



# TODAY'S family

Dec 2025/ Jan 2026

Lake Geauga

Atlas Cinemas  
gift cards are  
the perfect gift  
See page 17 for info!

## Santa's North Pole

How St. Nicholas  
ended up in a  
wintry place

## Great Gift Ideas

For kids and grownups

## Living Well

New Today's Family advice column  
for parents and caregivers!

## Providence House

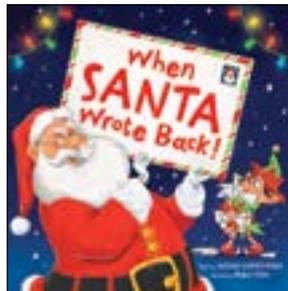
Help make holiday  
wishes come true  
for children in crisis

## Talking to kids about giving

Without making  
it guilt-based

## PLUS

Humor  
Book Club  
Fun Events  
Mommy Chronicles



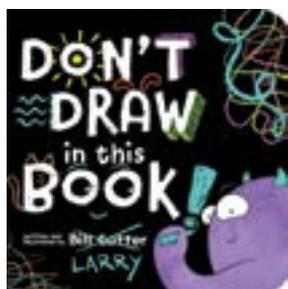
### When Santa Wrote Back

By Nathan Christopher

Come along for some fun in this hilarious holiday adventure starring Jake, a precocious young boy who writes a letter to Santa full of outrageous requests and gets more than he bargained for... when Santa writes back!

Jake is excited for the most epic Christmas ever — a Christmas in which he gets every present he can dream of! In order to make this happen, Jake writes a letter to Santa containing his countless gift requests, speedy shipping suggestions, and a friendly reminder that he awaits Santa's reply.

Santa usually saves his ink for the naughty and nice list, but it might just take a letter or two from the big guy himself, along with a bit of holiday magic, in order to help Jake understand the true meaning of Christmas.



### Don't Draw in this Book!

By Bill Cotter

A new interactive board book from Bill Cotter! Trace the shapes in Larry's magic sketchbook and turn the page for a surprise!

Larry the monster has a new sketchbook—a magic one, where you "draw" using your finger to trace shapes. Tracing each shape makes something new happen on the next

page! So you can draw a wavy line, turn the page, and see Larry surfing a tidal wave and shouting COWABUNGA!

You never know what's going to happen next, though, because that fish shape you draw might turn out to be a huge whale—and now Larry's surfing right on top of it! Quick, draw something else! This touch-and-trace interactive story is a fun way for kids to practice fine motor skills or just send Larry on a wild adventure, all in the silly, exuberant style that's Bill Cotter's trademark.

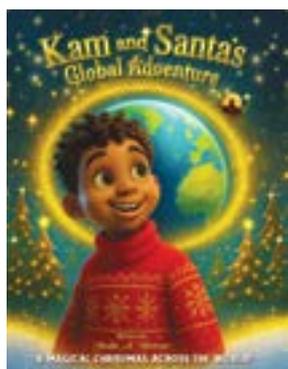


### Mommy is Here! After a Long Day at the Hospital

By Nathalie P. Suarez Moscoso & Edison J. Cano Cevallos

*Mommy is Here! After a Long Day at the Hospital* is a heart-warming bedtime story that captures the magical reunion between a mom and her baby after a long day apart. This

touching paperback honors the resilience and special bond between parents working in the medical field and their children. It offers a comforting space for love, laughter, and connection, reminding little ones that even when Mommy's away, her love never takes a break.



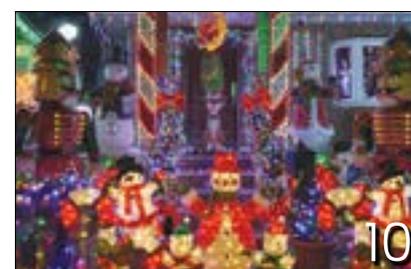
### Kam and Santa's Global Adventure

By Charissa Bates

Join Kam and Santa on a whirlwind trip around the world in this festive, heart-warming story. *Kam and Santa's Global Adventure* introduces children to different cultures and holiday traditions, all while celebrating kindness, generosity, and the spirit of giving — a must-read for the season.

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#### Publisher/Advertising

Kim Miller  
kim@todaysfamilymagazine.com

#### Publisher/Editor/Online

Dan Miller  
dan@todaysfamilymagazine.com

#### Writers

Deanna Adams  
Sophia Filipiak  
Dan Miller  
Jeannine Todd  
Stacy Turner

P.O. Box 7316  
Eastlake, Ohio 44097  
TodaysFamilyMagazine.com  
**440-223-0936**



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**[Eugene.Tetrick@jfs.ohio.gov](mailto:Eugene.Tetrick@jfs.ohio.gov)**

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

Dear Santa,   
 me and my little Sisters will be at  
 Providence House this Christmas.  
 we really need winter clothes and boots BUT  
 if you can bring some toys that  
 would be so cool!  
 Please tell Rudolph to bring you here so me and  
 the other kids can meet him.



we love you Santa!



See all of the ways you can make holiday wishes come true for children in crisis at

[provhouse.org/holiday](http://provhouse.org/holiday)



## Help make holiday wishes come true for children in crisis

You can make the holiday season special for the babies and children at Providence House!

Providence House keeps kids safe and families together to prevent foster care placements by embracing them with support during times of crisis to help enhance stability. We've served more than 20,000 children and families across northeast Ohio since 1981 – and in the last five years, 99% of our families have stayed together!

As a local nonprofit, we are nearly 80% privately funded and rely on the generous support of our community to fulfill our mission at no cost to our families.

We have a holiday wish list full of toys and items needed to provide loving care for the children staying in our crisis nurseries and helpful holiday donation resources available at [provhouse.org/holiday](http://provhouse.org/holiday).

Here are a few ideas to get you started!

• **Shop our holiday wish list at Amazon, Target & Walmart:** We have registries at Target, Amazon, and Walmart to make it easy to find gifts and essential items for our children that can be sent directly to Providence House! You can find them all online at [provhouse.org/wishlist](http://provhouse.org/wishlist).

• **Organize a giving tree or gift**

**drive:** Your family, company, or organization can host a holiday giving tree or gift drive to benefit the babies and children of Providence House. We have all the resources you need at [provhouse.org/holiday](http://provhouse.org/holiday)

• **Host a holiday party:** Ask your guests to bring a donation for Providence House instead of a host gift. You can find our Wish List at [provhouse.org/wishlist](http://provhouse.org/wishlist).

• **Give a gift in honor of family, friends, or colleagues:** For donations of \$20 or more, we'll send a special holiday card featuring our children's artwork to let them know you are supporting the children and families of Providence House in their honor. Find details and get started online at [provhouse.org/holiday](http://provhouse.org/holiday).

• **Make a stock or an IRA gift:** Maximize your potential tax benefits while making a significant impact on our mission with a stock or IRA charitable rollover donation! You can find details at [provhouse.org/stock](http://provhouse.org/stock) or [provhouse.org/IRA](http://provhouse.org/IRA).

Visit [provhouse.org/holiday](http://provhouse.org/holiday) for more details and contact us at [info@provhouse.org](mailto:info@provhouse.org) with questions!

On behalf of everyone at Providence House, we wish you and your loved ones a joyous holiday season and happy new year!



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## Great Lakes Mall unwraps a variety of holiday fun and festivities

Great Lakes Mall is unwrapping one of its most exciting holiday seasons yet, offering area shoppers and families a full calendar of festivities. The lineup blends beloved traditions, such as visits and photos with Santa Claus and Paws & Claus, with exciting new experiences, including Oliver's Marketplace and other unique community events.

**Photos with Santa** will take place in the Dillard's Concourse through December 24. Guests who make a reservation in advance will receive bonus gifts valued at \$54 including a personalized digital message from Santa before their visit, a three-month trial to Crayola Create and Play, and more. Walk-ups are also welcome. Visit the mall's website for a complete list of hours, pricing and reservation link.

Four-legged friends will take center stage during **Paws & Claus** on Monday, December 8 from 5–7 p.m. Well-behaved pets on leashes are welcome and reservations can be made on the mall's website. Walk-ups are also welcome.

**Sensitive Santa**®, held on Sunday, December 7 from 9:30–10:30 a.m., provides a sensory-friendly experience that welcomes guests with sensory sensitivities to enjoy a magical morning with Santa before regular mall activities begin. Guests can enjoy a special activity in addition to a visit with Santa. Families can register for the event here; walk ups are also welcome.

New this year, Great Lakes Mall welcomes **Oliver's Marketplace**, where guests can discover festive and seasonal, local and handmade items, while supporting small businesses. Oliver's Marketplace will be open every Saturday through Jan. 3, 2026, from 11 a.m.–5 p.m. in the Dillard's Concourse near Oliver's Emporium & Holiday Shop. Vendors interested in getting involved in Oliver's Marketplace should email [oliversemporium@myyahoo.com](mailto:oliversemporium@myyahoo.com).

For more information about Great Lakes Mall's holiday events and extended holiday hours please visit [shopgreatlakessmall.com](http://shopgreatlakessmall.com).

## 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



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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



### 2026 OPEN HOUSE SCHEDULE

JANUARY 21	6 - 8PM
JANUARY 25	12 - 2PM
JANUARY 28	6 - 8PM
MARCH 11	6 - 8PM

**MORAL VALUES**  
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**ACHIEVEMENT**

**\*VISIT US AT OPEN HOUSE OR CALL THE SCHOOL OFFICE FOR A PERSONAL TOUR!**



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# Do you know someone who deserves the SPOTLIGHT?

We're always looking to share inspiring, heartwarming stories — whether it's a young entrepreneur chasing a dream, a child who's overcome challenges, a teacher making a lasting impact, or someone quietly spreading kindness in their community.

If you know someone whose story would inspire or uplift Today's Family readers, send us an email and tell us about them! Please include a few details about who they are and what makes their story special. If your idea is a good fit, one of our writers will reach out to learn more and craft an article.

**As a thank you for helping us find great stories, we'll send you four tickets to Atlas Cinemas plus \$20 in concession vouchers!**

Please note: if more than one person suggests the same idea, the tickets will go to whoever sent it in first.)

SCAN TO EMAIL US!



## Wild Winter Lights at the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo

Cleveland Metroparks Zoo is once again transforming into a dazzling winter wonderland for the seventh straight year with the return of Wild Winter Lights. Now through December 30, guests of all ages can celebrate the magic of the holiday season with over 1.5 million lights and the return of holiday favorites.



Wild Winter Lights offers visitors a chance to explore an immersive trail of dazzling holiday-themed areas including Colorful Forest, Magical Storybook, Glittering Galaxy, Swan Lake, Frosty Lane, the Conservation Trail, and of course, Santa's North Pole Lodge where families can meet Santa and capture the perfect holiday photo.

Guests can choose to experience Wild Winter Lights on foot or from the warmth of their vehicle on select nights during the Wild Winter Lights Drive-Through.

Highlights of this year's festivities include:

- A mesmerizing musical light show featuring a towering 50-foot holiday tree

- Free carousel rides
- Festive costumed characters and model train displays
- Delicious seasonal treats like Jack Frost Donuts, Kernels by Chrissie, and classic hot chocolate
- New this year, the Zoo will host its first-ever Ugly Sweater 5K on Saturday, December 7 at 8:30 a.m. Participants are encouraged to wear their most festive holiday attire as they race through the Zoo grounds. Wild Winter Lights runs from 5–9 p.m. on select evenings now through Tuesday, December 30. Visit [FutureForWildlife.org/lights](http://FutureForWildlife.org/lights) to purchase tickets. Advance non-member tickets: \$27, or a four-pack for \$80; drive-through tickets: \$59 per vehicle (nonmembers).

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





# A NEW TODAY'S FAMILY ADVICE COLUMN!

## LIVING WELL

with Rebecca Fellenbaum

Heartfelt advice to help you enjoy this time in your life.

Scan the QR code to learn more or write to Rebecca!



### Parenting a self-critical tween

**Dear Rebecca:** My tween suffers from self-criticism and anxiety. She berates herself if she does poorly on a test, forgets to turn in an assignment, and outside of school if she loses something or something goes wrong with a friend. I feel like I'm walking on eggshells trying to get her to toughen up and feel better without further alienating her. She's a great kid, but she's holding herself back, and I can tell she's really suffering. How can I help?

~Stacy, Mayfield Heights

**Dear Stacy:** Thank you for sharing. You sound like an observant and sensitive mom. Let's dig in.

When did you first notice her anxiety and self-criticism? Has she always been like this, or can you attribute this behavior to a specific event or time in her life? You could gently explore this with her. Start by saying, "I notice you get really upset when things don't go the way you want. Can you tell me what is going on inside you when that happens?" You can even ask her how old she feels when she feels this way or when she first remembers it happening.

In The Adult Chair® model I teach and practice, we define anxiety as the physical manifestation of unfelt emotions. Feeling our emotions helps us get to the other side of anxiety. We can start by naming them and creating a safe space to feel them. Emotions that we allow to metabolize without attaching a story to them can be processed in 90 seconds.

Modeling real-life situations is also

important. Let her see you handle mistakes with compassion. That can look like saying, "Oops, I took the wrong turn. I can fix that," or "I forgot to get milk, no big deal." This can help her see that mistakes don't mean she is bad, but that they're simply part of life.

You mentioned feeling like you have to walk on eggshells. Can you get curious about what you're feeling? It's not your job to toughen her up or make her feel better. Unfortunately, we cannot make anyone feel anything (even our kids). Instead, you can show her and yourself love and acceptance, and walk beside her no matter how she feels.

Good luck, mama. I'm cheering both of you on.

### Overwhelmed mom of two

**Dear Rebecca:** I have two kids under five, and while I'm happy, I struggle with the reality of constant overwhelm, no time to myself, and swings between joy and stress. For example, when I hear my kids pitter-pattering on a Saturday morning way earlier than I'd like, I feel trapped and overwhelmed. How can I enjoy this time more?

~Janelle, Willoughby Hills

**Derar Janelle:** I've been there, and I'm not just going to tell you to savor the moments and that it gets easier. You deserve tools and help right now.

Let's start with mindset. What are your default thoughts? If we keep thinking the same thoughts, nothing will change. Try this simple shift: when you hear those early-morning footsteps, place a hand on your heart

and name two things you're grateful for, even if it's coffee and warm slippers. This interrupts your default thought loop.

Our thoughts stem from our beliefs. What beliefs do you have about yourself as a mom? Are you listening to your inner wisdom, or are you trying to keep up with everyone else? Releasing unrealistic expectations is an act of self-love.

Next, set up small systems that support you, like a gift to yourself. You could try prepping food the night before, swapping childcare with a friend, or keeping a basket of books and toys near your bed so mornings go smoother. When my kids were little, my neighbor and I had early morning pancake break-

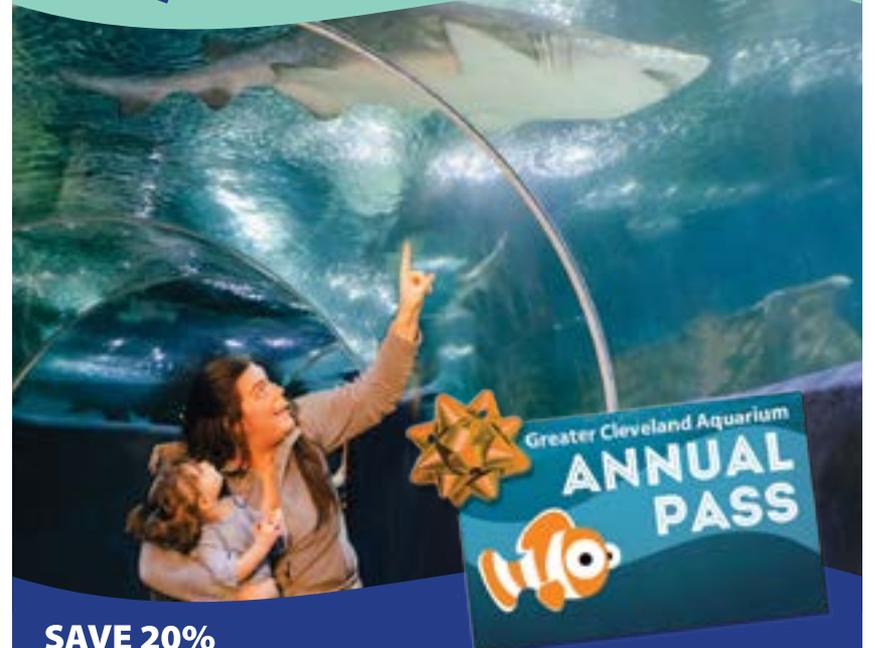
fasts. The kids played, and we could have coffee or take turns getting ready. Those little things add up.

Parenting young kids often swings between total love and absolute fear, and the full range of emotions in between. You don't have to choose one or the other. Allow yourself to feel them all. When you accept the full spectrum of your experience, you stop fighting reality, and you can start to find ease.

You're not failing. You're learning to hold joy and exhaustion in the same hand and you're doing great.

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).

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# New Year's traditions

From ancient rituals to modern celebrations

Every year, millions of people ring in the new year with countdowns, resolutions, champagne, and fireworks. But how did these traditions begin? Their stories stretch back thousands of years and across many cultures.

## The countdown

The famous "10... 9... 8..." originated from early 20th-century time ball drops, including the one at the U.S. Naval Observatory. The idea was to synchronize clocks — and eventually, celebrations. When the Times Square ball first dropped in 1907, people began counting aloud as it descended, creating the tradition we know today.

## Midnight kisses

This custom traces back to European folklore, which held that the first person you encountered in the new year could influence your luck. A kiss at midnight symbolized good fortune — and

choosing who you'd like that luck to come from.

## Resolutions

The concept is surprisingly ancient. The Babylonians made promises to their gods during Akitu, a festival marking the new year. Romans later adopted the practice, offering vows to Janus (the two-faced god of beginnings). Today, resolutions are more personal but follow the same spirit: reflection and fresh starts.

## Champagne toasts

Champagne's association with luxury began in the 17th century when it was reserved for royalty and special occasions. By the 1800s, improvements in production made it more accessible, and it quickly became the drink of choice for toasting major milestones — including midnight on New Year's Eve.

## The ball drop

Times Square's ball has been redesigned seven times. The original weighed 700 pounds and used 100 light bulbs. Today's version is a 12-foot crystal sphere illuminated by LED lights — a glowing symbol of renewal seen around the world.

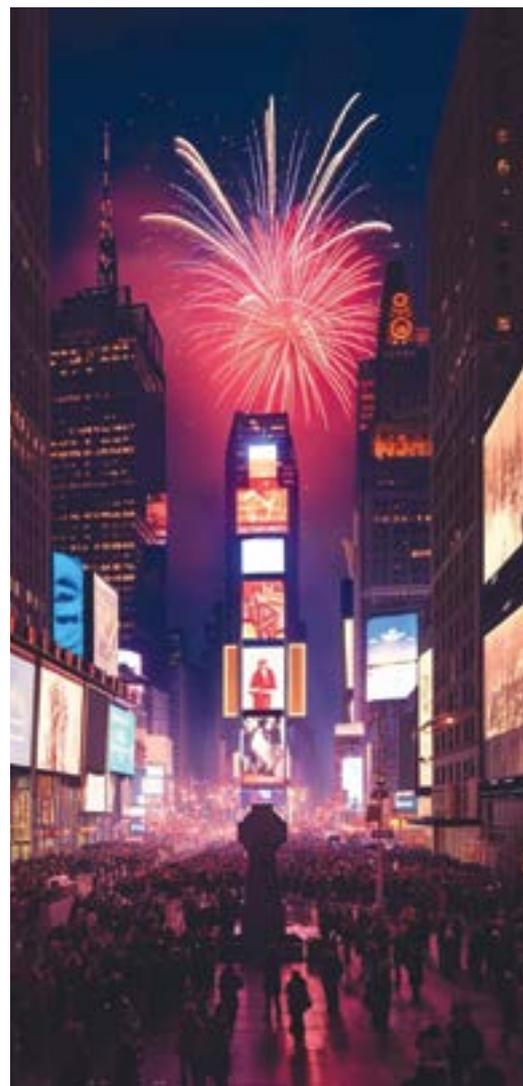
## Fireworks

Ancient Chinese celebrations used loud sounds and fire to scare away evil spirits. As gunpowder spread, fireworks became a global symbol of celebration and protection. Their bright bursts also represent hope for the coming year.

From ancient rituals to modern celebrations, New Year's traditions all share the same theme: welcoming hope, leaving behind the old, and stepping into the future with light, sound, and connection.

~Article by Dan Miller

~Photo: Shutterstock



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## New year success depends on perspective

What Alfred Nobel — and a daughter’s innocent question — can teach us about fresh starts

As one year ends and another begins, many of us make lists of goals we hope will bring us a sense of accomplishment. But sometimes what we think of as “success” can shift dramatically with just a little outside perspective.

For years, every Christmas I spent hours deep-cleaning the house in preparation for extended family visits. In my mind, a successful holiday required spotless countertops and dust-free baseboards. Every December I wound up scrubbing until my fingers were raw, promising myself that next year I’d start earlier.

One year, starting early actually made my annual list of goals. I was knee-deep in cleaning when one of my daughters wandered in and asked—eyes wide with excitement—“Who’s coming to visit?” For a split second, I assumed she meant: “We must live in our own filth the rest of the year.” But what she really wanted to know was whether her cousins were coming. In her mind,

my obsessive cleaning signaled fun family time ahead. Her perspective made me realize that my definition of a “successful” holiday—a pristine house—was far less important than the relationships we were preparing for. Sometimes, an outside perspective opens your eyes in the best way.

A much bigger perspective shift happened to Alfred Nobel when he unexpectedly read his own obituary. Before that moment, the Swedish engineer likely saw his life as a great success—he had amassed a fortune through inventions, most notably dynamite. But when a French newspaper mistakenly published Alfred’s obituary instead of his brother Ludvig’s, they condemned him as “The Merchant of Death,” blaming him for the destructive uses of his inventions. According to the Nobel Foundation, the shock of reading how the world might remember him deeply affected Alfred. He rewrote his will, leaving most of his fortune to establish the Nobel Prizes—including the Prize



for Peace—for which he is now honored.

Most of us will never read our own obituary, and many are much better with domestic arts than I am. But as you build your list of goals for the new year, it may be worth seeking

an outside perspective. Sometimes a small shift in viewpoint can change everything about what “success” really means.

~Article by Stacy Turner

~Photo credit:

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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 Ed Strauss | [ESTRAUSS@LNSPORTSPARK.COM](mailto:ESTRAUSS@LNSPORTSPARK.COM)

## Batting Cages



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State-of-the-art batting cages available for personal or party use. Instructional cage is also available.

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

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## A season that shines

### The bright history of holiday lights

When the days grow short and the evenings arrive before dinner, something magical happens across neighborhoods everywhere: the lights come out. String lights, candles, glowing wreaths, inflatable snowmen illuminated from within — the whole season seems to sparkle. But why?

#### A tradition older than Christmas

Long before Edison, LEDs, or Clark Griswold's famous roof display, people used light to celebrate the winter solstice — the darkest time of the year. In many ancient cultures, lighting fires, candles, and lanterns in December symbolized hope, protection, and the promise that longer days would return.

#### Candles on the tree

By the 1600s in Germany, families began decorating evergreen trees with candles to symbolize warmth and life in winter. It was beautiful... and extremely dangerous. Buckets of sand or water would sit nearby in case the tree caught fire — which it often did!

#### Enter electricity

In 1882, Edward H. Johnson, an associate of Thomas Edison, hand-wired 80 red, white, and blue bulbs and hung them on his Christmas tree. Curious crowds gathered outside his New York home to stare

through the windows. Slowly, electric tree lights spread — though early versions were expensive and required hiring an electrician to install.

#### From bubble lights to LEDs

The 20th century brought a parade of styles: C7 and C9 bulbs, bubble lights (which still have a cult following), icicle lights, and today's long-lasting, energy-efficient LEDs. Modern lights are safer, cooler to the touch, and available in every shape from snowflakes to synchronized musical displays.

#### Why we still do it

Holiday lights create a sense of warmth when the world feels cold. They brighten neighborhoods, lift moods, and remind us of childhood excitement. Psychologists even say lights can improve mental well-being during the darkest months by triggering feelings of nostalgia and comfort.

In a season that often feels busy and commercial, lights give us a simple, shared joy. Whether you prefer classic white strands, whimsical rainbow patterns, or the neighbor's house that goes full Clark Griswold every year, those glowing decorations connect us — to history, to tradition, and to each other.

~Article by Dan Miller



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## Enjoy free daily admission and holiday events at the Cleveland Museum of Art

Make your season bright this year with a trip to the Cleveland Museum of Art (CMA). From the CMA's largest-ever fashion exhibition and world-class art to holiday music, family activities, holiday-themed nightlife and traditions tours, there's something for everyone. With free daily admission, it's the ideal place for people of all ages and groups of all sizes.

### Youth and family programming

#### Open Studio

Sundays, December 7 and 21  
10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Open Studio days provide free, drop-in art-making sessions designed for the whole family, encouraging creativity and bonding through hands-on activities.

#### Play Days

Sunday, December 14  
10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Play Days at the CMA are free opportunities for families to be creative and curious and connect through art together. Events include

music, storybook readings, games, and art making for the whole family. Each event has a theme that relates to an exhibition, artist, or artworks in the CMA's collection.

Join them as they embark on a captivating journey exploring the revealing beauty of light. Don't miss a glowing display where light reveals the secrets of the past along with expert-led demonstrations of how art restoration brings forgotten masterpieces back to life with the CMA's conservation team and the Education Art Collection!

### Holiday Pop Up! Open Studio Saturday and Sunday, December 27 and 28 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Reflect on the year and dream of the future. Design a vessel for your memories and explore creative ways to document time.

Join them in the Ames Family Atrium for this special winter-break studio!

For a list of all the CMA's holiday programming please visit [www.clevelandart.org](http://www.clevelandart.org).



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**Eurographics Camping Trailer Tin 550-piece puzzle**  
www.eurographicspuzzles.com  
(Ages 12+)

This vibrant puzzle captures a nostalgic camping scene with vintage trailers, lush nature, and fun outdoor activities.

Packaged in a unique, embossed tin shaped like a retro camping trailer, this puzzle is not only a fun challenge but also a charming collectible.

Perfect for camping enthusiasts, puzzle lovers, and those who appreciate the great outdoors, this high-quality puzzle guarantees hours of entertainment and a beautiful keepsake.



**Eurographics Robots Lunch Bag and 100-piece puzzle**  
www.eurographicspuzzles.com  
(Ages 5+)

Step into a world of nostalgia and futuristic fun. This vibrant and eye-catching set features a collection of colorful, vintage tin robots that will captivate both children and adults alike. The 100-piece puzzle showcases a stunning assortment of retro-styled robots, bringing back memories of classic toys while sparking creativity and imagination. The puzzle comes stored in a matching, high-quality insulated lunch bag.



**Eurographics Delightful Donuts Lunch Bag and 100-piece puzzle**  
www.eurographicspuzzles.com  
(Ages 5+)

Indulge in a sweet and colorful challenge with the Delightful Donuts Lunch Bag. This vibrant 100-piece puzzle features a tempting assortment of beautifully decorated donuts, making it a feast for the eyes and a fun activity for puzzle lovers of all ages.

The puzzle comes stored in a matching, high-quality insulated lunch bag, perfect for keeping your meals fresh while showing off your love for delicious treats.

**Purryfuls**

www.purryfuls.com

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**Wise Blocks Race Car**  
(Ages 8+)

This STEAM accredited toy is good for development and learning!

With fun, challenging sets filled with durable pieces, Wise Blocks Small Blocks are the perfect toy for an aspiring engineer, a hobbyist, or anyone up for creative open-ended play! • Small brick format, compatible with LEGO and other leading brands • Take control with a fully functional, 4-way remote control (front, back, left, right)



**Smart Steps Balance Buddy Learning Monkey**  
(Ages 18 months+)

Discover a unique and interactive way to learn counting and balancing. It comes with two play modes.

In COUNTING MODE, your little one can learn to count from 1 to 5 as they follow voice instructions to add rings. BALANCE MODE promotes their sense of directionality, helping them understand right and left as they keep the leaning monkey balanced. For more challenges, the monkey rotates 360 degrees, encouraging your kids to reach new levels of accuracy and motion coordination. This innovative STEM toy offers a variety of exercises that enhance cognitive development, spatial awareness, and finger strength. Let's count, balance, and simply have fun with the Smart Steps Balance Buddy Learning Monkey!



- Set includes 414 bricks, electric motor, instruction booklet, and hand-held remote control
- 5 AAA Batteries required, not included
- Experience the thrill of building and playing with your own RC Race Car!
- Available at Walmart.

*Holiday*  
**GIFT GUIDE**  
— FOR KIDS —



**Matchbox Spin Cyclone Car Wash Playset**  
With 1:64 Scale Die-Cast Toy Corvette & Tow Truck  
(Ages 3+)

With the Matchbox Spin Cyclone Car Wash, kids rev up the adventures with a multi-level playset that ignites creative storytelling. Get race-ready in the pretend tune-up station where there's a working vehicle lift and tire-change station make sure the wheels are aligned! On the top level, a moveable attendant supervises the traffic flow, then directs cars to the cyclone tunnel for a wash. Kids pull a lever to make the tunnel spin, and it will randomly stop on one of three different settings: dirty, soapy and clean. When it lands on the clean icon, the car races down to ground floor. There's no water necessary in this wash!



**Squishyverse Series 1 Family Pack**  
(Ages 5+)

Exclusively in this pack is a Baby to join each of the seven Tribes featuring Mom, Dad and Teen characters found in other packs. Make Your Own Snackipoo Tribe of Squishies with the family pack and create your own exclusive Baby Poo Character! Each set contains over 8000 unique combinations!



**Squishyverse Series 1 Single Pack**  
(Ages 5+)

This nifty hand-held pack overflows with ten surprises inside. Peel the cover from the corner and start mixing, styling, squishing. Contains everything you need to make your first Snackipoo. With over 10 surprises inside and their ohhh-sooo satisfying texture, you'll want to make another one!



**MEGA BLOKS Big Building Bag**  
(Ages 1+)

- This set includes 80 big and vibrant building blocks.
- Easy to grip, stack, and pull apart, these building blocks are the perfect fit for your toddler's little hands.
- When playtime is over, blocks can be stored in the bag for easy cleanup.



**Hot Wheels Snack Containers**  
www.whiskware.com  
Snack, Stack, GO!

Snacking on the go just got a whole lot easier with Whiskware snacking containers! They are perfect for keeping your snacks, crafting supplies, and toys safe and secure while you're out and about. And the best part? They're stackable, stylish, and super easy to carry wherever you go!

Say goodbye to boring old plastic bags and hello to Whiskware snacking containers!



**Fisher-Price Little People Caring Fun Animal Farm**  
(Ages 1+)

This interactive playset features a two-story barn packed with hands-on activities all around, plus a drop-through silo and multiple stalls to house and care for the animals.

As kids play out fun days on the farm, Smart Stages technology introduces opposites, colors, counting and more with 50+ sing-along songs, sounds and phrases.



**Bloomsapes Blossom Bouquet Wooden Building Kit**  
www.MindWare.com  
(Ages 8+)

Set the glue aside; this intricate wooden flower bouquet building kit lets you create stunning floral displays without messy adhesive! Use precision laser-cut pieces for a smooth assembly process as you piece together a bouquet of colorful wooden flowers—including a lilac, pink rose and red carnations—accessorized with eucalyptus stems and a puzzle vase. An everlasting gift for someone special or a delightful addition to your home décor. Complete with step-by-step illustrated instructions and over 450 wooden building pieces.



**Rocket Launcher from Smartivity**  
(Ages 6+)

Have you ever wondered how rockets travel to space? With this kit, your child will build their own Rocket Launcher. Your child will first create a realistic Rocket. They will then load the Rocket on a durable Launcher and press the Launch button. Now, watch the Launcher thrust the Rocket safely into the air! The kit comes with easy-to-follow instructions, explanations of STEM concepts, and experiments which your child can perform independently.

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# The real story behind Santa's North Pole

We all know Santa Claus lives at the North Pole — a snowy workshop filled with elves, reindeer, and endless toys. But the idea of his Arctic home is surprisingly new in the long history of St. Nicholas.

## Saint Nicholas wasn't northern at all

The real St. Nicholas was a 4th-century bishop from modern-day Turkey. Known for his generosity, he inspired early gift-giving traditions — but his world was warm, not wintry.

## So how did Santa become a cold-weather celebrity?

As Christmas traditions spread across Europe and eventually to America, wintertime celebrations became closely tied to the season itself. Snow, evergreens, and long nights created a backdrop that felt naturally magical. Storytellers leaned into this wintry setting, gradually shifting Santa from a Mediterranean bishop to a figure who fit the colder climates where Christmas customs flourished. By the 19th century, imagining Santa in a place of endless snow simply felt right — even if it wasn't historically accurate.

## Enter Clement Clarke Moore

In 1823, "A Visit from St. Nicholas" ("Twas the Night Before Christmas") introduced many features of the modern Santa: flying reindeer,



chimneys, and a jolly personality. But the poem didn't mention the North Pole.

## Thomas Nast makes it official

In the 1860s, political cartoonist Thomas Nast created illustrations for Harper's Weekly that firmly planted Santa at the North Pole. Nast chose the location partly because it was remote and magical — and partly because it symbolized neutrality during the Civil War. His drawings of Santa's snowy workshop and list-checking desk shaped the popular image we still use today.

## Arctic explorers add to the myth

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, polar exploration captivated the public. Newspapers printed imaginary stories about Santa discovering new lands or sharing the ice with explorers. Some children even received replies to letters addressed simply to "Santa Claus, North Pole."

## A marketing boost

By the 20th century, advertisers ran with the imagery. Department stores, toy companies, and greeting card makers embraced Santa's wintry headquarters. Coca-Cola's iconic 1930s Santa — cheerful, warm, and wrapped in red — cemented the North Pole as his home forever.

## Why it stuck

The North Pole also offered something else: a place untouched by the complications of the real world. It wasn't tied to any country, culture, or conflict — just pure imagination. For children, it became the ultimate fantasy workshop where anything could be built, wrapped, and whisked around the globe overnight. And for adults, it provided a comforting bit of wonder to hold onto. The myth endures because it gives everyone permission to believe in something delightfully impossible.

Today, children still write to the North Pole, track Santa on NORAD radar each Christmas Eve, and imagine that swirling snow globe of elves, reindeer, and toys. And in a way, the North Pole lives wherever families create holiday magic — whether that's a snowy yard in Ohio or a living room filled with twinkling lights.

*Article by Dan Miller*

*Photo credit: Adobe Stock / By vectorfusionart*



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## Goodwill needs your stuff this holiday season!

'Tis the season to give! The holiday season is a time that we are often asked to contribute financially to a variety of causes. At Goodwill, there is a tremendous need for donations, not necessarily money, but STUFF! One of the easiest ways to contribute to your community, while cleaning out those overflowing closets this season, is to consider a gift of clothing or housewares to your local Goodwill.

Cleaning out your closet and donating those items to Goodwill is also a way to demonstrate to your children the spirit of giving. Involving all members of the family in the giving process can create new traditions and introduce the kids to charitable giving.

What to give? Seasonal décor you won't be using. Clothes that don't fit any longer. And housewares you no longer use are all valuable donations to Goodwill stores. The stores will sell those donations and use the revenue from those products to support a network of 30 different mission programs. Goodwill mission programs include job training and



placement for people with disabilities and other barriers to employment, family strengthening programs, emergency services and more. Last year, donations to your local Goodwill provided support to more than 17,000 individuals in our community.

Locally, you can donate at Mayfield Heights, University Heights, Willowick, Painesville, and Chardon area locations. Have a lot to donate? Consider reserving a Mobile Donation Center. The 7' x 16' unit saves you multiple trips to the donor doors and can be reserved for up to seven days, free of charge!

For more information, log onto [GoodwillGoodSkills.org](http://GoodwillGoodSkills.org) or email [donations@goodwillgoodskills.org](mailto:donations@goodwillgoodskills.org).

## Lake-Geauga Habitat for Humanity approaches a historic milestone

To help raise the \$240,000 needed to complete the 100 Homes Campaign, the family of Barbara and Paul Kiebler has made a remarkable gift to Lake-Geauga Habitat for Humanity by donating their parents' time-share condo in the Grand Cayman Islands. The property, located at the beautiful Morritt's Tortuga Club, will be auctioned off with proceeds directly supporting Habitat's mission to build safe, affordable housing for local families.

The silent auction closes December 15, with a starting bid of \$1,500. The winning bidder will become the proud new owner of this tropical retreat—while also helping build brighter futures for families in Lake and Geauga counties. You can make your bid at [www.lake-geaugahabitat.org/grandcayman](http://www.lake-geaugahabitat.org/grandcayman).

Barbara and Paul Kiebler were lifelong community champions known for their generosity, service, and commitment to helping others.

Barbara, a lifelong Chardon resident, led Geauga County fundraising efforts for both the American Heart



Association and American Cancer Society, and volunteered for nearly a decade at the Lake-Geauga Habitat ReStore. She was known for her vibrant energy, compassion, and dedication to making a difference.

Paul, a respected real estate appraiser and developer, helped provide homes for more than 100 families through six major subdivisions in Geauga County. A U.S. Army veteran and Chardon Village council member Paul's warmth, integrity, and community spirit left a lasting legacy.

The Kiebler family's generous donation ensures their parents' cherished getaway will bring joy to its new owner—and empower another family to achieve the dream of homeownership right here in Lake and Geauga counties.



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

Scan for more info!




## Greater Cleveland Aquarium annual passes discounted through December 31

Dive into holidays with a deal from Greater Cleveland Aquarium! Black Friday (November 29, 2025) through Cyber Monday (December 1, 2025) unlock a 20% savings on any membership level with code SAVE20MEMBERSHIP. The four-day Thanksgiving weekend sale is the deepest membership discount the Aquarium offers.

"We want to make adding a splash of wonder to gift-giving as stress-free as possible," explains Greater Cleveland Aquarium GM Stephanie White. "You can secure these savings digitally by entering the code at our website checkout or make your purchase in person at the ticket counter and pick up a printed notification you can forward on."

Standard annual pass levels range

from \$45-\$130 (\$3-\$117 during the promotion) and include a year's worth of free daily admission and other perks for one (adult/senior individual) or as many as eight (family/grandparent) named passholders. While the holiday membership promotion runs through December 31, the discount drops to 10% on Tuesday, December 2 with code SAVE10MEMBERSHIP.

Gift memberships activate with the recipient's first visit to ensure to guarantee a full year of benefits including free daily admission, free parking and exclusive member events, as well as discounts on programming and birthday parties and other perks.

Visit [greaterclevelandaquarium.com](http://greaterclevelandaquarium.com) and start diving into the fun!

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## 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).



## Deck The Hall event at Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens

Celebrate the holiday season at Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens' Deck the Hall, a festive tradition for family and friends — November 28–December 30. This magical event turns the estate that was once home to Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company co-founder F.A. Seiberling and his family, into a holiday destination, featuring seasonal décor throughout the Manor House, outdoor light displays and walking paths, and the Dazzle light show. Guests can also visit with Santa in the Carriage House Courtyard from 4–8 p.m. daily through December 23. Afterward, warm up with hot cocoa and gingerbread cookies from Molly's Courtyard Café, shop for gifts and décor at Molly's Shop, or pick out a poinsettia in the Corbin Conservatory.

Deck the Hall operates daily from

3–9 p.m. — last admission is at 8 p.m. Parking for the event is free in the Main Lot and auxiliary lots, with complimentary shuttle service available.

Tickets to Deck the Hall include a self-guided tour through the decorated Manor House and access to the grounds to see the outdoor lights. Manor House tours are not timed — tour anytime 3–8:00 p.m.

Deck the Hall will be held on Nov. 28 – 30, Dec. 4 – 7, 11 – 14, 18 – 23, 26 – 30. Standard admission prices are \$28 for adults and \$15 for youth (ages 3 to 17 years). Children 2 and under are admitted for free.

Tickets for Deck the Hall are on sale now. For tickets, or to make reservations, for a Deck the Hall special event offering, visit stanhywet.org or call 330.836.5533.

## Candy Land It's Wild in Ohio runs through—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. This event is open 10 a.m.–5 p.m. daily through January 4. The exhib-



it 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).

Penitentiary Glen Reservation is located at 8668 Kirtland-Chardon Rd. in Kirtland.

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Saturday, February 7  
6–9 PM at Big Creek Park

Meet up in the park for winter treats, hikes, astronomy, snow games, an EPIC bonfire and more!

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Find your wintertime adventure at [geaugaparkdistrict.org](http://geaugaparkdistrict.org)

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# Grown-up Gift Ideas



## XERO SHOES

www.xeroshoes.com

Looking for the perfect present for all the minimal footwear fans in your life? Whether you're shopping for the gym goer, the outdoor enthusiast, or the post-workout errand runner, they have what you're looking for.



### xero Dillon Leather

Step up your sneaker game! You might wear this shoe more than any other. The Dillon Leather brings together minimalism and understated style to create an effortless, put-together look. Feel relaxed, confident, and at the top of your game.

The full-grain leather adds style and durability to this classic sneaker. The calf-skin lining feels soft against your skin. And the barefoot design means you'll feel as good as you look. Available in several colors.



### xero Tari II

The Tari II is a lightweight, leather ankle boot that is a fit for every season and occasion. It has an adjustable, functional buckle and elastic gore for an accommodating, comfortable fit. The buckle also adds a stylish element to the boot's classic profile. A side zipper makes this boot a cinch to get off and on for easy wearability. And the height is just right to go well with a variety of outfits. Available in black and cappuccino.



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### Boll & Branch Flannel Sheet Set

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Available in a variety of colors, patterns and embellishments.



### Boll & Branch Waffle Bed Blanket

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- Uniquely soft Signature fabric binding
- Preshrunk fabric cut with an oversized fit to accommodate any mattress
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## Eurographics 3D Book Shop

1389-Piece Puzzle

www.eurographicspuzzles.com

Step into the charming world of "The Greatest Bookshop" with this unique 3D jigsaw puzzle. Bursting with vibrant detail, this intricately designed puzzle lets you build a picturesque two-story bookshop complete with colorful awnings, ivy-covered walls, and cozy window displays.

With 1389 pieces, this intermediate-level puzzle offers a fun and rewarding challenge for puzzle lovers and bookworms alike. Once complete, it becomes a beautiful display piece that brings the magic of books, puzzles, and imagination to life. Includes step-by-step instructions and glue sheets for easy assembly. A must-have for collectors and puzzle enthusiasts!

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### Hamilton Beach FlexBrew® Trio Coffee Maker, Black

#### FEATURES:

- Three ways to brew: single serving side with your favorite pod or ground coffee, or on carafe side up to 12 cups
- Fast brewing — brews a single cup in about 90 seconds
- Brew multiple cups without refilling the 40 oz. water reservoir
- Wake-up ready coffee with Easy-Touch programming
- Convenient cup rest with storage area



### Hamilton Beach 1.7 Liter Cool-Touch Digital Kettle

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- Stays cool to the touch
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- Cord-free serving
- Cord wrap



# The Cleveland Orchestra to host free Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Concert

The Cleveland Orchestra will honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with its 46th annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Concert on Sunday, January 11, at 7 p.m. at Severance Music Center.

This beloved annual event is free and open to the public, celebrating Dr. King's enduring message of hope, justice, and unity through the power of music. The concert features acclaimed soprano Latonia Moore alongside the Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Chorus, an all-volunteer community ensemble. The evening's program will take audiences on a musical journey reflecting Dr. King's evolution as a visionary leader and tireless advocate for equality.

Although the concert is free, tickets are required and available on a first-come, first-served basis beginning on Saturday, January 3, at 10 a.m., through the Severance Ticket Office in person, by phone at 216-231-1111, or online at [clevelandorchestra.com](http://clevelandorchestra.com). There is a limit of four tickets per household.

To ensure a smooth ticketing experience, guests are encouraged to download The Cleveland Orchestra app and create an account in advance of the on-sale date.



The celebration continues on Monday, January 19, with the MLK Community Open House & Day of Music from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Severance Music Center. This free, family-friendly event invites visitors of all ages to explore the building, experience live performances from community ensembles, and take part



The 2025 Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Concert  
Photo credit: Roger Mastroianni

in interactive activities in a casual atmosphere.

The day includes appearances by 10K Movement, Cleveland Association of Black Storytellers, Cleveland Classical Guitar Society Student Showcase, The Cleveland Orchestra Learning Ensembles: Bassoon Farm & Music Mentors, The Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra, Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Chorus Chamber Ensemble, Medina High School Encore Entertainment Company, Shaw High School Mighty Marching Cardinals Band, and St. Edward High School Trash Talkers.

Guests can also enjoy free hot chocolate and cookies and take complimentary family portraits in the Grand Foyer. No tickets are required for entry.



### Christmas Quotes

I once bought my kids a set of batteries for Christmas with a note on it saying "toys not included."  
—Bernard Manning

There's no experience quite like cutting your own live Christmas tree out of your neighbor's yard.  
—Dan Florence

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas, but if the white runs out, I'll drink the red.  
—Unknown



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## Frost: An Ice-Capped Garden Experience open through January 4

Each season, Frost transforms the Cleveland Botanical Garden 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 glass-house 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.

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 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.

## 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.

For more info on any of these holiday ideas, visit ClevelandZooSociety.org/holiday and cross a few people off your 'nice' list!



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Preschool – 8th grade



## OPEN HOUSE

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# Sprinkling some safety on your holiday spirit

It's the most wonderful time of the year – there'll be Christmas trees glowing and candle flames burning and good times when loved ones are near – it's the most wonderful time of the year! Making the season merry and bright can be beautiful yet dangerous. Let's get in the holiday spirit by putting safety first!

1. Whether your Christmas tree is real or fake, keep it a safe distance from a fireplace, wood burning stove, or other heat-producing sources. Three strings of lights should be the limit on any power strips or outlets. Be sure the UL symbol appears on the electrical items you purchase and pay attention to the color – green means it's for indoor use while red is for indoor/outdoor. When using older lights, check that the cords or wires are not cracked or frayed. Always unplug indoor lights when you leave your home.

2. Candles are pretty, but they're still open flames. December is the peak time of year for candle-related house fires. Sure they set a glowy holiday mood, but lit flames and Christmas decorations don't exactly mix. Here are a few important reminders:

- Never leave a burning candle unattended
- Keep lit candles at least 12 inches away from surrounding objects
- Trim wicks to a quarter of an inch before you light them
- Candles should be on a sturdy surface



- Don't burn candles near trees, curtains, or other flammable items
  - Keep candles and matches out of reach of children
3. When decorating your tree, refrain from putting glass or breakable ornaments within children's reach. When trying to reach up high, use a step-ladder rather than a chair or other piece of furniture.
4. When selecting gifts for young children, stay away from toys with coin lithium batteries or small

parts that could easily be ingested or create a choking hazard.

5. Never toss anything but logs into your fireplace. Don't try to burn evergreens or wreaths in a fireplace or wood stove. Greenery and tree needles burn much faster than logs, creating sparks, which can fly into the room or onto the roof. Don't burn wrapping paper because it can contain metallic materials that could be hazardous to breathe in. Always make sure the fire is out and the embers have cooled before you leave the house or go to bed.

6. Don't forget to prep the outside of your house. Keep your driveway and walkways clear of ice and snow, especially if you're expecting guests.

**Wishing you all a safe and happy holiday season!**

Courtesy of the Corsaro Insurance Group and Central Insurance Companies.

*Matthew Corsaro is the president and owner of the Corsaro Insurance Group in Mentor, Ohio. His company and staff have been providing insurance solutions to families and business owners for over 40 years. Mr. Corsaro has obtained the Accredited Advisor in Insurance and Certified Insurance Counselor designations. Corsaro Insurance Group represents over 20 insurance companies. As well they have expertise in all areas of auto, home and business insurance. They can be reached at 440-946-4950.*



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# Talking to kids about giving — without making it guilt-based

The holidays are full of opportunities to teach children about generosity — toy drives, food pantries, gift-giving, and acts of kindness. But well-intentioned conversations can sometimes drift into guilt territory: “Some kids have nothing — you should be grateful,” or “Do you really need all those toys?” While the message comes from a good place, guilt rarely inspires lasting generosity. What does? Helping kids connect giving with empathy, agency, and joy.

Here are some ways to foster healthy conversations about giving without the pressure or guilt.

## 1. Start with empathy, not comparison

Children don't need to be reminded of how much “better” they have it than someone else in order to care. In fact, comparing their lives to others can make generosity feel like a moral debt instead of an act of kindness.

Instead, focus on understanding other people's experiences in age-appropriate ways:

- “Some families are having a hard time right now. We can help brighten their holiday.”
- “Everyone feels good when someone helps them.”

This keeps the emphasis on compassion, not shame.

## 2. Let kids choose how they want to help

Kids feel more invested when they have a say. Even small choices help them experience giving as something empowering. Offer a few simple



options:

- Picking out a toy to donate.
- Filling a bag for a food pantry.
- Helping bake cookies for a neighbor who lives alone.
- Drawing a card for a family member going through a tough time.

When kids choose the act, the act becomes meaningful.

## 3. Connect giving to their strengths

Some children are creative; others love physical activity; others thrive in social situations. Help them see that giving isn't a one-size-fits-all activity.

For example:

- An artistic child can make homemade cards for nursing-home residents.
- A kid who loves organizing can help sort pantry donations.
- A musical child can play a song for grandparents or neighbors.

Kids learn that generosity looks different for everyone — and that their unique gifts matter.

## 4. Share your own “why”

Children pick up on values we model. When a parent explains why they give, kids understand generosity as part of authentic family culture rather than a seasonal requirement. Try:

- “When I was a kid, someone helped our family, and now I like paying it forward.”
- “It just feels good to make someone smile.”

These conversations plant seeds without pressure.

## 5. Celebrate effort, not outcomes

If a child donates one can of soup, that's a win. If they choose to give up a toy but change their mind later, that's part of learning.

Praise the intention and the thought process:

- “I love how you thought about what another kid might enjoy.”
- “You showed kindness by helping pick this out.”

This approach encourages lifelong generosity instead of seasonal compliance.

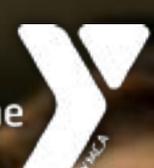
## 6. Keep giving joyful

Giving shouldn't feel like a chore. Share stories of kindness, watch holiday movies with themes of generosity, create traditions like “Kindness Countdown Calendars,” or make a family ritual of doing one small good deed each week in December.

At the end of the day, kids remember how giving felt more than what they gave.

~Article by Jeannine Todd



the 

# THE

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## Rabbit Run Community Arts Association

Discover your creative side this winter at Rabbit Run Community Arts Association in Madison. RRCAA is a comprehensive fine arts association offering instruction in the major disciplines of the fine and performing arts.

Dance classes are available for little ones starting at age 3 in creative movement, pre-ballet and pre-tap. School-aged youth, whether just starting in dance or with some dance experience, may register for classes in ballet (including pointe) or jazz and tap.

Also available are modern dance, contemporary/lyrical dance, ballet strengthening/kinesiology, ballroom dancing and adult tap fitness.

A new art class this winter is Art with Miss Katie for school-age youth on Wednesdays.

They also offer private music lessons in most musical instruments from beginner to advanced.

For specific class information or to register visit [www.rabbitrun.org](http://www.rabbitrun.org) or call RRCAA at 440-428-5913. Rabbit Run, located at 49 Park Street in Madison, is a nonprofit organization that receives partial funding from the Ohio Arts Council.

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**Information & RSVP for Open Houses: [St-GabrielSchool.org](http://St-GabrielSchool.org)**

**CONTACT**

ANN: 440-354-7574

EMAIL: ASILVESTER@ST-GABRIEL.ORG

**CONTACT**

ALICIA: 440-354-7858

EMAIL: AHENRIKSON@ST-GABRIEL.ORG