything," says Mikey. "It keeps things interesting and helps the company grow." He only takes on jobs he knows he can do well. "Customer satisfaction is what people notice most," he adds. "It would be nice to be known for great service."

Mikey's family continues to play an important role, lending equipment, guidance, and sometimes a few extra hands. His father is even teaching him how to handle tax returns. Reliable friends also pitch in on larger projects. "They'd rather work with me than a random company," Mikey says. "I'm lucky to know people my age who share my drive."

That youth-driven energy hasn't gone unnoticed. "I've actually had people congratulate us," Mikey says with a smile. "A lot of customers like supporting local kids who are trying to build something." Many are surprised to learn how young he is—until they see the quality of his work. "It surprises them even more when we do a good job," he laughs.

Based in Chardon, Kalman Property Management LLC serves the northeast Ohio area. To inquire about a service, email Mikey at [kalmangroup@outlook.com](mailto:kalmangroup@outlook.com) or give him a call at 440-901-9277. Check out his website at <https://kalmanmikey.wixsite.com/kalman-property-mana>.

~Article by Sophia Filipiak

**Pictured: Mikey at 14 years old turning his family's attic into a beautiful media space.**



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- For information on the event or to be a vendor contact Debbie at [cpc.mentor@gmail.com](mailto:cpc.mentor@gmail.com)

# St. Gabriel students turn “Principal for a Day” into a month of giving

What started as a fun raffle prize quickly turned into an act of generosity at St. Gabriel School in Concord Township. Maverick and Harland Howells, whose parents won the Principal for a Day raffle at last year’s PTU Gala, spent the day helping Principal Kumazec lead the school — and left a lasting impact.

The brothers jumped into their leadership roles with enthusiasm, assisting with morning announcements, supervising a fire drill, and selecting new school stickers. But they didn’t stop there. The Howells used their “principal power” to declare Friday a Destination Dress Down Day, inviting students to wear shirts from their favorite places and to kick off SOCKtober — a month-long sock drive to benefit both City Mission and Adoption Network Cleveland.

“We wanted to do something that helps people,” said the Howells brothers. “Everyone needs socks — especially when it’s cold!”

Principal Kumazec praised their initiative: “Maverick and Harland showed what true Grizzly Power looks like — leading with kindness, faith, and service. They turned a fun experience into something that will help so many in need.”

Throughout October, St. Gabriel students and families were encouraged to bring in new socks of all sizes to support City Mission’s outreach to the homeless and families in crisis, as well as



Harland and Maverick Howells with St. Gabriel School leadership team.

Adoption Network Cleveland’s work connecting and supporting children and families throughout northeast Ohio.

Thanks to two young leaders with big hearts, St. Gabriel’s SOCKtober spirit warmed more than just feet this fall.



### Thanksgiving Quotes

For those of you who cannot be with family this Thanksgiving, please resist the urge to brag.

—Andy Borowitz

Thanksgiving: when the people who are most thankful are the ones who didn’t have to cook.

—Melanie White

# Santa’s Workshop at ReStore

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# 6 tips to help you save money

## Common HVAC & plumbing bad habits

Taking proper care of your HVAC and plumbing is essential to maintaining high efficiency and future costly maintenance. Completing annual maintenance and taking proactive steps to fight against future costly issues are one of the most important things that you can do to save money on plumbing and HVAC.

There are a variety of bad habits that homeowners can unintentionally have regarding their HVAC system and plumbing. These common mistakes can add up over time if you are not careful:

**Not changing your filter:** There are a variety of issues that stem from not changing your filter, inefficiency, and rising energy bills among them. Most homeowners are unaware that the air filter for the HVAC system should be replaced around once every other month, depending on usage. If your filter is not replaced, it can become clogged with dirt, dust, and debris. A clogged air filter can even damage essential parts of your HVAC unit, which can result in costly fixes.

**No regular maintenance:** Forgoing regular maintenance on your HVAC system may seem like an easy way to cut costs, but the damage of doing so can quickly add up over time. Catching any issues with your unit early can help prevent long-lasting damage, as well as ensure that your unit is running at maximum efficiency.

**Blocking airflow:** Proper airflow is one of the

most important things that your HVAC system requires to function efficiently. If this airflow is blocked, multiple issues can arise. Many homeowners are tempted to hide their outdoor HVAC units with plants and shrubs to boost curb appeal. However, placing plants too near the unit can disrupt ventilation. Plants could also become a home for pests and rodents, which can damage the unit as well. Air flow can also be blocked by furniture, not just foliage, so be sure to keep any lawn chairs or other items away from your system.

**Actively look for drips:** Drips add up over time—and can also signal a larger problem at hand. Loose valves, cracked pipes, or even flooding are all issues that a few small drips can warn homeowners about. These issues, if left untreated, are far more costly than a simple leak. Dripping water can slowly add up in your energy bill. Water can also cause harmful mold to grow if not quickly handled.

**Upgrade your water heater:** Heating water requires a lot of energy; by upgrading to a more effective, energy-efficient model, you can save a lot of money over time. Water heater models that are over ten years old might be due for a replacement soon. A good model to consider is an on-demand water heater, which quickly heats water, when necessary, rather than continuously heating water throughout the day.



**Check your water meter:** Take a quick look over your water meter to be sure that your water flow is running normally. Located somewhere accessible outside of your home, your water meter indicates water usage. If water is not running to your home but the meter indicates water is still flowing, that can often be a sign of a major water leak somewhere in your pipes.

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# Greater Cleveland Aquarium hosts Hunger Network Drive

Seven-day event offers a \$7 discount on admission when you donate a nonperishable food item or necessity

This holiday season, take the opportunity to fight food insecurity as you dive into an aquatic adventure.

Back for its 11th year, Greater Cleveland Aquarium is partnering with Hunger Network for “Nourish Our Neighbors,” a seven-day drive collecting canned proteins like tuna and chicken, shelf-stable milk, nut butter, whole grain cereals and healthy and nutritious nonperishables—as well as essential personal and household hygiene items including toilet paper, deodorant and diapers.

Each guest who drops off an item from Hunger Network’s wish list (see graphic to bottom right) at the Aquarium ticket counter between Wednesday, November 12 – Tuesday, November 18, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., will receive \$7 off their same-day admission. Aquarium members will receive one raffle entry for each item they contribute for an opportunity to win a special prize package that includes a back-of-house fish feeding experience, a gift shop prize basket and a \$100 voucher for a Music Box Supper Club concert.

“It’s real-time good karma, with one good deed translating to one good deal,” says Greater Cleveland Aquarium GM Stephanie White. “Give a little to help someone in need, and we’ll give you



a discount to explore nearby lakes and faraway oceans.”

Serving more than 45,000 individuals each month, Hunger Network is one of Cuyahoga County’s largest emergency food providers.

“When we come together as a community, we can nourish more than just bodies, we nourish hope,” says Hunger Network CEO Julie M. Johnson. “Every donation is a lifeline, helping us touch more

lives and ensure that families across northeast Ohio feel supported, valued, and empowered.”

Hunger Network representatives will be on-site on Saturday & Sunday, November 15 & 16, to share the nonprofit’s mission and accept monetary gifts in lieu of physical items. “The winter season brings added burdens for many families, from heating bills to healthcare costs,” Johnson adds. “By partnering with the Greater Cleveland Aquarium, we’re showing that compassion and curiosity can go hand in hand—your gift not only feeds a neighbor, it fuels a movement toward a healthier, more connected community.”

“We’ve been partnering with Hunger Network almost as long as we’ve been open,” says White. “I always find it heartwarming to see parents bring in their children to drop off jars of peanut butter or boxes of pasta so they can play a small role in helping their community thrive.”

For questions about donating, contact Greater Cleveland Aquarium at 216-862-8803 or visit [greaterclevelandaquarium.com](http://greaterclevelandaquarium.com). For information on other ways you can support Hunger Network visit [hungernetwork.org](http://hungernetwork.org).

Greater Cleveland Aquarium is located at 2000 Sycamore Street on the west bank of the Flats in Downtown Cleveland.

## THIS HOLIDAY SEASON SHOP IN MENTOR

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#### HEALTHY SNACKS

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#### HYGIENE ITEMS

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# A fresh take on Thanksgiving

## New traditions for a grateful gathering

Thanksgiving is one of those holidays that can easily slip into autopilot—mashed potatoes, turkey, pie, repeat. The smells, the sounds, and the familiar rhythm of the day all feel comforting, but sometimes a little change can make it even more meaningful. If your family is ready to shake things up (just a bit), here are a few fresh ways to make this year's celebration stand out.

### Start a gratitude hour

Gratitude is at the heart of Thanksgiving, but it often gets lost somewhere between the gravy and the game. Try setting aside a short "gratitude hour" during the day. Everyone writes a thank-you note—to a teacher, neighbor, or friend who made their year a little brighter. Read a few aloud or tuck them into envelopes to deliver later. It's a simple tradition that spreads the warmth well beyond your own table.

### Mix up the menu

Turkey and stuffing might be the stars, but who says they have to steal the whole show? Invite each guest to bring one dish that's not traditionally served at Thanksgiving—something that reflects their background, travels, or current cravings. Maybe it's Grandma's lasagna, spicy tacos, or a

curry recipe that reminds someone of home. Every plate comes with a story, and your dinner table becomes a delicious celebration of everyone's lives and cultures.

### Unplug for a while

Phones, tablets, and TVs have a way of sneaking into the day. Try a "tech-free hour" during dessert or after dinner. Gather for a walk around the neighborhood, a board game marathon, or a few rounds of "remember when..." stories. You might be surprised at how many laughs (and memories) bubble up when everyone is fully present.

### Give back together

Thanksgiving is about more than what's on the table—it's about who's at the table, and who isn't. Families can work together to deliver pies to a local fire station, bake cookies for an elderly neighbor, or donate to a food pantry. These simple acts of kindness remind everyone—kids especially—that gratitude grows stronger when it's shared.

### Reimagine the gathering

Modern families look different than they used to—blended, long-distance, multicultural—and so do their Thanksgivings. Some



families host "Friendsgiving Eve," a relaxed get-together before the big day. Others switch up locations each year or even meet at a park for an outdoor potluck. What matters most isn't sticking to old traditions, but finding new ways to connect and include everyone who feels like family.

### The heart of it all

Whether you're serving turkey or tacos, eating around the dining table or on a blanket by the fireplace, the spirit of Thanksgiving stays the

same—being present with the people you love and remembering what truly matters. As author Brene Brown puts it, "What separates privilege from entitlement is gratitude."

And maybe that's the best new tradition of all—finding gratitude not just on Thanksgiving, but in every ordinary Thursday we get to spend together.

~Article by Dan Miller

~Photo credit: Shutterstock / Monkey Business Images

## Great Lakes Science Center opens new early childhood exhibit

Handle With Care is an immersive, 2,000-square-foot early childhood exhibit designed to support early experiences with empathy and engineering for the Great Lakes Science Center's youngest guests.

The new gallery will incorporate STEM learning and fundamental engineering principles while fostering empathy and creativity through imaginative play.

As guests enter Handle With Care, they will have the opportunity to create a personalized care package for a loved one. After assembling their care package, guests can head over to the warehouse and distribution area where they can explore a three-tiered climbing structure, sit in the driver's seat of a scale model forklift, and manipulate their package through a



10-foot-tall pulley and conveyor belt system. Finally, guests can deliver their care package to an imaginative play neighborhood complete with houses, apartments and a package delivery truck. The Science Center's littlest visitors will particularly enjoy the small park area that is designed for infants.

For more info visit [GreatScience.com](http://GreatScience.com).

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# Every child deserves a **FOREVER HOME**

## Adoption: An alternate path to parenthood

The perception of adoptive parents may be of a loving wife and husband who are unable to have children of their own. The couple go to a private adoption agency, shell out tens of thousands of dollars and, after what could be a years-long waiting period, bring home the newborn son or daughter they've always dreamed about raising.

Working with a private adoption agency with the goal of adopting an infant is an admirable approach to offering a home to a child in need. But some folks—married or not—find the process to be too costly and drawn out. Fortunately, there are other avenues for adoption, especially if prospective parents are open to providing forever homes for youngsters with special needs, older children, sibling groups or children of different races or ethnicities.

November is National Adoption Month, a 30-day platform for raising awareness and bringing attention to the need for permanent families for minors in foster care. It is an initiative of the Children's Bureau, which is part of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

"National Adoption Month is a celebration of those members in our community who have taken a chance on children and made them a member of their family," says Eugene Tetrick, supervisor of the Substitute Care Unit (foster care/adoption) for the Lake County Department of Job and Family Services. "These people had the courage and determination to 'change their normal' by bringing a child in need into their home."

Beverly Torres, deputy director at the Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services, says many children are in county custody because of abuse, neglect, a parent's mental health issues and other reasons. "When they can't be safely reunified with their caregivers and when parental rights are terminated,

we owe these kids a family. November highlights foster care, and especially adoptive care, for our families and children."

In honor of National Adoption Month, Today's Family answers questions about adopting youngsters currently in the foster care system.

### **What is the difference between fostering and adopting?**

Foster parents are state-certified caregivers, who provide a temporary home for children while social service agencies attempt to reunify youngsters with their families. If reunification with birth parents does not happen, the public agency holding temporary custody of the child receives permanent custody of them, matches them with an adoptive family (most often in the dually licensed foster/adoptive home they are currently in) and works with the adoptive family to finalize an adoption through probate court.

### **Who is eligible to adopt children in foster care in Ohio?**

Prospective adoptive parents must be at least 18 years old, have sufficient income to meet the child's basic needs and be in good physical, emotional and mental health. They may be single, married, part of a same-sex couple or the child's older sibling. If part of a couple, they must be in a stable relationship for at least one year. Education level, religion and home ownership are not factors.

### **How great is the need?**

Every day, children throughout Ohio enter the custody of children services. This results in 2,000 to 3,000 children at any given moment waiting to be adopted in Ohio. The need for adoptive families is great and every child deserves a forever family.

According to Torres, Cuyahoga County has permanent custody of



Zyirrea and Ziyer are lovable siblings in need of a caring forever family. Zyirrea enjoys tablets and girly things. She laughs a lot, especially at funny movies and cartoons. Ziyer enjoys playing with any form of remote-control cars. He is energetic and has beautiful smile that would light up a room. They both love electronic games.

Do you have room in your heart for this dynamic duo? For more information about Zyirrea and Ziyer, please contact Shamara Leonard at 216-881-2216 or Norreen Thomas at 216-881-4662.

almost 900 children. The county has a permanency plan, whether it's through adoption, legal custody, or some other arrangement, for about two-thirds (slightly more than 600) of them; the remainder are still in need of forever families.

Tetrick adds, "From 2020–2025 we finalized adoptions for 40 children. With those adoptions, our foster homes close as their families are now "complete" when the adoption is finalized. Therefore we are continuously trying to recruit new families to replace the ones that left after they completed their families."

And the need is definitely very real as Lake County has over 70 children in their custody in 2025.

### **Many people wish to adopt. Why haven't these children found forever families?**

It's important to match youngsters with families who are committed to meeting the children's specific needs for the long term. Many children in foster care deal with physical, psychological or behavioral concerns as they all have been exposed to abuse and/or neglect.

"Any time a child moves from one home to another, it's a traumatic experience," Torres explains. "When kids come into our custody, they are experiencing a trauma in their life, a separation, a loss. That comes out in different ways for different children. Sometimes they've been

removed from their home because of mental-health issues within the family that are not being managed in a healthy way, and that child is experiencing the same mental health issue. The specific needs of our children dictate the kind of families we're looking for."

Placing older children, such as teenagers, can be challenging because some people prefer to adopt infants or toddlers. Keeping siblings together can also be difficult if families wish to adopt one child at a time.

#### What is the cost?

" Oftentimes, those who become licensed as foster and adoptive parents through the county are looking to grow their family through adoption as the costs of private adoptions are too expensive," Tetrick says. "Some costs involved in the adoption process are court costs for the adoption and paying for updated birth certificates, which are minimal comparatively to private adoptions. Adoption of a child in the custody of Lake County costs less than \$200."

Cuyahoga County's Torres says

a required fire inspection may run \$30-\$100. If the compulsory home study visit reveals the need for making home improvements to meet Ohio mandates, there may be costs associated with those upgrades.

By comparison, voluntary adoption of a newborn at a nonprofit organization in Ohio typically costs \$10,000-\$25,000, according to the Franklin County Law Library website.

#### I want to adopt a child currently in foster care. What is the next step?

Start with contacting the county agency. Cuyahoga residents may call 216-881-5775 or visit <https://hhs.cuyahogacounty.gov/programs/detail/foster-care-and-adoption>. Those in Lake County may dial 440-350-4218 and those in Geauga County may call 440-285-9141.

According to Torres, prospective adoptive parents are required to attend preservice training to become licensed as a foster or adoptive parent. Once licensed, they will complete an application and undergo a home study, which includes a fire



inspection. Following approval, the county agency will work to match the potential adoptive family with a child or sibling group. After a match is made, an adoption assessor and the child's social worker will present the prospective adoptive parent with the child's social, medical, and educational records, photographs and other pertinent information.

The adult and child will then have preplacement visits in the adoptive home and the child's current home. After the child lives with the potential adoptive family for a trial period, a judge or magistrate can finalize the adoption. Classes, support groups and referrals to community agencies will then be available to the new family.

## Candy Land It's Wild in Ohio November 22–January 4

An indoor magical wonderland brings this favorite family game to life!

Free fun for the whole family, the indoor holiday tradition continues as the Candy Land game comes to life, but with a natural twist, taking you on a colorful adventure as you discover what's wild in Ohio. In addition, enjoy a themed craft, scavenger hunts, hands-on exhibits and much more!

Shop at The Nature Store for unique nature-themed gifts and enjoy hot chocolate in Snowshoe Lodge. Special weekend programs: Saturdays feature animal chats and s'mores around a campfire, while Sundays offer meet-the-keeper chats in the Wildlife Center animal yard. Snowshoe rentals are weather permitting. Registration or tickets not required.

#### Wild Weekends

Each Saturday, enjoy an outdoor campfire with s'mores from noon to 3 pm and animal chats at 11 am, 1 and 3 pm. On Sundays, experience meet-the-keeper chats in the Wildlife Yard



at 11 am, 1 and 3 pm.

Candy Land It's Wild in Ohio begins November 22 and is open 10 a.m.–5 p.m. daily through January 4. The exhibit will be closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Eve at noon and New Year's Day. Admission is free for all ages. Registration is not required. Additional information can be found at [www.lakemetroparks.com](http://www.lakemetroparks.com).

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## HUMOR



Eager shoppers camping out all night in the not-so-old days, freezing their tushes off for a chance to get a cheap video game console. Ah, the memories.

## Black Friday

How the day after Thanksgiving went from quiet shopping to calendar chaos

There was a time—not that long ago—when the Friday after Thanksgiving didn't have a catchy name. It was simply "the day after," a time when families polished off leftovers and maybe, just maybe, did a little shopping. Then came "Black Friday," a term that sounds like it should describe a stock market crash rather than a day of doorbusters and discounted air fryers.

The phrase actually dates back to the 1960s in Philadelphia. Police officers there used the term "Black Friday" to describe the gridlock and chaos downtown when hordes of post-Thanksgiving shoppers and football fans flooded the city. Stores were thrilled by the sales; the police were not amused. Retailers, understandably, didn't love the negative connotation and briefly tried to rebrand it as "Big Friday." (That didn't stick—thankfully.)

By the 1980s, national chains began embracing "Black Friday" as a marketing term, flipping the meaning from gloom to profit. The idea was that retailers moved from "in the red" to "in the black" once the holiday shopping season began. Ads, TV spots, and circulars spread the word. By the late '90s, "Black Friday" was an unofficial holiday of its own—one that required a thermos of coffee and an alarm clock set for 3 a.m.

Then things got weird. People camped overnight outside stores.

Some lined up in tents. Every news station ran the same footage: shoppers stampeding through automatic doors for \$10 toasters and half-priced TVs. Somewhere, someone decided that freezing in a parking lot was a fair trade for a discount on electronics they didn't need.

Fast forward to today, and the scene looks a lot different. Most people shop from their couches in pajama pants, browsing "Black Friday Week," "Black Friday Month," and—our personal favorite—"Cyber Monday Extended!" Retailers stretch the deals across weeks, and the once-thrilling chaos has mellowed into a digital scrollathon.

Still, the tradition continues, even if it's lost some of its madness. Maybe that's not a bad thing. Families can now spend Thanksgiving night watching movies instead of strategizing their retail battle plans. No one has to run through a parking lot at dawn or risk frostbite for a discounted slow cooker.

The meaning of "Black Friday" has evolved, but the excitement remains. Whether you're hunting bargains online or just savoring another helping of pie, it's nice to remember that this unofficial holiday began with good intentions: getting people out, about, and into the holiday spirit.

Just don't call it "Big Friday." We tried that already.



## Frost: An Ice-Capped Garden Experience opens November 22

Each season, the Cleveland Botanical Garden transforms into a dazzling celebration of nature showcasing the magic of the season, inviting families and friends to return and make new memories together. With sparkling displays, festive activities and the warmth of the season woven throughout, Frost captures the timeless joy of winter in the Garden.

Frost will transform familiar spaces into a dazzling celebration of light, nature, and seasonal wonder. Journey through reimagined indoor and outdoor scenes, following the story of Verglas, the winter spirit, through the changing of the seasons. Verglas will greet you as you enter the Ellipse, along with shimmering displays of plants and lights at every turn.

Raine & Shine, spirits of the wet and dry seasons, return to the glasshouse biomes celebrating winter in other parts of the world. Lights will guide people into the Spiny Desert of Madagascar and through the Costa Rica Cloud Forest, where they will be met with a captivating ring of waterfall lights.

Family favorites abound, with Clark Hall offering extra seating and an expanded kids' play zone, including an oversized slide, back by popular demand.



Photo courtesy of Holden Forests & Gardens

Outdoors, the gardens sparkle with densely lit displays and plenty of photo opportunities including a light tunnel and a disco-lit Hershey Children's Garden. Indoors, the Japanese Overlook will evoke the magic of a grand winter hall—an enchanting new setting for educational activities.

Rounding out the journey with familiar favorites, the Garden Room delights with creative gingerbread houses, and Woodland Hall once again hosts a stunning display of decorated trees by our affiliate garden clubs.

Frost will open to the public on Saturday, November 22 and will run through Sunday, January 4. Adult tickets are \$24–\$28, child tickets are \$15–\$17. Advance online ticket purchase is required. Prices vary by day of the week and entry time. Tickets are on sale now at holdenfg.org.

# COMING SOON!

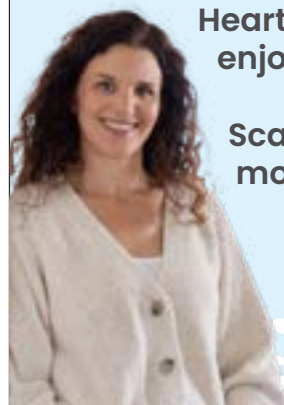
## A NEW TODAY'S FAMILY ADVICE COLUMN

# LIVING WELL

with *Rebecca Fellenbaum*

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## Fun Thanksgiving Facts

**Pumpkin pie was not served at the first Thanksgiving meal.**

The Pilgrims didn't have ovens for baking and they lacked the butter and flour necessary for pie crust. Culinary historians believe the first Thanksgiving meal consisted largely of seafood, like mussels, lobster, and clams. Diners almost certainly ate venison and likely some assortment of wild fowl—turkey, duck, goose and swan.



**An estimated 240 million turkeys will be raised in the U.S. this year.**

Of the 240 million turkeys raised this year, 45 million—or 18 percent—will be baked, grilled, and fried this Thanksgiving.

**The first Thanksgiving was celebrated in 1621, but it wasn't observed as a national holiday until 1863.**

Sarah Josepha Hale, the woman who wrote "Mary Had a Little Lamb," wrote letters for 17 years campaigning to make Thanksgiving a national holiday. Finally, President Lincoln proclaimed Thanksgiving a national holiday 240 years after the tradition started in Plymouth, Massachusetts.

**The TV dinner was invented thanks to Thanksgiving.**

In 1953, a Swanson employee accidentally ordered too much turkey—260 tons too much! The frozen turkeys were taking up space in 10 refrigerated train cars when a company salesman suggested preparing and packaging the turkey with sides in compartmentalized aluminum trays. Swanson sold 5,000 TV dinners in 1953.

The following year, they sold 10 million!

**There weren't any balloons at the first Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in 1924.**

The first parade featured Macy's employees, floats, and animals from the Central Park Zoo. Large animal shaped balloons made their first appearance in the parade in 1927.

**Cranberries aren't just for eating.**

Native Americans used cranberries to treat wounds and dye arrows. You can also find them in many holiday crafts including creative center pieces, wreaths and garlands.

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# ST. GABRIEL CRAFT BOUTIQUE

NOVEMBER 8, 2025  
8AM - 3PM

St. Gabriel School  
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**\$4 ADMISSION**

Explore a world of creativity at our Annual Craft Fair! Discover unique handmade treasures from local artisans, including jewelry, home decor, and artisanal foods. Start your Christmas shopping early!

## Teen's passion for the violin hits all the right notes



Liam performing his first solo in fifth grade at Greenview Elementary.  
Photos courtesy of Christine Schaefer

At just 13 years old, Liam Schaefer of Lyndhurst has already built an impressive musical résumé—and he's just getting started. A student at Memorial Junior High School, Liam first picked up the violin in fourth grade when he was 9 years old. Guided by his grandfather, a retired choral director, his natural talent quickly began to shine.

"His grandfather really took him under his wing," says Liam's mom, Christine. "That bond helped Liam blossom into the musician he is today."

By fifth grade, Liam earned a spot in the honors orchestra, and the following year he joined the Suzuki Orchestra, a program built around the renowned Suzuki Method—an approach that nurtures musical skill through encouragement, repetition, and listening, much like learning a language. Liam's dedication paid off when he advanced from second chair to first chair, the leadership position of his section.

In seventh grade, he was nominated to perform at the OMEA Solo Ensemble, where he received the highest possible score—a "1." This year, Liam's accomplishments reached a new crescendo as he joined the advanced Suzuki Orchestra as first chair and achieved a personal goal: earning a coveted spot in the Cleveland Youth Pops Orchestra.

"Liam has done so much for himself in these

short years," Christine adds proudly. "He's driven to be the absolute best version of himself."

Along with his musical achievements, Liam maintains a 4.0 GPA, takes honors classes, and participates in multiple clubs and after-school activities. With that combination of talent, discipline and heart, his future looks nothing short of brilliant.

~Article by Dan Miller



Liam (left) playing in October 2025 at Beachwood H.S. for the Ohio Music Education Association Honors Orchestra for District 7 schools.



## Handmade Arts & Crafts Market

Tuesday & Wednesday  
December 2 & 3  
11:00 am – 8:00 pm

**La Vera Party Center**  
32200 Chardon Road  
Willoughby Hills, OH 44094

- Two banquet rooms of handmade gift items by crafters.
- Hourly door prize drawing of \$25 Beary Merry gift certificates courtesy of Monreal Srnick Funerals & Cremations.
- 50+ basket raffle to benefit Susan G. Komen for the Cure.
- Lunch, dinner & pre-ordered family take-out meals available.
- \$4 admission.

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Call today to schedule your own private screening. Please allow a minimum of 24-48 hours to schedule.

## Shop day and night at Holly Days

Handmade nature-themed gifts available during this holiday-favorite event

Revel in a premier selection of juried, nature-themed gifts by a variety of regional artists at Geauga Park District's ever-popular Holly Days Artisan Boutique — the perfect place to find quality handmade items for anyone on your list!

This year's show at The West Woods will once again feature the festive "Holly Night" evening market on Friday, November 7, from 5 to 8 p.m., along with daytime shopping on Saturday, November 8, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. More than 40 vendors will be on hand, including some set up outdoors under tents — so dress for the weather and plan to explore them all!

Shoppers can also look forward to perusing the charming Mistletoe Market, a room full of youth artisans selling their handmade gifts at typically lower price points, and to enjoying delicious food from Manna Food Truck, Vivander Cookie Mobile, Crooked Kettle Popcorn,

and Donut NV.

Gifts at these popular events traditionally include heirloom-quality ornaments and holiday décor, all-natural bath and beauty products, gourmet treats, unique jewelry and accessories, beautiful pottery and glass items, hand-turned wooden pieces, holiday wreaths, and more.

Want a sneak peek at the lineup? Participating artisans are listed at [www.geaugaparkdistrict.org/activity/special-events-art-shows](http://www.geaugaparkdistrict.org/activity/special-events-art-shows). You're guaranteed to leave with something you love — or something you'll love to give!

The West Woods Nature Center is located at 9465 Kinsman Road (Route 87) in Russell Township and is fully wheelchair- and stroller-accessible.

For more information about Geauga Park District events, call 440-286-9516 between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., or visit them online at [www.geaugaparkdistrict.org](http://www.geaugaparkdistrict.org) or on Facebook, X, Instagram, or YouTube.



## Fine Arts Association presents Anne of Green Gables – The Musical

November 28 – December 21, 2025

The Fine Arts Association presents Anne of Green Gables – The Musical™, running November 28 through December 21 at the Corning Auditorium in Willoughby.

Based on the beloved novel by L.M. Montgomery, this classic musical follows the imaginative and spirited Anne Shirley as she wins the hearts of her adoptive family and neighbors in the small farming community of Avonlea. With its rich score and timeless story, Anne of Green Gables – The Musical™ has become a cherished piece of musical theatre history, delighting audiences of all ages.

Group rates are available. Tickets and information can be found at [fineartsassociation.org](http://fineartsassociation.org) or by calling 440-951-7500.

## St. Mary School in Chardon Early Childhood Expo is November 20

St. Mary School students learn and thrive beyond a traditional Catholic school education. Inspired by a vision of academic excellence rooted in a foundation of faith, and as the first and only Ohio Designated STEM School in Geauga County, their students from preschool through junior high are exceedingly prepared both academically and spiritually for their futures. They strive to develop each student's unique potential through an environment of Faith, in cooperation with the Family, and with a vision for the Future.

Come and learn about their preschool and kindergarten programs at their Early Childhood Expo on Thursday, November 20 from 6–7 p.m.



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FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
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# NOVEMBER 27, 2025

## Lake County YMCA

### In Person w/Virtual Option



# Kickstart life skills

## Why martial arts can make an impact at any age

If you're looking for an activity that does more than burn calories and pass time, martial arts might just be your family's next best move. At GriffonRawl Combat Sports & Fitness in Mentor, programs such as muay thai, boxing, MMA, junior MMA, elder fit, Brazilian jiu jitsu, and wrestling are helping kids and adults alike build fitness, self-defense skills, discipline, and confidence.

"We train beginners to professionals in the arts to get in shape, learn to fight to be able to defend yourself, compete and/or just to have a lot of fun," says owner Jason Dent, a professional mixed-martial-arts veteran who has dedicated his career to helping students of all ages grow physically and mentally.

Research shows that structured martial arts training improves physical fitness—speed, agility, strength, coordination, and balance—even in children. Beyond the physical benefits, martial arts teach life lessons. Kids learn focus and respect; adults discover mental resilience and stress relief.

### A smart move for any age

Children today spend more time on screens than ever, but martial arts training pulls them into the real world. It gives them something tangible: mastering a skill, earning a belt, learning to control both their bodies and their emotions. The result? Confidence, self-discipline, and respect for others.

Adults can benefit just as much. Whether you're diving into Brazilian jiu jitsu or joining a muay thai class, you're not just fighting an opponent—you're building strength, improving your health, and developing the ability to defend yourself if necessary.

"I have been training at Griffon-Rawl for nearly 13 years. This gym has always been welcoming and felt like home. For the last three years, Coach Jason Dent and his staff have been amazing at helping influence my daughters. In addition to learning all the skills for self-defense and competition, they are learning respect for themselves and others. It has been an



Owner/operator Jason Dent with his wife Masda and son Lincoln. Jason entered the MMA cage as a professional in 2003, defeating his first opponent. He won the first of his five professional championships a little later that year. Masda helps with administrative responsibilities and teaches muay thai and boxing programs when needed. She is also a team fighter and has competition experience. Lincoln is currently a purple belt in their junior MMA program.

amazing journey. We are so grateful for the opportunity to plug in and train together."

— GriffonRawl student and parent

### It's not about fighting— it's about empowerment

At GriffonRawl, the goal isn't to create brawlers—it's to build confident individuals who can handle life's challenges. Junior MMA and wrestling classes, for example, emphasize technique, control, and sportsmanship, teaching students to prevent and defuse conflict rather than start it.

### Training for everyone

- Muay thai and boxing: Develop striking skills, coordination, and cardio endurance
- MMA and junior MMA: Blend striking, grappling, and real-world self-defense
- Elder fit: Strength, balance, and mobility for older adults
- Brazilian jiu jitsu and wrestling: Ground control, leverage, and staying calm under pressure

No matter your age, experience level, or goals, GriffonRawl offers a supportive environment where everyone trains together and improves together.

### Take the first step

Dent encourages anyone curious about martial arts to give it a try. "Check out our weekly schedule online. Stop in anytime and check out as many different programs as you'd like. No reservation needed. The first session in each program is free! It's that simple. No obligations!"

Whether your child is bursting with energy or you're an adult seeking meaningful movement, martial arts can be the answer—fitness, focus, confidence, and self-defense all rolled into one. At GriffonRawl you'll find more than classes; you'll find a community that pushes, supports, and celebrates you every step of the way.

GriffonRawl Combat Sports & Fitness is located at 6090 Pinecone Drive in Mentor. For info call 440-358-9371 or visit [ohio-mma.com](http://ohio-mma.com).

~Article by Dan Miller

# TRY A CLASS FOR FREE!

Check out our weekly schedule online.  
Stop in anytime and check out as many  
different programs as you'd like.

No reservation needed.

The first session in each program is free!

It's that simple. No obligations!

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440-358-9371 ♦ [OHIO-MMA.COM](http://OHIO-MMA.COM)

## Miracle on Erie Street 5K run/walk makes its return on December 6

Jingle your bells! The festive spirit is about to take over Downtown Willoughby as the Miracle on Erie Street 5K Run/Walk makes its return on December 6, 2025, this year, with a new Miracle Mile added. Organized by Erie Street Miracles, a Willoughby-based charity, this event promises to kick off the Christmas season filled with cheer.

Erie Street Miracles provides hope during the holiday season. Their goal is simple, to restore faith in Christmas miracles one family at a time, by providing Christmas mornings to our neighbors in need including those uprooted by domestic violence, recovering from substance abuse, or burdened by illness.

The race route winds through Willoughby's neighborhoods, offering a mostly flat terrain suitable for participants of all fitness levels. Bring the whole family for photos with Santa, festive runner awards, warming hot cocoa, and more surprises.



To make the day even more festive, each runner/walker will receive two drink tickets to use in Downtown Willoughby's bars and restaurants after the race.

Registration for the Miracle on Erie Street 5K is now open. To register or donate to support the mission, visit [www.ErieStreetMiracles.com](http://www.ErieStreetMiracles.com).

Remember, it's not just a 5k... it's a Miracle on Erie Street!

## Geauga Family YMCA to launch EGYM on November 7

The Geauga Family YMCA, a branch of the YMCA of Greater Cleveland, will launch EGYM, a smart fitness system that personalizes every workout through connected technology, on Thursday, Nov. 7.

EGYM combines advanced equipment with data-driven training to help members of all fitness levels achieve their goals safely and effectively. Each machine automatically adjusts to the individual's body measurements and strength level, guiding users through a customized workout that adapts as they improve.

Members can log in with their YMCA wristband or key tag to access their personalized settings. The system tracks performance, provides visual feedback and syncs with a mobile app to keep progress consistent between visits.

The launch of EGYM reflects the YMCA of Greater Cleveland's ongoing commitment to innovation and overall well-being. The system enhances the Y's mission to strengthen spirit, mind and body by making fitness more engaging, inclusive and sustainable.

Members and community members are invited to attend the EGYM launch event on November 7 at the Geauga Family YMCA to experience live demonstrations, meet wellness staff and learn how this new technology can help them reach their fitness goals.

The Geauga Family YMCA is located at 12460 Bass Lake Road in Chardon.

For more info or to schedule a visit, go to [www.clevelandymca.org/wellness/egym](http://www.clevelandymca.org/wellness/egym) or call 440-285-7543.

## Subscribe to the Today's Family EMAIL NEWSLETTER!



Featuring, updates, announcements, contests, featured events, articles, parenting tips and lots more!

Scan the QR code and sign up today!



## Indoor Sports and Fun at LNSP East!

### Lil Kickers & Skills Institute



#### WINTER SESSION

December 3–March 7 (12 weeks)

No classes on January 25

Off two weeks for the holidays:

Dec 22–Jan 3

Try a class for FREE or register today online!

- Youth soccer development program
- 50-minute classes, one day a week (Tuesdays, Thursdays, or Saturdays)
  - Ages 18 months–12 years old
- Payment plan available! • Register anytime

Cost: Kickers \$18/class • Skills \$20/class

Contact Paul Liotta | [PLIOTTA@LNSPORTSPARK.COM](mailto:PLIOTTA@LNSPORTSPARK.COM)



### Lil Sluggers

#### WINTER SESSION

December 3–February 21 (10 weeks)

No classes on January 25

Off two weeks for the holidays:

Dec 22–Jan 3

- Nationally franchised youth baseball development program
- 50-minute classes, one day a week (Thursdays or Saturdays)
  - Ages 2–6 years old
- Payment plan available! • Register anytime

Cost: \$18.50/class

Contact Noah Koscho | [NKOSCHO@LNSPORTSPARK.COM](mailto:NKOSCHO@LNSPORTSPARK.COM)

## Batting Cages



M–F 3:30–9 pm; Sat/Sun 9 am–8 pm

State-of-the-art batting cages available for personal or party use.

Instructional cage is also available.

\$1.50 per token • \$10 for 7 tokens • \$20 for 15 tokens

Batting cages may be closed during private parties. Call for availability.

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[www.LostNationSports.com](http://www.LostNationSports.com)



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