TODAY'S family

May 2026 Lake Geauga

10 birthday ideas kids will love!

Lake County History Center

Community picnic to celebrate America's 250th anniversary

The many shapes of motherhood

What the animal world can teach us about care and connection

NEW FEATURE!

Parent Win/Parent Fail

Readers share real-life parenting stories

Become a foster parent

Adventure Zone

Family fun at an affordable price

PLUS

Humor
Book Club
Fun Events
Living Well

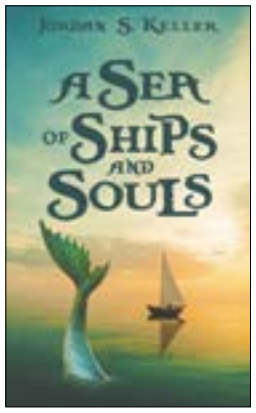
Today's Family BOOK CLUB

A Visit with the Birds: A Hands-On Nature Book

By Sarah Levine

Join a curious child on a walk through the park, where readers are invited to listen for bird songs, spot colorful feathers, count birds, and even pretend to fly. With engaging and hands-on prompts woven into the story, this book transforms a simple outing into an unforgettable learning adventure.

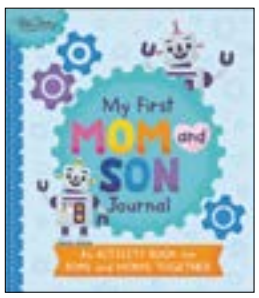
Featuring stunning cut-paper collage artwork and a warm, inclusive story, A Visit with the Birds encourages young readers to slow down, observe nature, and connect with the nature around them, no matter where they are. Along the way, children will learn about common birds–like pigeons, robins, chickadees, and blue jays–while building early science and observation skills. Grades K–3.



A Sea of Ships and Souls

By Jordan S. Keller

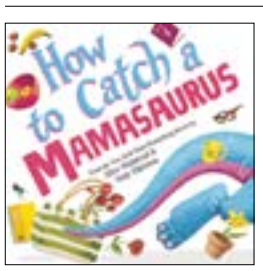
As the son of two washers, Jace Kit has only dreamed of adventure-until a fabled Sea Sprite washes ashore and turns his world upside down. The Sea Sprite needs a hero to save the Ocean Queen from a ruthless pirate terrorizing the Remos Ocean. With a legendary trinket and handmade boat to his name, Jace is her only hope-even though he knows the trinket is fake. With Jace's skilled sailing and the Sea Sprite's magic, the pair enters a competition to win a ship capable of catching the pirate. The only thing darker than the depths are the Sea Sprite's secrets, and Jace realizes too late his adventure might cost a price too high to pay.



My First Mom and Son Journal

By Katie Clemons

This engaging prompt journal is the perfect tool to strengthen mother-son relationships. Kids can record memories, swap stories, compare perspectives, and explore common and unique interests with their mom! Letters back and forth and interactive lists invite both to reflect, write, and doodle about topics timely to their lives as kids build self-confidence and improve their penmanship. Paperback; $14.99; ages 5–8.



How to Catch a Mamasaurus

By Alice Walstead

The Catch Club Kids are at it again! This time, they're out to trap the Mamasaurus—a one-of-a-kind creature whose love, kindness, and awesomeness have no limits. The kids try to trap the Mamasaurus with all her favorite activities, but will they succeed? Hardcover; $12.99; ages 4–10.

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Lake, Geauga & Cuyahoga Counties

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

Publisher/Advertising
Kim Miller
kim@todaysfamilymagazine.com

Publisher/Editor/Online
Dan Miller
dan@todaysfamilymagazine.com

Writers
Deanna Adams
Justin Daniels
Sophia Filipiak
Dan Miller
Stacy Turner

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Mom Life
The Funny Side

What three words solve Dad's every problem? Ask your mother.

Good moms let you lick the beaters after making brownies, great moms turn them off first.

Motherhood is like a fairy tale—but in reverse. You start in a beautiful gown and end up in stained clothes cleaning up after little people.

A mom says to her friend, "My teenagers have taught me something even David Attenborough couldn't." "What's that?" Why some animals eat their young."

Who's a mom's favorite child? The one who sleeps.

What's the worst part of dinnertime? Realizing you're the one who has to cook it.

Science teacher: "When is the boiling point reached?" Student: "When a mom has to ask more than five times."

What's the hardest part of a child's birthday? On the anniversary of your hardest day... they get the party.

Why do moms hide in the bathroom? Because sometimes it's the only room with a lock.

Mom's recipe for iced coffee: 1. Have kids. 2. Make coffee. 3. Forget you made coffee. 4. Drink it cold.

How do you know something is officially lost? When Mom can't find it.

A boy asks, "Mom, can I have $20?" She says, "Does it look like I'm made of money?" He replies, "Isn't that what M.O.M. stands for?"

I asked my mom her favorite exercise. She said, "Running out of patience."

Nothing tests a mom's hearing like a child whispering "Mom..." from another room.

A clean house is a sign that...everyone is asleep or not home.

Why is it so hard to find anything? Because Mom isn't looking for it.

Mom logic: "I'm not yelling... I'm just speaking loudly enough for you to hear me."

Behind every great kid is a mom who's pretty sure she's messing it all up.

My kids call it "helicopter parenting," but I prefer to think of it as "surveillance with love."

Your Summer Family Tradition Starts at Adventure Zone

Where great views, relaxing spaces, and nonstop fun come together

By Dan Miller, Today's Family Editor

Tucked along the scenic shoreline of Geneva-on-the-Lake, Adventure Zone offers families a place to play, unwind, and make lasting memories—all with a stunning Lake Erie backdrop.

From mini golf and go-karts to a climbing wall and arcade games, Adventure Zone has become a go-to destination for families looking for a fun, affordable outing. But what truly sets it apart is something less tangible: the atmosphere.

"This is a positive family experience," says co-owner Donniella Winchell. "It's an affordable atmosphere where families will feel comfortable and safe."

That sense of comfort is intentional. Whether it's a first visit or a family tradition, guests are welcomed into an environment designed to be easy-going and inclusive—where kids can run, play, and explore while parents relax and enjoy the moment.

Adventure Zone's location plays a big role in its appeal. Situated near the lake, the property offers more than just activities—it delivers a full experience.

"We have a great property with a view of the lake and we wanted to use it," says Winchell. "The state park's bike path goes along the shoreline and in the evening, you can see a beautiful sunset."

It's not uncommon for families to spend the day enjoying the attractions and then linger a little longer, taking in the view as the sun dips below the horizon. That combination of energy and calm is part of what keeps visitors coming back year after year.

Behind the scenes, Adventure Zone is very much a family operation—something that influences everything from the way the business is run to how guests are treated.

"Our daughter and son-in-law are integrally involved and our grandkids work here during the summer months," says Winchell. "We also hire about 90 seasonal employees each year. This business is owned by a family that cares about families."

That commitment is evident not only in the welcoming atmosphere, but also in the opportunities the business creates for local teens and young adults. For many, a summer job at Adventure Zone is more than just a paycheck—it's a first step into the workforce and a chance to be part of something community-focused.

For families visiting Geneva-on-the-Lake, Adventure Zone offers a refreshing alternative to more crowded or high-pressure attractions. There's no need to rush or plan every minute. Instead, it's a place where families can move at their own pace—whether that means a competitive round of mini golf, a few laps on the go-kart track, or simply enjoying the lake breeze.

In a time when many outings can feel expensive or overwhelming, Adventure Zone keeps things simple: fun activities, a welcoming environment, and a setting that encourages families to slow down and enjoy time together. *Continued on page 6 →*

Adventure Zone

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• Snack Bar • Two Escape Rooms • Hammer Slammer

NEW for 2026!

The Lottie Express: A little train for little people.
Bicycle Rentals: Begin Memorial Day Weekend.
The Original Jumping Pillow: A fun experience for all ages.

440-466-3555

www.AdventureZoneFun.com

Adventure Zone from page 5

And sometimes, that's exactly what families need most.

Adventure Zone opens for the 2026 season weekends on Saturday, May 2, 2026 and begins seven days a week Memorial Day weekend. For hours and pricing, visit www.adventurezonefun.com, call (440) 466-3555, or text (216) 469-5903. They are located a 5600 Lake Road E in Geneva-on-the-Lake.

Adventure Zone Attractions

There's something for every age and energy level at Adventure Zone!

- **The Lottie Express** – A little train for little people. NEW!
- **Bicycle rentals** – Beginning Memorial Day Weekend. NEW!
- **The Original Jumping Pillow** – A fun experience for all ages. NEW!
- **Zip Line** – Soar above the park for a quick adrenaline rush.
- **Go-Karts** – Race family and friends around the track.
- **Hammer Slam** – Travel up the 30 foot tower with a great view of the park.
- **Bumper Boats** – Cool off with a splash-filled spin on the water.
- **Adventure Golf** – A classic miniature golf experience for all ages.
- **Climbing & Rappelling Walls** – Challenge yourself and reach new heights.
- **Batting Cages** – Step up and take your best swing.
- **Bungy Tramp** – Bounce, flip, and fly high in the air.
- **Merry-Go-Round** – A timeless favorite for younger visitors.
- **Escape Rooms** – Work together to solve puzzles to beat the clock.
- **Adventure Krawl** – A kid-focused climbing and play structure.
- **Arcade** – A mix of new and classic games for indoor fun.

SMALL MOMENTS, BIG MEMORIES

Celebrate Mother's Day and Father's Day with 50% off admission at Greater Cleveland Aquarium

Greater Cleveland Aquarium is celebrating special caregivers with parenting-themed activities, extended hours and 50% off admission for moms, stepmoms, foster moms and grandmas on Mother's Day Weekend (Saturday & Sunday, May 9 & 10, 2026, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.) and dads, stepdads, foster dads and grandpas on Father's Day Weekend (Saturday & Sunday, June 20 & 21, 2026, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.).

Whether it is watching a small Eastern spiny softshell turtle dash over for a treat during a habitat feeding, seeing a giant Pacific octopus shift colors or high-fiving a scuba diver as a 10 foot sandtiger shark glides overhead, the Aquarium offers up-close views and simple, memorable experiences families can enjoy side by side.

Mother's Day and Father's Day Weekend activities are included with general admission ($0–$19.95 per person). Visiting moms receive a commemorative button and 50% off their adult admission (available in person at the ticket counter only) with the purchase of another adult or child ticket on May 9 & 10, while dads are eligible for the same parental discount June 20 & 21.

Families looking for a gift that lasts longer than a single day can choose a year of undersea adventures with 10% off any level of Aquarium Annual Pass—available May 2–10 with code 26MOM10 or June 13–21 with code DAD26.

Greater Cleveland Aquarium is located at the Nautica Waterfront District, 2000 Sycamore Street in Cleveland. For more information visit greaterclevelandaquarium.com or call (216) 862-8803.

TODAY'S FAMILY ADVICE COLUMN

LIVING WELL

with Rebecca Fellenbaum

Parenting, stress, relationships, family life—we all have questions.

Ask yours anonymously or with your name. Selected questions will be featured in an upcoming issue of Today's Family.

Balancing support

Dear Rebecca: My daughter has a new interest, and I want to support her without overdoing it. I'm excited for her, but also worry about pushing too hard or turning it into something stressful. How can I encourage her while keeping it fun?

— Lizzy, Painesville

Dear Lizzy: Awesome awareness, and congratulations on your daughter's new interest. I sense both your excitement and hesitation. You're definitely not alone—this is something so many parents wrestle with.

You say you're worried about "overdoing it" or "turning it into something stressful." That tells me something is coming up for you, and it isn't just about your child's interest.

Where does your worry come from? Is this triggering something that's happened before, either when you were a kid or as a parent?

Often when we feel tension, it's because we're telling ourselves a story. The story is usually based on assumptions or past experiences.

Instead, stick to what's true right now.

Here are the facts you've outlined: Your child is interested in something new. That's it.

When you look at that simple fact, without attaching a story, what you do next becomes much clearer.

That's also where the opportunity for you to do some exploratory work begins. That might look like:

- Noticing your excitement and any emotions that immediately follow it
- Letting your child forge the path of her new interest, even if it's slower or less structured than you think it should be
- Checking in with her, instead of assuming what she needs

And most importantly, noticing when that pressure starts to rise in you.

You don't have to make this into anything bigger than it is.

Sometimes, the most supportive thing we can do is allow our kids to pursue their interests in their own way.

Trust that your awareness, the very thing you're showing here, is what will guide you. Our kids sure don't come with a manual, and that makes it fun!

Everything's fine... so why do I feel stuck?

Dear Rebecca: Dare I say, life feels pretty stable right now, and my kids are in a good place. I've been thinking about doing something for myself, but I keep putting it off. It feels easier to stay in my routine. How do I take that first step?

— Mary, Highland Hts.

Dear Mary: Great question! This comes up a lot, especially when life finally slows down a bit. I am going to frame this from the perspective that the answers are within you!

When we have an internal conflict, it is hard to know what to do next without first understanding what's going on within ourselves. This exercise will help you weigh the options, and hopefully you'll gain clarity on your next right step.

Let's go through your thought process like a slide show. First, sit in the first scene of life being stable and kids in a good place. How does that feel? You can close your eyes for a moment and internally scan from head to toe to really tap into what comes up for you when you're in this moment.

Then, move to the second scene: thinking about doing something for yourself. Where does that desire come from? What feelings come up that encourage you? What parts of you are putting it off? If you can sit quietly and ask these questions, answers may arise. You can journal these if that's helpful.

For your final scene, I want you to play out two options. First, imagine the slide show where you stay in your routine. How does that feel? What are you doing? What is lacking, or feels good about this scenario? Then, play out the scene where you do something for yourself. How does that feel? What are you doing? What is scary or great about that scene?

Which final scene feels most aligned? Which one feels open and warm and expansive, and which feels more closed?

In my work, I talk about our next right step lighting on our own unique illuminated path. When you think about doing something for yourself, you don't need to know what that looks like 10 steps from now. You just need to look for the next step to light up. Once you're clear internally which direction you want to go, set your intention there and then pay attention. I am confident your next move will become clear.

Please let me know how it goes!

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.

Have a question on your mind?

You're not the only one!

Submit your question anonymously (or include your name) and it may be featured in an upcoming issue of Today's Family. Scan the QR code to ask.

From Thrift to Thrifting

How secondhand finds—and a fresh perspective—can turn the old into something new

Mommy CHRONICLES

By Stacy Turner

I grew up in an era of hand-me-downs and thrift store shopping. Back then, these practices weren't very popular, certainly not flaunted if someone were to compliment an article of clothing or household item. Today, Instagram accounts are full of folks finding fabulous items they've thrifted for themselves, their families, or to resell. The fact that it's gone from an adjective to its own verb—thrifting—says a lot about its popularity.

Today, you'll encounter all ages at thrift stores – older folks trying to stretch a dollar, families looking for inexpensive kids' clothes and toys, and young people treasure-hunting for household goods for new apartments. You may even find people of all ages with smart phones scanning tags to ascertain whether brand-name items, books, or collectibles can be sold online as a side hustle.

In fact, Forbes magazine noted that the secondhand apparel market grew from $28 billion in 2019 to $49 billion in 2024. And that growth isn't only in apparel, but household items as well. Whether we're looking for value, treasures, or just trying to save useful items from a landfill, resale shopping is on the rise.

And as thrift store traffic and pricing increases, people have also begun to embrace another of the unspoken hobbies of my youth and early adulthood: dumpster diving. Sometimes, it's easier for people to place unwanted but still usable items at the curb instead of going to the trouble of finding someone who needs it, selling it online, or holding a yard sale. It can be true that one person's trash is another one's treasure.

The profits from Goodwill retail stores funds their missions, enabling them to invest in the community through employment training, social services, and family-strengthening services. A great place to do your thrift shopping!

My first apartment as a single person was filled with items I found at thrift stores, rummage sales, or at the curb on trash day. Since I didn't have the budget for a particular aesthetic, my search for items was based on what I saw and how I could alter it to serve my needs. The wooden door became a mosaic framed desktop when balanced across a pair of file cabinets. A quirky cane chair from the curb completed the home office set up. A low wooden dresser from a rummage sale, once painted, became a convenient countertop and linen closet in the awkward bathroom of my rental. Over time I added more items, based on the treasures I found and how I could modify them for functionality as my space became homier.

Initially, my husband didn't embrace this way of thinking. If we happened to drive by something with potential just waiting at the curb to be reborn, he would only stop under the cover of darkness, and once the offending items were loaded, he'd drive away like he was leaving a crime scene. But over time, as he watched me refinish and refashion items, he slowly came around. Eventually, he caught the bug himself, when he took over the refinishing of a wooden frame mirror I had unapologetically pulled from someone's trash. He had it sanded and stained before I could get to it, marveling at how the new-to-us style accented our youngest's bedroom furniture so perfectly.

Recently, he texted me a photo of a wooden desk with curved legs he'd found at the curb. "Who is this?" I joked, "and what have you done with my husband?!" He picked it up because he thought one of the kids could use it as a desk, and had it sanded and refinished in no time flat. And now we're both on the lookout at thrift stores for the perfect chair to match it. Maybe it is true that everything old is new again. That seems true, whether it's in music, fashion, food, or furnishings.

Thinking back on all the things I've seen reborn—even those reclaimed by my family and me, reminds me that our activities are much bigger than just repairing what was old.

It takes fresh eyes—and a little hope—to see how something old can become new again. Sometimes, all it takes is looking around with fresh eyes to find a new perspective—or solve an old problem in a completely different way.

Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine

2026 Summer Season

May 3–October 25

We will be serving breakfast in the St. Ann Dining Room every Sunday after 9:30 a.m. outdoor Mass.

May 3

Fr. James Roach will conduct the 4 p.m. services with rosary and benediction. Fr. Roach will bless commemorative holy pictures and pins free to all. Be there for the service.

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A Century of Faith

Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine celebrates 100 years

For 100 years, Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine, 21281 Chardon Road in Euclid, has been a place of prayer, reflection, and community for visitors from across Northeast Ohio and beyond. In 2026, the Shrine marks this milestone anniversary with a series of special events honoring its rich history and enduring mission.

Founded in 1926 and inspired by the original Lourdes grotto in France, the Shrine has long served as a peaceful destination where individuals and families can step away from the busyness of daily life. Surrounded by natural beauty, it offers a quiet setting for prayer, spiritual renewal, and connection.

The centennial jubilee celebration will begin on Sunday, May 31, 2026 with a 9:30 a.m. Mass celebrated by Bishop Edward Malesic of the Diocese of Cleveland, followed by a meet-and-greet reception at St. Ann's Dining Hall. Later in the year, on Sunday, October 25, Auxiliary Bishop Michael Woost will visit the Shrine to celebrate Benediction and the Rosary as part of the ongoing celebration. There will be a small reception after the 4 p.m. services.

Throughout the anniversary year, visitors will also have the opportunity to view and venerate a special statue blessed by Pope Francis, which will be included in entrance processions at Mass and displayed in the chapel. In addition, a new book by local author Jennifer Boresz, chronicling the history

of the Shrine, is expected to be released, offering a deeper look at its legacy in the community. The Sisters were interviewed extensively for the book, which will be available for sale soon and will live within the archives at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in downtown Cleveland.

In the warmer months, the Shrine's outdoor Masses remain a cherished tradition, drawing worshippers who appreciate the opportunity to gather in faith while surrounded by the beauty of nature. These services, along with daily visitation, continue to make the Shrine a meaningful destination for people of all ages.

As Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine enters its second century, it remains a place where faith, history, and community come together—just as they have for generations. Visit www.srstrinity.com or call (216) 481-8232 for more information.

Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine

A Place That Stays With You

By Dan Miller, Today's Family Editor

For many families, Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine isn't just a destination—it's part of their story.

I first visited the Shrine as a boy with my grandfather. I remember the peacefulness… and, if I'm being honest, not loving the long walk up the hill to pray the rosary. After he passed, my grandmother kept the tradition alive in her own way, gathering the family for the Shrine's roast beef dinners—a simple ritual that brought everyone together.

Years later, the Shrine became part of my own story in a deeper way. My wife and I were married there, outdoors at the grotto during a summer heat wave—cool in the shade, while our guests sat in the blazing sun.

Even now, one small moment still sticks with me. As a child, I once asked a groundskeeper if people ever lit candles without donating. He smiled and said, "You can cheat me or the Shrine, but you can't cheat God."

It's funny how places like this stay with you—not just in faith, but in memory.

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Enhancing Indoor Air Quality

The role of high-end HVAC systems in NE Ohio

Maintaining healthy indoor air quality is crucial for the well-being of residents in Northeast Ohio. While various factors can affect air quality, high-end HVAC systems play a significant role in mitigating health risks and ensuring cleaner indoor environments. In this blog, we will explore how these advanced systems contribute to improving indoor air quality in NE Ohio.

1. Filtration efficiency: High-end HVAC systems are equipped with HEPA filters or MERV 13 or higher filters, effectively capturing pollutants, allergens, and airborne particles. This helps remove contaminants from the indoor air, creating a healthier living space.

2. Fresh air exchange: Incorporating energy recovery ventilators (ERVs) or heat recovery ventilators (HRVs), these systems bring in fresh outdoor air while expelling stale indoor air. This constant air exchange helps dilute pollutants and maintain a fresher indoor environment.

3. Proper ventilation: Well-designed HVAC systems ensure proper ventilation, promoting the circulation of fresh air throughout the building. This ventilation process helps remove indoor air pollutants and replenish the air with clean, oxygen-rich air.

4. Air quality monitoring: Advanced HVAC systems include air quality monitoring capabilities, allowing real-time tracking of indoor air quality parameters. By continuously monitoring air quality, the system can detect any issues promptly and trigger appropriate actions to maintain optimal conditions.

5. UV lights: Some high-end HVAC systems incorporate UV lights to neutralize airborne pathogens, viruses, and bacteria. This additional layer of disinfection contributes to improved indoor air quality and promotes a healthier living environment.

6. Customized zoning:
HVAC systems with zoning capabilities enable customized control of temperature and airflow in different areas of a building. This feature helps maintain consistent air quality and prevents the spread of contaminants between different zones.

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Classic, Cool, and Nature-Inspired

This year's baby name trends show a clear shift toward names that feel grounded, timeless, and connected to nature. Parents are favoring softer vintage names for girls and strong-but-simple names for boys. Short, two-syllable names continue to dominate, along with nature-inspired picks.

You'll also see a continued rise in "old soul" names—those that feel like they belong to another era but still work perfectly today.

Trending Girls' Names		Trending Boys' Names	
Olive	Ivy	Leo	Silas
Isla	Amelia	Theo	Everett
Eloise	Aurora	Hudson	Rowan
Maeve	Hazel	Asher	James
Nova	Willow	Milo	Arlo

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Opening your heart and home can change a child's life forever

Becoming a foster parent in Geauga County

May is National Foster Parent Month, a time to recognize the individuals and families who provide safe, supportive homes for children in need—and to encourage others to consider making a difference. In Geauga County, the need for foster families continues to grow, with more children entering care than there are available homes.

Through Geauga County Job and Family Services, local residents have the opportunity to step in and provide stability during one of the most challenging times in a child's life. Foster parents serve as temporary caregivers for children, teens, and infants while their families work toward reunification—an outcome that remains the goal in most cases.

Foster parenting is about more than providing a place to stay. It's about helping children heal, maintain important family connections, and build a path forward. As the agency emphasizes, a child is counting on you to Foster Their Way Home™.

Who can become a foster parent?

Many people are surprised to learn how accessible foster parenting can be. You may qualify if you:

- Are at least 18 years old
- Are single, married, or co-parenting
- Work full-time or part-time
- Can provide a safe, stable, and nurturing home
- Are in good physical and mental health

- Have adequate space and financial stability

In addition, prospective foster parents complete:

- 24 hours of preservice training
- CPR and first aid certification
- Background checks for all adult household members
- A home study, including interviews and safety inspections
- Personal references and a medical statement

What children need most

Every child in foster care has experienced some level of trauma, and each situation is unique. In Geauga County, many children are ultimately reunited with their families, making it essential for foster parents to support those relationships whenever possible.

There is a growing need for families willing to care for teens, sibling groups or children with medical or higher-level needs.

By saying "yes," foster parents can help siblings stay together, keep children in their schools and communities, and provide consistency during uncertain times.

Making a lasting impact

Foster parenting requires compassion, patience, and flexibility—but the impact is profound. It's a chance to be a steady, supportive presence while a child and their family work toward a better future.

Just as important, foster parents are not alone. Building a strong support network and working closely with local agencies helps ensure both the child and the foster family have the resources they need to succeed.

For those who have ever wondered if they could make a difference, National Foster Parent Month is the perfect time to consider taking that first step. Opening your home—even temporarily—can change the course of a child's life in ways that last forever.

In Geauga County, contact Allie Hulsmann at allie.hulsmann@jfs.ohio.gov or 440-285-1205. Visit geaugacountyfoster.com to learn more.

Scan the QR code in the ad below to register for the inaugural Foster the Future 5k and 1 Mile Walk fundraiser to support the care and well-being of children in Geauga County.

Every Child Needs Family

Becoming a foster parent in Lake County

Children come into the custody of the Lake County Department of Job & Family Services due to a crisis which resulted in the child being a victim of abuse, neglect or dependency. If the child cannot be placed safely with a relative, the Lake County Department of Job & Family Services is responsible for providing a safe environment for that child.

It is the philosophy of the Department that children grow better in families therefore the primary goal is to find foster care providers who are willing to provide temporary care to children while their families are in crisis. Foster parents provide care until reunification with a family member can occur.

If reunification is unable to occur, children would become eligible for adoption and either remain with their foster parents who make a permanent commitment to care for the child or an adoptive home is secured.

The Lake County Department of Job & Family Services provides support to their foster parents by providing the following services:

- Personal support from an assigned substitute care social worker
- Ongoing training and conference attendance
- Respite care
- Daily per diem rate to reimburse for the cost of providing care
- Medical, dental and vision care for children
- Transportation reimbursement (on a limited basis)
- Foster Parent Handbook
- Newsletter

Foster parents: Who are they and how can I become one?

Foster parents are caring people who have opened their hearts and homes to the children of Lake County. These children are in need of temporary care after having been removed from their parent's custody. Applicants must meet the following requirements:

- They must be at least 18 years of age.
- They may be a married couple, single person or coparents.
- At least one foster parent must be able to read, write and speak English to effectively communicate with any child placed in their home.
- They shall have an income sufficient to meet the basic needs of their household.
- All members of a foster caregiver's home shall be free of any physical, emotional, or mental condition which would endanger a child or seriously impair the ability to care for a child.
- They shall submit to a criminal background check with fingerprints through the Bureau of Criminal Investigation and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
- They shall not operate their home as an adult boarding house nor shall they provide child care in their home without the Department's consent.
- The home shall have a safety audit from Lake County Department of Job and Family Services and a fire inspection through their community fire department.
- They must agree to abide by the discipline policy of the Lake County Department of Job and Family Services.
- They must have sufficient room to provide care for foster children without displacing any family member.

If you are interested in becoming a foster parent call (440) 350-4218 or email Eugene.Tetrick.jfs.ohio.gov.

Lake County History Center

Preserving the region's past while bringing history to life for new generations

Lake County History Center in Painesville Township is more than a museum—it is a living record of Lake County's evolution, housed on a site whose own history stretches back nearly two centuries.

Long before it became a destination for exhibits, education, and community events, the property served a very different purpose. The land was originally part of Lake County's early public care system, established in the mid-1800s as a county poorhouse and infirmary. In 1876, a larger institutional building was constructed on the site to replace earlier facilities, continuing its role in housing and caring for residents in need for generations.

Today, that same campus has been transformed into a 33,000-square-foot museum, library, collections and assembly space, along with rental venues for the public.

Founded in 1938, the History Center now welcomes more than 36,000 visitors annually and continues to expand its mission of preservation and education. Its collection includes more than 31,000 artifacts and archival items, ranging from photographs and family records to organizational documents, personal belongings, and historic objects that reflect everyday life in Lake County.

Among its holdings are wedding dresses, writing desks, a Sony Walkman, and materials connected to President James A. Garfield. The museum maintains 9,717 objects, 6,736 photographs, 6,913 archival records, and 8,272 books and documents, all digitized for public access.

Unlike publicly funded institutions, the History Center is a private nonprofit. It relies heavily on community support, with funding coming from memberships, individual and corporate donations, grants, educational program tuition, ticket sales for events, and rentals of two venue spaces.

"Our historic brick building celebrates its 150th birthday this year!" said Lisa Lewins, History Center director. "We encourage everyone to stop by with family and friends for a free museum tour, or attend one of our events filled with learning and entertainment. This is a hidden gem with so much history about our rich heritage in Lake County."

Education plays a central role in the organization's mission. The History Center brings its adult education programming directly into the community, while youth participation continues to grow, with attendance increasing among students ages 5 to 18.

"We offer an on-site Pioneer Village for schools, groups, and families, where visitors get to try living in rustic 1824 Ohio conditions. Our adult programs include on-site speakers, lantern and ghost tours, trolley tours, off-site Speaker Bureau re-enactors, and a growing number of entertaining educational programs," added Lewins.

Beyond education and exhibits, the History Center serves as a community gathering place.

That role will be on full display during a major upcoming celebration.

On Sunday, June 14, 2026, the History Center will host a Community Picnic celebrating America's 250th birthday. The free event runs from 4 to 6 p.m., followed by a DJ-led barn dance featuring line dancing and popular music.

Continued on page 14

The Many Shapes of Motherhood

What the animal world can teach us about care, connection, and letting go

By Justin Daniels, Today's Family

This time of year, we often picture motherhood in one very specific way. But in the animal world, the story is a little more varied.

Across the animal world, the bond between parent and offspring can take many different forms. Some are brief but intense. Others stretch across a lifetime. All are shaped by what's needed in that moment—and each tells its own version of what it means to care, protect, and prepare the next generation.

Take elephants, for example. In herds of African elephant, family bonds are deep and enduring. Daughters often remain with their mothers for life, forming multi-generational groups where grandmothers, aunts, and siblings all play a role. These herds move, rest, and raise young together, creating a strong sense of continuity and connection that can last for decades.

In the ocean, orca families share a similar closeness. Orcas are known to stay with their mothers throughout their lives, with mothers continuing to guide and support their offspring well into adulthood. It's a powerful example of a bond that doesn't fade with time, but instead evolves.

Other animals take a different approach. Consider the bald eagle, a symbol many families have come to know through popular nest cameras. Eagle parents are attentive and protective, working together to feed and shelter their young. For a time, everything centers on the nest. But as the eaglets grow, they are encouraged—sometimes quite firmly—to leave. What begins as constant care eventually gives way to independence.

In the world of gray wolf, family life becomes a shared effort. Packs are often made up of parents and their offspring, with older siblings sometimes helping to care for and teach the younger ones. Responsibility is spread across the group, reinforcing the idea that raising the next generation isn't always the work of one alone.

Adobe Stock / By Photocreo Bednarek

Even among primates like chimpanzee, where emotional bonds are strong and learning takes years, there is still a gradual shift. Young chimps rely heavily on their mothers early on, but over time, they begin to navigate the world more independently, carrying with them the lessons they've learned.

What becomes clear across all of these examples is that there is no single blueprint for motherhood. Some bonds remain close across a lifetime. Others are defined by a season of deep connection followed by distance and growth. Some are shared among many. All are shaped by circumstance, environment, and the needs of the child.

And yet, there is a common thread.

Whether it lasts for months or decades, whether it is expressed through constant presence or the gradual act of letting go, motherhood in the natural world is rooted in care. It is the instinct to protect, to guide, and to give what is needed—when it is needed.

As we celebrate Mother's Day, it's worth remembering that while the details may look different from one family to the next, the heart of it remains the same.

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Lake County History Center from page 13

Activities will include live music, a petting zoo, Pioneer Village games, free museum tours, and a patriotic costume contest. Guests will also enjoy complimentary food, including hot dogs, popcorn, pie, and beverages. Register at www.lakehistory.org to reserve meal tickets and beverages.

From its origins as a 19th-century county care institution to its current role as a cultural and educational hub, Lake County History Center continues to preserve the region's past while actively engaging its future—one story, artifact, and community event at a time.

For more information about the History Center or hosting an event, visit www.lakehistory.org, call 440-639-2945, or email information@lakehistory.org.

By Dan Miller, Today's Family

In Case You Missed It

Scan the QR code to access hundreds of family-related articles and events. Our site is keyword searchable and is mobile friendly. Whatever local family information you need, you will most likely find it at **www.TodaysFamilyMagazine.com**!

Spring Showdown at Lake Metroparks Farmpark

May 24, 2026 • 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Lake Metroparks Farmpark will host the sixth annual Spring Showdown Lamb & Goat Show featuring young men and women ages 8 to 18 showing their lambs, commercial ewes and market goats. The youth will demonstrate their showing abilities and animal husbandry skills to professional judges. The show is a collaboration between the Spring Showdown Lamb & Goat Show Committee and Lake Metroparks.

Admission: $9 ages 12 through 59, $8 ages 60 and older, $7 ages 2–11, children younger than 2 are free.

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

Visit www.lakemetroparks.com for more info.

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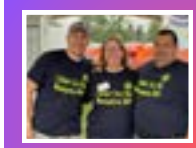

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CASINO, 6:00 - 10:00 PM
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FRIDAY, JUNE 5 @ 6:00-11:00 PM
WAYNE'S WORLD, 7:00 – 11:00 PM
CASINO, 6:00 - 11:00 PM
$1000 PRIZE DRAWING AT 10:00 PM

SATURDAY, JUNE 6 @ 1:00-11:00 PM
THE CALIBER BAND, 1:00 – 4:30 PM
ROAMING PRINCESS, 2:00 - 5:00 PM
FACE PAINTERS, GLITTER TATTOOS,
BALLOON TWISTER, 3:00 – 6:00 PM
CASINO, 5:00 - 11:00 PM
PIECES OF 8, 7:00 – 11:00 PM
$2,000 PRIZE DRAWING AT 10:00 PM
MIDNIGHT MASS AT ST. GABRIEL CHURCH, 12:00 AM

SUNDAY, JUNE 7 @ 1:00-8:00 PM
FACE PAINTERS, GLITTER TATTOOS, BALLOON
TWISTER, 3:00 – 6:00 PM
PERFECT CHOICE, 1:00 – 4:00 PM
ROAMING PRINCESS, 2:00 - 5:00 PM
CASINO, 5:00 - 9:00 PM
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Some days you feel like parent of the year. Other days… not so much. Tell us about it. The funny, the frustrating, the "did that really just happen?" moments.

We're collecting real stories from local parents—and yours might be featured.

Scan here. It takes less than a minute.

Short and messy is fine—we'll help shape it!

"Thought I was crushing it…"
I packed a full, healthy lunch—turkey sandwich, fruit, yogurt, even a little note. Felt like Parent of the Year.
My son came home starving.
Turns out… I forgot to actually put the lunch in his backpack.
— Mom of two, Chesterland

"Confidence is key… until it isn't."
Sent my daughter to school in what I thought was a cute, laid-back outfit.
Drop-off felt great.
Pick-up? She informed me it was picture day.
— Todd, Dad in Richmond Hts.

"Winning at bedtime… or so I thought."
Kids were in bed early, no complaints, no stalling. I was feeling really good about my parenting.
Went downstairs, sat down, relaxed…
Then realized it was 6:45 pm.
— Mom, Lyndhurst

"I'll take the small victory."
My toddler had a full meltdown over the wrong color cup… but eventually calmed down and used their words to ask for the blue one.
No tears (from me) by the end—counting that as a win.
— Nicole, Mom in Mentor

"Didn't see this coming."
I let my kids "help" make dinner, fully expecting a mess.
Not only did they stay engaged, they actually ate everything on their plates.
I'm still in shock.
— Bob, Grandfather in Wickliffe

"Trying to be fun backfires."
Told my kids we were having "breakfast for dinner" to mix things up.
They were thrilled… until they realized I meant eggs and toast, not donuts and pancakes.
I've never seen excitement turn that fast.
— Mom, Beachwood

No Screens, No Weekends: Family Life in 1776

By Dan Miller, Today's Family

As the nation approaches its 250th anniversary, it's a fitting time to look back—not just at the founding of a country, but at the everyday lives of the families who lived through it.

Imagine waking your child up tomorrow morning—not for school or soccer practice, but to help start the fire.

In 1776, that wasn't unusual. For most families in early America, daily life revolved around survival, not schedules. There were no school drop-offs, no weekend plans, and certainly no screens competing for attention. Instead, each day was shaped by daylight, the seasons, and the work that needed to be done.

Children were a vital part of that rhythm from a young age.

A typical day might begin at sunrise. Before breakfast, children could already be helping with chores—feeding animals, gathering wood, or fetching water. Even younger children had responsibilities, often working alongside parents and older siblings. There was little separation between "adult work" and "kid time." Everyone contributed.

School looked very different, too. Some children attended small, one-room schoolhouses, often for only part of the year. Others learned at home, picking up reading, writing, and arithmetic as time allowed. Education was important, but it was often

secondary to the immediate needs of the family.

And weekends? They didn't really exist.

The idea of a five-day workweek wouldn't take hold until much later. In 1776, most families worked six days a week, with Sunday reserved primarily for church and rest. Even then, "rest" didn't necessarily mean a full day off—it just meant a slower pace.

But that doesn't mean childhood was all work and no fun.

Without organized sports or structured activities, children found their own ways to play. They ran, climbed, explored, and invented games using whatever was around them. Free time was unstructured, imaginative, and almost always outdoors.

Evenings often brought families together in ways that feel surprisingly familiar today. After a long day, families gathered by candlelight or the hearth. There might be storytelling, music, or simply conversation. It was a time to reconnect, share experiences, and wind down together.

In many ways, family life in 1776 was harder than it is today. Daily tasks required more time, more effort, and more physical labor. But in other ways, it was simpler. There were fewer distractions, fewer outside pressures, and a stronger sense of working together as a family unit.

Of course, no one is suggesting we trade modern life for 18th-century routines. Few of us would be eager to give up conveniences like running water, transportation, or the flexibility that today's schedules allow.

But there's something worth noticing in that earlier way of life.

Children had more independence. Families spent more time together, not because they scheduled it, but because life required it. And play—while less structured—was still an essential part of growing up.

As we celebrate America's 250th anniversary, it's interesting to look back and consider how much has changed—and how much hasn't.

Families are still balancing responsibilities. Parents are still trying to support their children while preparing them for the future. And kids, no matter the century, are still learning, growing, and finding their place in the world.

The details may look different, but the heart of family life remains the same.

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Party Perfect: 10 Birthday Ideas Kids Will Love

Cake is easy. The party? That's where things get tricky. Luckily, Northeast Ohio is packed with places that turn birthdays into memorable, stress-free celebrations. Whether your child loves animals, art, sports, or a little bit of everything, these 10 party spots offer something for every personality—and make parents' lives a whole lot easier.

Adventure Zone Family Fun Center

5600 Lake Rd E, Geneva-on-theLake
(440) 466-3555
www.adventurezonefun.com

Looking for an action-packed birthday? Adventure Zone delivers a choose-your-own-adventure style celebration packed with variety. Guests receive wristbands to enjoy attractions like go-karts, bumper boats, mini golf, climbing walls, and more, allowing kids to explore at their own pace. Parties include a reserved pavilion space, and families are welcome to bring their own food, cake, and decorations. The birthday child is free with a minimum number of guests, making it a strong value for larger groups. With so many options in one location, it's easy to create a customized experience that keeps everyone engaged from start to finish.

Best for: High-energy kids who want lots of choices.

Atlas Cinemas

Mentor, Euclid, Shaker Square, Aurora
atlascinemas.net

Atlas Cinemas offers a classic birthday experience with a big-screen twist that's easy for parents to plan. Party packages include movie tickets, popcorn, drinks, and candy for each guest, along with access to a party area for cake and celebration time before or after the film. Families can choose from options tailored to different age groups, with upgrades available for evening showings or specialty films. Guests bring their own cake and decorations, keeping things simple and flexible. It's a relaxed, low-stress option that combines entertainment and celebration in one place—perfect for kids who love the movie theater experience.

Best for: Movie lovers and low-key celebrations.

Busy Bees Pottery & Arts Studio

Great Lakes Mall, Mentor
(440) 290-7767
mentor.busybeesart.com

Busy Bees Pottery & Arts Studio offers creative, hands-on birthday parties where kids make something special to take home. Each celebration includes a private party room, dedicated host, and guided art activity, along with invitations and a keepsake handprint for the birthday child. Party options range from pottery painting and canvas art to mosaics, clay building, and candle making, with choices suited for a variety of ages. Some projects are ready the same day, while others are kiln-fired and picked up later. With all setup and cleanup handled, it's a stress-free option that blends fun, creativity, and lasting memories.

Best for: Creative kids who love arts and crafts.

Cleveland Metroparks Zoo

3900 Wildlife Way, Cleveland
(216) 661-6500
www.clevelandmetroparks.com/zoo

For animal lovers, Cleveland Metroparks Zoo offers a one-of-a-kind birthday experience surrounded by wildlife. Parties are held at Koala Junction Outpost and include zoo admission, a private party space, and themed activities that keep kids engaged throughout the day. Packages vary in size and can include food, drinks, and attraction vouchers for experiences like the carousel or train. Families can also add extras such as animal encounters or face painting. With flexible options for both small and larger groups, it's a memorable way to celebrate while exploring one of the area's most popular family destinations.

Best for: Animal lovers and outdoor adventurers.

Cuts N Curls

6025 Kruse Drive, Solon
(440) 542-1750
cutsncurls.net

Cuts N Curls creates a birthday experience that blends creativity, confidence, and a touch of glam. Each party includes hands-on crafting along with salon-style fun like hairstyling, mini makeovers, and personalized keepsakes. With themed options ranging from princess and mermaid parties to fashion design and splatter paint, there's something for every personality and age group. Dedicated party coordinators handle all the details, allowing parents to relax and enjoy the celebration. Guests leave with something they created and a boost of confidence, making it more than just a party—it's an experience kids will remember.

Best for: Kids who love glam, fashion, and self-expression.

Greater Cleveland Aquarium

FirstEnergy Powerhouse
2000 Sycamore Street, Cleveland
groups@greaterclevelandaquarium.com
(216) 862-8803 ext. 7705
www.greaterclevelandaquarium.com

Greater Cleveland Aquarium offers an underwater-themed birthday experience that's both fun and educational. Party packages include aquarium admission, a private party space, and a guided activity or scavenger hunt led by an educator. Multiple package levels allow families to choose the right fit for their group size, with options to add food, extra time, or special experiences. Guests can explore exhibits filled with sharks, rays, and colorful marine life, making the celebration feel like an adventure. With flexible planning and built-in entertainment, it's a unique way to celebrate a birthday in an immersive environment.

Best for: Curious kids and ocean explorers.

Jump Start! Gymnastics

23700 Mercantile Road, Beachwood
Rear of National Biological Building
(216) 896-0295
jsgymnastics.com

Jump Start Gymnastics is a high-energy party destination where kids celebrate through movement and play. Led by trained coaches, parties include a mix of structured activities and free play using obstacle courses, gymnastics equipment, a trampoline, and a foam pit. Each event features dedicated gym time followed by a party area for food, cake, and gifts. Basic supplies and cleanup are included, making it easy for parents to host without the stress. It's an ideal option for active kids who want a celebration that feels more like a fun-filled play session than a traditional party.

Best for: Energetic kids who love to climb, jump, and move.

The Little Gym of Shaker Heights

20707 Chagrin Blvd., Shaker Heights
(216) 232-3062
www.thelittlegym.com/ohio-shaker-heights

The Little Gym of Shaker Heights offers active, structured birthday parties designed to keep kids moving and engaged. Each 90-minute celebration includes instructor-led games, obstacle courses, and music, along with time for cake and gifts in a private party space. Families can choose from themed options like superheroes, princesses, or dinosaurs, adding a personalized touch to the experience. Setup, cleanup, and basic supplies are all included, making it a convenient choice for parents. With a balance of guided activities and free play, it's a fun, stress-free way for kids to celebrate in a safe, energetic environment.

Best for: Younger kids who enjoy guided play and themes.

Lost Nation Sports Park

38630 Jet Center Drive, Willoughby
Marilyn@lnsportspark.com
(440) 602-4000 ex. 223
lostnationsports.com

Lost Nation Sports Park is perfect for kids who want a birthday filled with action and open space to play. Parties take place inside a large indoor facility with access to turf fields for games like soccer, kickball, dodgeball, and more. Guests can also enjoy basketball courts and batting cages, depending on the party setup. A private party room provides space for food and celebration, with families welcome to bring their own refreshments. It's a flexible option that works especially well for larger groups or sports-loving kids who prefer a fast-paced, game-focused party experience.

Best for: Sports-loving kids and larger groups.

Snapology Cleveland

23645 Mercantile Rd, Suite H, Beachwood
(216) 990-8988
www.snapology.com/ohio-cleveland

Snapology offers a unique birthday experience that combines creativity, building, and STEM-based fun. Parties are led by trained facilitators who guide kids through hands-on challenges based on themes like superheroes, animals, or science fiction. Guests work together using LEGO® bricks and other materials to complete interactive projects that encourage teamwork and problem-solving. All setup and cleanup are handled, making it a simple option for parents. With customizable themes and engaging activities, Snapology delivers a celebration that feels like play while sparking imagination and curiosity.

Best for: Builders, thinkers, and STEM-loving kids.

FAMILY FUNNIES

quick laughs for busy families

A magician says he will disappear on the count of three. "Uno, dos..." and he vanishes without a tres.

A wife watches her wedding video and shouts at the screen, "Don't do it, you fool!"

Joggers creep me out. Not because they're out and about at all hours of the day and night, but because they find so many bodies.

It's evening and little Johnny and his friend are sitting by a campfire. They are plagued by swarms of mosquitoes for over an hour and it gets worse when the sun goes down. Suddenly, a lightning bugs appear and Johnny exclaims, "These darn mosquitoes! Now they've brought lanterns to help find us."

Fun for Mom and the Whole Family!

Eurographics is a world-leading art publisher and puzzle manufacturer. Their company is known for its wide selection of quality products and outstanding customer service. Featuring: **Precision-cut pieces:** Ensuring a snug fit and hours of relaxing enjoyment • **Premium quality:** blueboard and a linen finish for a durable, glare-free experience • **Eco-friendly:** Manufactured using recycled and responsibly sourced materials.

Bakery Shop Tin
550-piece puzzle

Step into a sweet Paris-style scene puzzle presented in a charming, house-shaped collector tin. Overflowing with pastries, flowers, and cozy café details, this premium blueboard puzzle is a treat to build and a delight to display. The decorative tin keeps pieces tidy between sessions and makes a gorgeous keepsake.

Grand Ole Opry Collage
1000-piece puzzle

Step into the spotlight of Nashville's most legendary stage. This vibrant collage is packed with classic country memorabilia: rhinestone jackets, vintage boots, guitars, microphones, tickets, posters, and a glowing view of the Opry stage itself.

Zen Spa
1000-piece puzzle

Unwind and reset with a serene tabletop of spa treasures: floating lotus blossoms, orchids, smooth river stones, incense curls, a teapot and succulents all painted in soothing pastels. Zen Spa invites slow, mindful puzzling and a moment of calm.

Wyatt's Trading Co.
1000-piece puzzle

Saddle up for a trip to the Wild West! This is a story-packed puzzle set in a colorful frontier general store—complete with saloon doors, a sheriff's office, wagon wheels, cacti, textiles, a loyal horse and pup, and stacks of curious goods to discover in every section. Bright details and warm desert hues make this a joy to build and a standout to display.

Eurographics Puzzles
www.eurographicspuzzles.com

May is National Foster Parent Month

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Call the Foster Care line at:
(440) 350-4218
or email:
Eugene.Tetrick@jfs.ohio.gov

Lake County Department of Job and Family Services