

TODAY'S family

November 2026 Lake Geauga

Beary Merry Handmade
Arts & Craft Market
40th Birthday Bash

Winter Allergies

Why symptoms can
linger long after pollen
season ends

National Adoption Month

Lake and Geauga counties:
helping children find safe,
stable and permanent homes

These Are Not Toys

Electric bikes and scooters
are raising serious safety
concerns for young riders
and motorists

HUMOR

Being Born on a Holiday

MEET

Mr. Mike

Local drummer creates music videos
that are helping children learn, grow
and believe in themselves

Plus

Living Well
The Reading Corner
Mommy Chronicles
Toy & Gift Ideas
5 ideas for hosting
Thanksgiving

The Reading Corner



The Wright Brothers

From Bicycles To Airplanes
Adrienne Palma • Author
Amber Rae Malot • Illustrator
(\$14.99 | Ages 6–9)

The story tells about the determination and perseverance of Orville and Wilbur Wright. From their fascination with a toy helicopter given to them by their father when they were young, the two brothers continued their interest in flight.

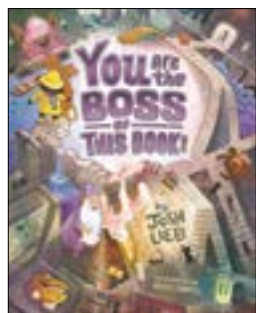
From flying kites to building gliders, to pursuing the right test site that had steady wind and soft sand dunes, the brothers overcame many obstacles to pursue their dream of designing, building, and flying a heavier than air aircraft.



Luna and the Lost Cove

Aria Joy Prichard • Author /Illustrator
(\$19.95 | Baby–4 years old)

Luna has always felt different from her mermaid friends. Drawn to the unknown and eager for adventure, she sets off with her best friend, Lemon the seahorse, after discovering a mysterious map that leads toward uncharted waters. As Luna journeys through a dazzling undersea world, she begins to uncover clues about who she is and where she belongs.



You Are the Boss of This Book

Josh Lieb • Author
Kevin Cornell • Illustrator
(\$19.99 | Ages 4–8 | Release date: November 3)

It's a dark and stormy night when you enter a mysterious castle. Melvin the magician greets you with an all-important question: Would you rather...eat a pizza or hug a tarantula? Think carefully, because Melvin's castle is full of surprises. Time travel? Shape-shifting? Dragons? Only one thing's for sure: the power is in your hands. And so is—wait, is that the tarantula?! NEVER choose the tarantula!

This hilarious, interactive story will draw in even the most reluctant readers with its wacky twists and turns, demanding to be reread again and again to explore every fantastical possibility.



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TODAY'S family
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Cleveland Play House

Nov. 28–Dec 27

Bursting with spirit and unstoppable charm, Annie shines with the kind of hope that refuses to be dimmed, as an irrepressible young girl with a big voice and an even bigger heart proves that courage comes in small packages.

In this high-energy, rags-to-riches adventure featuring iconic anthems like “Tomorrow,” “Easy Street,” and “It’s the Hard-Knock Life,” our young heroine takes on a world that underestimates her as she transforms everyone she meets—from a lovable stray dog named Sandy, to the billionaire Oliver Warbucks, and even the president of the United States!

Because sometimes, all it takes is one plucky dreamer—bright, bold, and unshakable—to remind us all that the sun will come out tomorrow!

Allen Theatre

216-241-6000 | clevelandplayhouse.com

Providence House

A Safe Place During Family Crises

When a parent faces a medical emergency, housing crisis or other unexpected hardship, finding safe care for a child can become an urgent concern. For more than four decades, Providence House has helped Northeast Ohio families navigate those situations while keeping children safe.

Founded in 1981 by Sister Hope Greener, Providence House provides free, temporary shelter for children from birth through age 12. Children stay at the crisis nursery while parents and caregivers receive support to address the circumstances that brought them there.

Those circumstances vary widely. A family may be facing eviction, a shutoff of heat or water, homelessness or an unsafe living environment. A parent may need hospitalization or medical treatment and have no trusted person available to care for their children.

At Providence House, children receive personal necessities, supervision and nurturing care from trained staff in a home-like setting. Children with medical or developmental needs may also receive specialized services and therapies.

Equally important is the work done with their families. Child advocates help parents connect with housing resources, parenting support, substance-use treatment, mental health services and other community assistance. Providence House works with a network of local agencies to help families create safer, more stable circumstances before reunification.



East Campus Nursery

The organization began in a three-room house on Cleveland’s West Side and later established its Ohio City campus on West 32nd Street. Its facilities include Leo’s House, a traditional crisis nursery, and Elisabeth’s House, which serves children with medical needs. An additional nursery at Buckeye Road and East 118th Street expanded access for East Side families, including those in Lake and Geauga counties.

Families seeking assistance can contact Providence House directly. Even when nursery space is unavailable, staff can help connect parents with resources and referrals.

The goal is straightforward: protect children through a family crisis, support parents through it and help families return home together.

For more information on how you can help, visit www.provhouse.org or call 216-651-5982.



 cleveland play house

Annie

NOV 28 – DEC 27 • ALLEN THEATRE

book by THOMAS MEEHAN • music by CHARLES STROUSE • lyrics by MARTIN CHARNIN
original Broadway production directed by MARTIN CHARNIN
based on “Little Orphan Annie” by permission of TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY, LLC
directed & choreographed by PATRICK MCCOLLUM

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Pictured: Lennon Rostar. Photo by Shiny Penny Studios, 2026

Building Confidence in Children

One Beat at a Time

Meet Mr. Mike, the Wickliffe drummer whose music videos are helping children learn, grow and believe in themselves

A student was having trouble cleaning up his work. Mike Mulroy could have repeated the directions. Instead, he tapped out a beat on a desk and turned the task into a rhyme.

"All of a sudden my student is no longer just sitting there," he recalls. "He's smiling and cleaning up and doing exactly what is expected."

That moment captures the idea behind Mr. Mike, a Wickliffe native whose music videos help children build confidence, practice everyday skills and discover the joy of learning.

Mulroy's comfort around children started early. His mother babysat throughout his childhood, and he often came home from school to help. Years later, a family connection introduced him to Mentor CARES (Cardinal Autism Resource and Education School), founded by his best friend's mother, Christy Lapaglia.

In summer 2021, Mulroy was working at Aldi and feeling uncertain about his direction. He volunteered for the CARES summer program, fell in love with the work and was hired as a paraprofessional, a classroom assistant who works alongside teachers to support students.

When he learned he would be staying with the same students for the school year, he returned to the classroom with exciting news.

"I remember going back to the classroom so incredibly happy, giving all my students a big hug saying, 'I'm staying!'"

Over the next five years, he helped students follow schedules, complete assignments, manage emotions, communicate and build independence. They taught him patience, he says, and showed him how much encouragement could accomplish.

Finding his rhythm

While his career working with children was taking shape, another lifelong passion was finding its way into the classroom.

Mulroy had been drumming for as long as he could remember. In kindergarten, his teacher frequently asked him to stop tapping on his desk.

His parents encouraged his interest in music and took him to concerts, while performers such as Justin Bieber and Alex Wolff inspired his enthusiasm for percussion.

At Wickliffe High School, he joined the drumline alongside his friend Christian Jensen. But peer pressure got the better of him. After hearing classmates describe band as something for losers, he dropped out for two years before returning as a senior.

Looking back, he regrets letting others influence something he enjoyed. It's a lesson he now shares with children: never be embarrassed about what makes you happy.

His musical interests continued beyond high school. He studied music for a semester in Colorado, played drums in a college jazz band and performed with his friends in a group called Public Chase. He also grew up participating in theater and became comfortable performing before audiences.

Eventually, he auditioned for the Cleveland Cavaliers' 216Stix drum team, where he discovered the importance of consistent practice. Performing at Cavaliers and Cleveland Monsters games has been a dream come true, he says, and his fellow drummers have become like family.

Back at CARES, Mulroy began combining his musical abilities with the lessons he was teaching. Sometimes a simple rhythm or improvised song could help a frustrated student approach a task differently.

His coworker, Ms. Aimee, encouraged him to take the idea further. The classroom regularly used educational YouTube videos, but they struggled to find ones addressing the particular behaviors and challenges their students experienced.

"I hope a child feels seen, and heard. I hope a child feels a spark of inspiration."
—Mr. Mike



Why not create their own?

One early song idea, "I Can Swing by Myself!," was inspired by a student who resisted trying to swing independently. Rather than simply continuing to push him, Mulroy wanted to encourage him to believe he could do it himself.

The first completed Mr. Mike video, "Dance Like a Dino!," followed a classroom dinosaur theme.

"I want to teach them that it's cool to believe in yourself, it's cool to push yourself, it's cool to work hard," he says.

Although the videos originated in a classroom serving children with autism and other developmental disabilities, Mulroy emphasizes that they are for everyone.

"Just because the lessons are a bit unordinary, or that they're low stimulating and structured, does not mean that they are 'only' for people on the spectrum," he says. "Everyone can use a refresher. Everyone needs structure."

Continued on page 7



Small Financial Habits, Big Family Futures

Between school activities, grocery bills, holiday shopping, and everyday surprises, managing family finances can sometimes feel like a juggling act. The good news? Building a stronger financial future doesn't require making big changes overnight.

Cardinal Credit Union believes financial confidence begins with small, intentional steps that grow with your family.

"At Cardinal, we believe financial confidence starts with small, everyday habits," said Christine Blake, CEO of Cardinal Credit Union. "By helping families talk about money, set goals, and make thoughtful financial decisions together, we can help the next generation build a stronger financial future."

Start with conversations. Whether you're teaching a young child the difference between wants and needs or helping a teenager open their first savings account, talking openly about money builds healthy habits that can last a lifetime.

Make saving a family goal. Planning a vacation, preparing for college, or building an emergency fund? Involving the whole family helps children understand the value of setting goals and celebrating progress along the way.

Spend with intention. As the holiday season approaches, creating a realistic budget can help families enjoy meaningful moments without starting the new year with unnecessary financial stress.



Remember, the most memorable traditions don't always come with the biggest price tags.

Know you're not alone. Financial questions are a normal part of life, and having someone to turn to can make a difference. Cardinal offers personalized financial guidance and resources to help members navigate life's milestones with greater confidence.

For more than 70 years, Cardinal has been committed to supporting Northeast Ohio families through every stage of life. Because when families feel financially empowered, our entire community grows stronger.

This holiday season, give your family a gift that lasts: a foundation of healthy financial habits.

Learn more at CardinalCU.com.

Candy Land Wild about Winter

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

The free family tradition is back! New this year, Candy Land has gone Wild about Winter! Fun for the whole family, the indoor holiday tradition continues as the game comes to life, taking you on a wintry adventure to discover the secrets above and beneath the snow. Rounding out the activities are a themed craft, new 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. Snowshoe rentals are weather permitting.

Wild Weekends

Special weekend programs: Saturdays feature animal chats and s'mores around a campfire, while Sundays offer animal enrichment demonstrations in the Wildlife Center yard.

DATE & TIME

November 21, 2026 – January 3, 2027
10 AM – 5 PM

Closed Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas, New Year's Eve & New Year's Day

LOCATION

Penitentiary Glen Reservation
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www.stmaryschoolchardon.org

These Are Not Toys

As e-bikes and e-scooters become more popular with kids, speed, inexperience and confusion about the rules are raising safety concerns.

We've all seen them. A child who looks barely old enough for middle school flies down a residential street on an electric bike. Another zips along a sidewalk without a helmet. Sometimes two kids are sharing a bike designed for one rider, moving quickly enough that a driver backing out of a driveway may have only seconds to react.

And they are moving fast.

Electric bikes and scooters have seemingly gone from novelty to neighborhood fixture almost overnight. They can be fun and convenient, but their popularity has created a concern many parents may not fully appreciate: These are not simply bicycles with a little extra help.

Under Ohio law, a Class 1 e-bike provides assistance while the rider pedals and can assist up to 20 mph. A Class 2 can propel the bike without the rider pedaling, also up to 20 mph.

Class 3 bikes provide pedal assistance up to 28 mph — approaching the speed of automobile traffic on many residential streets. Ohio prohibits anyone under 16 from operating a Class 3 e-bike.

That combination of speed and young, inexperienced riders has caught the attention of police departments and communities throughout Northeast Ohio.

A growing local concern

In September, Mentor City Council approved new regulations intended to make e-bike rules clearer and easier to enforce. Among other provisions, Mentor now requires e-bike riders to wear helmets, prohibits passengers unless the bike is designed for them, requires riders to warn pedestrians before passing and requires the motor to be turned off when an e-bike is ridden on a sidewalk.



Incoming Mentor Police Chief Mike Majernik says the city had been receiving numerous complaints about riders traveling at high speeds on sidewalks and bike paths.

"The laws that were on the books made it difficult for our officers to enforce," Majernik says. "The new e-bike laws passed by Mentor City Council make it much easier for our road officers to spot a violation and take appropriate enforcement action."

What concerns him most is the age and experience of some riders.

"Young kids are riding e-bikes and scooters that reach high speeds, and they don't require a driver's license," he says. "Young kids don't know the rules of the road and don't have the awareness that you develop when learning to drive a car."

Mentor isn't alone in addressing the issue. Other Northeast Ohio communities have also adopted or considered additional rules governing e-bikes and other motorized devices as their popularity has grown.

Know what your child is riding

One complication is that parents may not realize exactly what they are buying.

Ohio's legal definition of an e-bike includes requirements involving the bike's motor, pedals and maximum assisted speed. Some electric two-wheelers marketed alongside e-bikes are powerful or fast enough that they may actually fall into another motor-vehicle classification.

"They are not normal bicycles," Majernik says. "The laws are complex, and there are kids riding e-bikes or minibikes that are classified as motorcycles based on how they work."

That distinction matters. A child operating what legally qualifies as a motorcycle or another motor vehicle without the proper license can face consequences, and parents may also bear responsibility for allowing the

child to operate it.

Before buying one, parents should know its classification, maximum speed and where it can legally be ridden. Just as important, they should honestly consider whether their child has the maturity and judgment to operate it around cars, pedestrians and other riders.

The consequences can be serious

Majernik says Mentor had a couple of serious e-bike accidents involving injuries this past summer and receives frequent complaints about unsafe riding.

"We don't want someone on an e-bike or scooter struck by a car," he says. "People driving don't want to injure someone, and people walking the sidewalks and bike paths don't want people zipping by at high speeds and worrying about getting struck."

Pediatric experts have raised similar concerns. E-bikes are faster and heavier than traditional bicycles and can require more judgment and control. Knowing how to ride a conventional bicycle doesn't necessarily mean a child is ready for an electric one.

Helmets help reduce risk, but they don't eliminate it. Nor can a helmet make up for a rider who doesn't understand right-of-way, intersections, stopping distance or how quickly a car can appear from a driveway or side street.

"Kids are kids, and no matter how much a parent may tell them to be careful, when they get in a group they tend to push the limits," Majernik says.

That puts an important part of the responsibility on parents.

An e-bike may be sold as recreation and may look a lot like the bicycle a child has ridden for years, but adding a motor and significant-

Continued on page 7



**DRESS FESTIVE FOR PICTURES
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CELEBRATE BY RINGING SANTA'S BELL
EXPLORE DTW SHOPS & RESTAURANTS**

PRESENTS

MIRACLE ON ERIE STREET 5K

AND ONE MILE WALK

December 5th

**DOWNTOWN WILLOUGHBY
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(2) DRINK TICKETS FOR DTW BARS & RESTAURANTS**



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ly more speed changes the equation. Before handing over the handlebars, parents need to understand what the device can do — and whether their child is truly ready for it.

Majernik's message is simple. "They are not toys," he says. "Simply put, e-bikes are not safe for children to ride. It is like allowing your child to ride a motorcycle with no driver's license and no knowledge of the traffic laws."

For younger kids, there is still another option that has worked pretty well for generations: the traditional bicycle.

It doesn't have a motor, but it does come with brakes, pedals and one remarkably effective built-in speed limiter — tired legs.

— Article by Dan Miller
Today's Family

A growing audience

The project has become a team effort. Longtime friend Christian Jensen produces the beats, helps record the music and joins live performances as DJ. Former CARES colleague Miss Brittany, a board-certified behavior analyst, develops social stories and classroom resources and sometimes appears on screen.

Every Friday for more than two years, the team has released a new video. Mulroy records melody ideas on his phone, works with Jensen on the music, then films and edits the results. A "Mr. Mike Monday" series is also planned.

The audience has grown far beyond Northeast Ohio. Mulroy has heard from teachers and families in Australia, Brazil, Japan, the United Kingdom and other countries.

He recalls working late one night when a teacher from another area messaged him asking about an upcoming video. It happened to be the very video he was finishing. Suddenly, he realized children beyond his own classroom were looking forward to his work.

Mr. Mike is also taking the music on the road. His approximately 30-minute shows bring the videos to life with bucket drumming, dancing, singing and audience participation. He has visited schools in Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania and South Carolina.

At a Cincinnati appearance, a teacher overheard a child leaving the room saying, "I can't stop smiling!"

Mulroy now focuses full time on Mr. Mike and performs with the Cavaliers' 216Stix drum team. He left his regular CARES position after the summer but remains available as a substitute.



For all the music, movement and videos, his mission is simple.

"I hope a child feels seen, and heard. I hope a child feels a spark of inspiration."

To inquire about school or community performances:

Email: reallymrmike@gmail.com

Find: @yourfriendmrmike on Instagram and TikTok

—Article by Dan Miller, Today's Family

—Photos courtesy of Mr. Mike



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Healthy Communication Takes Courage

Why is it so hard to talk honestly with the people we love most?

By Rebecca Fellenbaum



Living with people we love means bringing up issues in a way that honors both ourselves and the other person.

When you're frustrated that your spouse isn't helping enough around the house or your teenager has shut you out, expressing what's going on for you and asking for what you need requires skill and the ability to listen and respond.

This is a common scenario: You have something to say, but you don't know how to communicate it well. You worry about how it will be received. So you hold it in, ask for only part of what you want or inadvertently let it out sideways.

While it takes courage, there is another way: healthy communication. It requires vulnerability, risks disagreement or disapproval and asks us to accept that we might not get what we want. Yet without it, resentment

builds, and we miss opportunities to connect.

Most of us learned how to communicate by watching the adults around us. Did your family discuss disagreements or sweep them under the rug? Was there yelling and arguing, or did everyone keep their feelings to themselves?

The good news is that communication is a skill we can learn and practice. And we can model it for our kids.

Here are three steps for having a tough conversation:

Set the stage – Before starting, ask yourself: Am I trying to make things better, or am I trying to prove I'm right?

Approach the conversation with good intentions and assume the other person has good intentions, too. Then ask if they're willing to talk and when they're available.

Speak for yourself – Instead of saying, "You're always on your phone! Nobody in this family pays attention

to each other!" try, "I've been missing spending time together without our phones. Could we put them away during dinner tonight?"

Note the "I" statement and clear request. Share your experience, how you feel and what you'd like. Avoid accusations and words like "always" and "never." Remember, you're making a request, not a demand.

Make room for both experiences – Listen to understand, not to formulate your defense. Two people can experience the same situation differently. You don't have to agree with someone's perspective to acknowledge it.

Here's the vulnerable part: You cannot control the other person's response. You can communicate kindly and still not get what you want. That doesn't mean the conversation failed. Fear of hearing no keeps us silent, but that's no reason not to try.

Don't start with your biggest issues. If something irks you, try making a request instead of complaining.



Ask what someone meant instead of assuming. Then listen without interrupting.

I've discovered that the more I trust myself to speak honestly, the more connected I feel to the people around me. In taking the risk, something unexpected has happened: vulnerability has become a bridge to deeper connection in my relationships

Rebecca Fellenbaum is a life and relationship coach, writer and Cleveland-area mom who helps individuals and couples feel better and enjoy their lives and relationships. Find her online at www.rebeccafellenbaum.com.



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TURKEY DAY 5K

Lake County YMCA

NOVEMBER 26, 2026

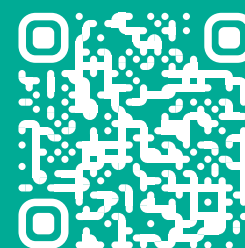
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A Holiday Tradition, Handmade

Beary Merry event celebrates 40 years

What began as a fundraiser dreamed up by a group of preschool moms four decades ago has grown into a holiday tradition filled with handmade gifts, longtime shoppers and a commitment to helping others.

The Beary Merry Handmade Arts & Crafts Market returns Dec. 1–2 to LaVera Party Center for its 40th Birthday Bash, celebrating a story that began in 1985 with the Euclid Preschool PTA Parenting Group. The annual tradition was interrupted in 2020 when the event was canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The original idea was simple. The parenting group needed a fundraiser to support educational speakers and activities for preschool families. Denise McPherson, who chaired the effort, combined her love of crafts with the talents of other preschool moms and helped organize the first show at Casa di Borally.

“We never imagined that something created by a group of preschool moms would still be bringing people together 40 years later,” McPherson says. “It’s been wonderful to watch Beary Merry grow and become a holiday tradition for so many families.”

The event continued to grow, moving first to Normandy Party Center and eventually to LaVera. When the preschool parenting group later disbanded, McPherson was given the opportunity to continue the Beary Merry tradition.

Today, the juried market features a wide range of handmade goods and specialty foods, including artwork, jewelry, holiday décor, children’s items, clothing, candles, chocolates, baked goods, personalized ornaments, home décor and more.

Many crafters have participated for years, creating relationships with shoppers that go well beyond a simple transaction.

“I tell my customers that Beary Merry is like a big holiday party with your family,” longtime crafter Beth Vilkas says. “That’s why customers keep coming back and they stay for hours!”

Giving back also remains an important part of the event. A popular raffle features more than 50 themed gift baskets, with proceeds benefiting Susan G. Komen in memory of Jen-



Denise McPherson

nifer Grosel, who died from breast cancer in 2007 at age 40, leaving behind her husband and three young children.

“Our guests are so passionate about supporting Susan G. Komen,” raffle coordinator Dorene Zajec says. “Many share personal stories about loved ones and their own journeys with cancer.”

Beary Merry also serves as a toy collection site for Asa’s Angels. Guests may bring a new toy or make a monetary donation to help local families in need.

To mark this year’s milestone, organizers have invited members of the original Euclid Preschool PTA Parenting Group to return. The first 250 guests each day will receive a limited-edition shopping tote, and special door-prize drawings will be held every half hour.

For McPherson, the longevity of Beary Merry comes down to the families, volunteers, crafters and shoppers who have supported it through the years.

“What means the most to me is seeing the same crafters and shoppers come back year after year,” McPherson says. “It has become more than a craft show. There are friendships, family traditions and so many memories connected to Beary Merry.”

After four decades, the event has become more than a place to shop. It is a holiday tradition built on handmade gifts, familiar faces, community support and the simple pleasure of coming together year after year.



— 40th —
• Birthday Bash! •

Handmade Arts & Crafts Market

TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY
DECEMBER 1 AND 2
11:00 AM - 8:00 PM

LA VERA PARTY CENTER

32200 CHARDON ROAD, WILLOUGHBY HILLS 44094

- Two Banquet Rooms Of Handmade Gift Items By Crafters
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FOUR DOLLAR ADMISSION

thebearymerryshow@gmail.com



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glasshouse



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Our Lady of Lourdes Shrine

Fall Events / Winter Hours

Save the Date

Special Dates

Feast of All Saints: Sun., Nov. 1 • 8 AM Mass
 Feast of all the Poor Souls: Mon., Nov. 2 • 7 AM Mass
 Thanksgiving Day: Thurs., Nov. 26 • 8 AM Mass
 Fri., Nov. 27 • 8 AM Mass
 French Toast Breakfast: Sun., Dec. 6 • after 8 AM Mass
 Includes: bacon or sausage, coffee or tea, and juice | \$10.25 pp



Shrine Mass Schedule

Sunday: 8 AM only (No 4 PM Rosary)
 Mon, Wed., Thurs., and Fri.: 7 AM
 Tuesday: 3:30-4:30 PM Adoration | 5 PM Mass
 Saturday: 8 AM



Gift Shop

Sunday: After 8 AM Mass–4:30 PM
 Monday–Friday 10 AM–4:30 PM
 Saturday 10 AM–3:30 PM
 As of Nov. 1 grotto water will be available in the Gift Shop

The Shrine grounds will remain open from dawn until dusk



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When Winter Brings More Than the Sniffles

Why some allergies can linger long after pollen season ends

By Dan Miller, Today's Family

When temperatures drop and families close the windows, allergy season may seem like it should finally be over. But for some children, winter brings a fresh round of sneezing, congestion, itchy eyes and coughing.

The reason is simple: winter often means more time indoors, where allergens such as dust mites, pet dander and mold can linger year-round. Heated homes and closed windows can increase the amount of time children spend around those triggers, making symptoms seem worse even though outdoor pollen levels have dropped.

"It is important to distinguish between 'seasonal allergies' which affect us during specific allergy seasons and 'perennial allergies,' which affect us year-round," says Dr. Shelly Senders of Senders Pediatrics in South Euclid.

Cold or allergies?

One of the biggest challenges for parents is figuring out whether a child has perennial allergies or yet another winter cold.

Both can cause congestion, a runny nose and coughing. Allergies, however, are more likely to cause repeated sneezing, itchy or watery eyes and an itchy nose or throat. A fever, body aches and feeling "sick" point more toward a viral infection.

"One of the biggest clues that

you're dealing with perennial allergies rather than a cold is an itchy nose and itchy eyes," Dr. Senders says. "Perennial allergies are caused by histamine release which is what causes the itchiness."

Duration can also offer a clue. Most colds improve within several days and resolve within about two weeks. Perennial allergy symptoms typically come and go all year.

Look inside the house

Dust mites, which are microscopic bugs that feed on dust, are among the most common indoor allergens and are especially prevalent in bedding, carpeting and upholstered furniture. Pet allergens can also become more troublesome during winter simply because pets and family members are spending more time together indoors.

Mold is another potential trigger, particularly in damp basements, bathrooms, around windows or anywhere moisture collects. Indoor allergens can contribute not only to nasal symptoms but also to asthma flare-ups in children who are sensitive to them.

Cold air itself is not an allergy, although breathing cold, dry air can irritate the nose and airways and may trigger coughing or asthma symptoms in some children. That can make figuring out the cause even more confusing.



Small changes can help

Doing a little sleuthing is helpful when suspecting perennial allergies. Start by paying attention to patterns. Are symptoms worse after a child wakes up? After playing with a pet? In one particular room?

For children with dust and dust-mite allergies, washing bedding regularly and using allergen-resistant mattress and pillow covers may help reduce exposure. Vacuuming with a HEPA-filter vacuum, keeping excessive humidity under control and addressing visible mold can also make a difference.

Pet allergies can be more complicated. Keeping animals out of a child's bedroom may reduce exposure, although pet allergens can spread throughout a home and remain on furniture and clothing.

When to call your pediatrician

Parents should talk with their child's pediatrician when symptoms are persistent, interfere with sleep or school, repeatedly return, or are difficult to control with simple measures.

Children who develop wheezing, shortness of breath or frequent nighttime coughing also deserve

attention, particularly if they have asthma or a history of respiratory problems.

If congestion or coughing lasts for weeks, keeps returning, interferes with sleep or is accompanied by wheezing, that's a good reason to talk with your pediatrician rather than assuming it's just another cold.

A pediatrician can help determine whether symptoms are caused by allergies, repeated viral infections or something else. "But" says Dr. Senders, "Don't engage in often expensive remediation efforts until you ask your pediatric provider to do a simple blood allergy test." The cost of the blood test (which is typically covered by most insurances) is minimal compared to the cost of allergy proofing a house."

Winter may mean fewer blooming plants outside, but allergy triggers do not disappear when the temperature drops. For some children, they simply move indoors.

Senders Pediatrics is located at 2054 South Green Road in South Euclid. To schedule an appointment, call 216-291-9210 or visit senderspeditrics.com for more information.

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Cardinal Parents' Club (CPC) is bringing you all your favorite crafters, artisans and vendors and Mentor H.S. gear. All admission proceeds will support CPC initiatives/purchases such as window signs, letter, trophies, plaques, meals for athletes, senior banners, and scholarships. Thanks for your support!

- All patrons, craft show vendors and volunteers are required to abide by current Mentor High School and the Cardinal Parents Club health and safety guidelines.
- For information on the event or to be a vendor contact Debbie at cpc.mentor@gmail.com

Greater Cleveland Aquarium Hosts Hunger Network Drive

Event offers a \$7 discount on admission when you donate a nonperishable food item or necessity

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

Back for its 12th year, Greater Cleveland Aquarium is partnering with Hunger Network for "Nourish Our Neighbors," a seven-day drive collecting canned proteins like tuna and chicken, shelf-stable milk, nut butter, whole grain cereals and healthy and nutritious nonperishables—as well as essential personal and household hygiene items including toilet paper, deodorant and diapers.

Each guest who drops off an item from Hunger Network's wish list at the Aquarium ticket counter between November 12 – 18, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., will receive \$7 off their same-day admission. Serving more than 45,000 individuals each month, Hunger Network is one of Cuyahoga County's largest emergency food providers.

For questions about donating, visit



greaterclevelandaquarium.com or call 216-862-8803.

For information on other ways you can support Hunger Network visit hungernetwork.org.

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

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More entertainment for your dollar!

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

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

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



and live in Northeast Ohio.

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

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

Visit www.AtlasCinemas.net today.

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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!

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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 information on any of these holiday ideas, visit: ClevelandZooSociety.org/holiday.



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Happy Holidays Start With Healthy Boundaries

By Stacy Turner

As the last of autumn's colors fade, the holiday season quickly takes their place — bringing traditions, family gatherings, packed calendars and, sometimes, a healthy dose of stress.

As a new parent, I often approached the holiday season with visions of sugarplums dancing in my head. I counted down the days as I plotted and planned how I could make the coming holidays memorable and fun for my munchkins, while trying to meet the needs and expectations of extended family members. As a result, I headed into the holiday season with equal parts anticipation and wonder about what I would experience with my littles, along with some doubt that we'd be able to incorporate all the long-standing expectations of holidays gone by.

Some of the new traditions we began with our kids have stuck with us, like heading out to a local farm together to select and cut down our Christmas tree. Others eventually fell away, replaced by different activities

as we figured out what worked best for our growing family.

But it's easy to get caught up in planning a picture-perfect holiday season. Every seasonal song makes it seem as though everyone but us is in on the plan. They'll be returning home to loving families who gather to enjoy each other's company while eating pumpkin pie or roasting chestnuts on an open fire. For many people, however, gatherings of extended family can be less than idyllic, as people with stark differences and strong opinions experience Thanksgiving throw-downs or Christmas-time confrontations instead.

Over the years, I've learned the importance of prioritizing the traditions and needs of my growing family rather than always trying to meet the expectations of extended family. I've learned that the hectic holidays can be exhausting enough without succumbing to the emotional drain of others, whether they're consciously causing it or not.

I've also learned that it's healthy and necessary to create boundaries

with difficult people, in spite of the holiday sentiments that seem to suggest otherwise. But exactly how can this be done?

Begin before the holiday season kicks off by discussing plans and activities with your partner. Together, come up with events and traditions that work for you and your family. Keep in mind that just because you've always done something doesn't mean it automatically makes it onto this year's list. Your time with your children is precious and fleeting, and you're allowed to be protective of it.

Knowing this, it's okay to limit travel and avoid taking your Christmas on the road, even if relatives you'd like to see have made the decision to stay put. It's also okay to modify activities to reduce time spent with those who steal your joy. You may hear complaints, but you'll get to focus more time and energy on the people and activities that fill you and your family up.

Sometimes a boundary doesn't mean excluding someone entirely. It may simply mean shortening a visit,



changing the setting or deciding ahead of time which situations are likely to create unnecessary stress. Not everyone will like the boundary, but that doesn't necessarily mean it's the wrong one.

It's okay to find new ways to celebrate — ways that better suit your growing family's needs and wants — even if that's not how it's always been done. I came across a quote by author Prentiss Hemphill that makes the point quite well: "Boundaries are the distance at which I can love you and me simultaneously."

As you look forward to the coming holidays, know that you can show love for yourself and those difficult folks by setting boundaries in advance that serve everyone better. It doesn't mean you love them less. It means you love them enough to try to make the situation work for all of you.

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Lady Caroline December Cruises

Brunch with Santa, Saturday, December 5, offers guests a chance to meet the man himself. Still need a good family photo for this year's holiday card? We've got you! Guests may use their cell phone cameras to capture the moment.

Later that day, Lady Caroline leans into what has become a holiday tradition: the Ugly Sweater! For 21 and over guests, this cruise is a fun way to welcome "sweater weather" and the season. We'll pair holiday drinks with good views on this themed cruise with prizes for the best (worst?) sweaters.

For 21+ guests who prefer to skip

the slopes and head straight for the after party, our Après Ski Party is for you. Bundle up in your Alpine best and brave the sky deck, or cuddle up on one of our three climate-controlled, enclosed decks.

On December 31, join us for our Noon Year's Eve cruise and watch the ball drop from the comfort of your couch or get gussied up and take to the lake with our 21+ New Year's Eve Gala. Party hats, favors and festive merriment included in both events.

For tickets and group bookings, visit ladycaroline.com or call 216-696-8888.



Miracle on Erie Street 5K Returns to Downtown Willoughby

The Miracle on Erie Street 5K returns to historic Downtown Willoughby on Saturday, Dec. 5, bringing runners, walkers and families together for a festive event benefiting Erie Street Miracles.

The race begins at 11 a.m. and includes a professionally managed 5K course as well as a 1-mile walk for those who prefer a shorter route. Participants can also enjoy appearances by Santa and Krampus, family-friendly activities and a holiday atmosphere throughout downtown.

Following the race, registered participants can use two complimentary drink tickets at participating Downtown Willoughby bars and restaurants.

Proceeds from registration fees, sponsorships and donations benefit Erie Street Miracles, which helps create memorable Christmas morn-

ings for families in need throughout Northeast Ohio.

"Miracle on Erie Street represents more than just a race," says race organizer John Tomaselli. "It is an opportunity for people to come together, celebrate the season and make a real impact on the lives of others."

Registered participants will receive commemorative race shirts, with finisher medals and age-group awards also presented. Local vendors and community organizations will be part of the day's activities.

Runners can compete for a personal best, families can walk the course together or participants can simply enjoy a festive morning while supporting a local cause.

For registration, volunteer information and additional event details, visit runsignup.com/Race/OH/Willoughby/MiracleOnErieSt5K.



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• Payment plan available • Register anytime

Contact David Swinarski | DSWINARSKI@LNSPORTSPARK.COM



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Tropical Holiday Brings Island Warmth to the Botanical Garden

Cleveland winters may be cold, but the Cleveland Botanical Garden is heading someplace warmer for the holidays.

Tropical Holiday opens Saturday, Nov. 21, transforming the Garden into a mix of tropical scenery and traditional holiday favorites. The exhibit runs through Sunday, Jan. 3.

Visitors can follow the story of a shipwrecked crew traveling through desert and jungle settings on its way to a Holiday Bazaar. In the Madagascar and Costa Rica Glasshouses, families can take part in a storybook scavenger hunt, searching for plants and natural features that could help the travelers survive their journey. Children who complete the hunt can turn it in for a free postcard.

At the center of the display is a 20-foot living tree surrounded by bromeliads, ferns, monstera and palms and decorated with lights and jewel-toned ornaments. Hundreds of poinsettias and tropical plants add holiday color throughout the indoor gardens. Families can also explore the expanded children's play area, complete with an oversized

slide, while outdoor displays include a light tunnel stretching from Geis Terrace to the Rose Garden.

Another favorite returns with the Garden's 20th annual gingerbread competition. Approximately 100 creations from local families, children and bakeries will be displayed throughout the run of Tropical Holiday.

Several special events and activities are also planned:

Krampusnacht

Saturday, Dec. 5, 6–9 p.m. Costumed Krampuses will roam the indoor and outdoor gardens during an evening featuring live music, local vendors and food and drink specials. Admission is \$35 for nonmembers and \$30 for members; advance registration is required.

Storytime with Santa

Sundays, Nov. 22 and 29 and Dec. 6 and 13, 10 a.m.–noon. Santa will read a holiday story, pose for photos and join families for crafts and light refreshments. Cost is \$30 per nonmember adult and \$25 per child; members pay \$25 per adult and \$20 per child.



A family walking through the Costa Rica Glasshouse

Breakfast with Santa

Sunday, Dec. 20, with seatings at 9 and 11 a.m. Santa will visit each table, followed by opportunities for family photos. Ticket prices will be announced.

Children's Holiday Classes

Kids can make tropical paper wreaths, nature-inspired ornaments, stuffed yeti pillows or decorated holiday cookies on select dates throughout the season. Classes cost \$8 for member children and \$10 for

nonmembers; one adult admission to the class is included, although general Garden admission is separate.

Tropical Holiday is included with general admission: \$21 for adults, \$15 for children ages 3–12 and free for children 2 and younger. Advance timed tickets are required. Evening hours are offered Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays until 9 p.m.

Please check cbgarden.org for a full list of special events, dates and times.

Santa's Workshop at Habitat ReStore

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While do-it-yourself water treatment options may seem appealing, professional

testing and guidance can help homeowners avoid unnecessary expenses and choose the most effective approach for their specific needs.

Serving Northeast Ohio since 1987, DeBord Plumbing & Heating provides plumbing, heating, cooling and septic services. The company's licensed, bonded and insured team is committed to providing professional, courteous service, whether customers need routine maintenance, equipment replacement or assistance with an unexpected plumbing or HVAC emergency.

DeBord Plumbing & Heating places a high priority on customer comfort and safety. Homeowners considering a new HVAC system can contact the company for a complimentary replacement quote.

For more information, call 440-285-9125 or 440-286-6002, visit www.Debordinc.com or see the advertisement below for additional information and special offers. DeBord Plumbing & Heating can also be found on Facebook.



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More Than One Path to a Forever Family

Lake and Geauga counties take somewhat different approaches to foster care and adoption, but share the same goal: helping children find safe, stable and permanent homes



For many children in Lake and Geauga counties, a safe and stable home can make all the difference. While the path to adoption may look different for every family, the goal is the same: giving children the chance to belong, thrive and grow up surrounded by care.

Throughout Northeast Ohio, children in foster care need adults willing to provide temporary homes while families work toward reunification — and, when reunification is no longer possible, permanent homes through adoption.

November is National Adoption Month, an annual effort to bring attention to children and teens waiting for families and to the adults who open their homes to them. “National Adoption Month is a celebration of those members in our community who have taken a chance on children and made them a member of their family,” says Eugene Tetrick of the Lake County Department of Job and Family Services. “These people had the courage and determination to ‘change their normal’ by bringing a child in need into their home.”

Foster care comes first

When children enter county custody because they cannot safely remain at home, the initial goal is generally to reunify them with their parents or caregivers whenever that can be accomplished safely.

Foster parents provide temporary homes during that process. If reunification ultimately is not possible and the court grants permanent custody to the county, adoption may become the plan.

Geauga County places particular emphasis on this progression. The county generally licenses its foster families as foster-to-adopt, meaning families begin by supporting the goal of reunification but may later become the first option for adoption if the child needs a permanent home.

“Families sometimes come to us thinking adoption begins with choosing a child who is already waiting,” says Allie Hulsmann, recruitment specialist with Geauga County Job & Family Services. “In Geauga

Continued on next page →

LAKE COUNTY

Three Paths

Lake County offers families three options: foster care, adoption or foster-and-adopt.

Families pursuing adoption-only home studies must be Lake County residents and interested in adopting children classified as having special needs under Ohio guidelines. Foster-and-adopt families can provide temporary care while also maintaining an approved adoption home study.

Prospective families complete 24 hours of preservice training, and a home study generally takes three to six months, depending partly on the applicant's availability.

Lake County does not charge for the adoption home study, although some incidental costs may apply.

TO LEARN MORE
call 440-350-4218, 440-918-4218
or visit www.lakecountyfostercare.com.

GEAUGA COUNTY

Foster to Adopt

Geauga County generally does not license families solely for adoption. Instead, its foster parents are licensed foster-to-adopt.

Families begin by providing foster care and supporting reunification with the child's birth family. If reunification becomes impossible and the child needs a permanent home, the foster family may become the first adoption option.

Geauga's adoption efforts particularly focus on school-age children, teenagers and sibling groups. Approved families may also be considered for children legally available for adoption elsewhere in Ohio or outside the state.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Families interested in beginning the process may contact Allie Hulsmann at 440-285-1205.

County, the journey often begins with fostering and supporting reunification. If reunification is no longer possible, that foster family may ultimately become the child's permanent family."

Who are the children waiting?

Children who need adoptive families are not all toddlers or infants. Many are school-age children or teenagers. Some are brothers and sisters who hope to remain together, while others have medical, developmental, emotional or behavioral needs related to experiences they have endured.

Lake County conducts adoption-only home studies for residents interested in adopting children who meet Ohio's definition of having "special needs." That term can include children age 6 or older, sibling groups, children who have spent an extended period in permanent custody, and children with medical, developmental, emotional or behavioral needs.

Geauga County likewise identifies school-age youngsters, teenagers and sibling groups among the children who most often need permanent families. Families approved through Geauga may be matched with children in Geauga County, elsewhere in Ohio or even another state.

"We especially need families who are open to school-age children, teenagers and siblings who want to remain together," Hulsmann says. "These children have already experienced loss, and

keeping important relationships intact can make a tremendous difference."

Who can become a foster or adoptive parent?

Prospective parents do not need to fit one particular family model.

Lake County allows single or married adults to become foster or adoptive parents, and many foster families have two working parents. Foster children also do not necessarily need their own bedrooms; room-sharing is permitted under certain age and gender guidelines.

Geauga County similarly welcomes single or married adults who can meet licensing requirements, pass background checks and provide a safe, loving home.

The most important question is not whether a prospective parent's household looks a certain way, but whether that family can offer patience, stability and commitment.

What does it cost?

Adoption through a public children-services agency generally involves far fewer out-of-pocket expenses than private adoption.

"Oftentimes, those who become licensed as foster and adoptive parents through the county are looking to grow their family through adoption as the costs of private adoptions are too expensive,"

Tetrick says.

Neither Lake nor Geauga county charge residents for an adoption home study, although families may incur smaller expenses such as physical-exam copays or criminal background checks.

Financial assistance and post-adoption resources may also be available for eligible children. Ohio's Post Adoption Special Services Subsidy, for example, can provide qualifying families with funding for specialized services after adoption.

The need continues

Lake County says it typically has about 80 children in custody, living in both foster homes and residential placements. There is a continual need for additional foster families to provide homes to children in care. Currently, 13 children are in need of permanency in Lake County. Additionally, over this past year, 13 Lake County children were adopted. In Geauga County, approximately 21 children are currently in county custody, with 3 still in need of permanent homes.

Whatever the number in a particular county, the goal remains the same: giving children who cannot safely return home the opportunity to grow up knowing where they belong.

For some families, that opportunity begins with foster care. For others, it may begin with adoption.

For a child who has spent months or years wondering what comes next, it can end with something much simpler: a family that stays.



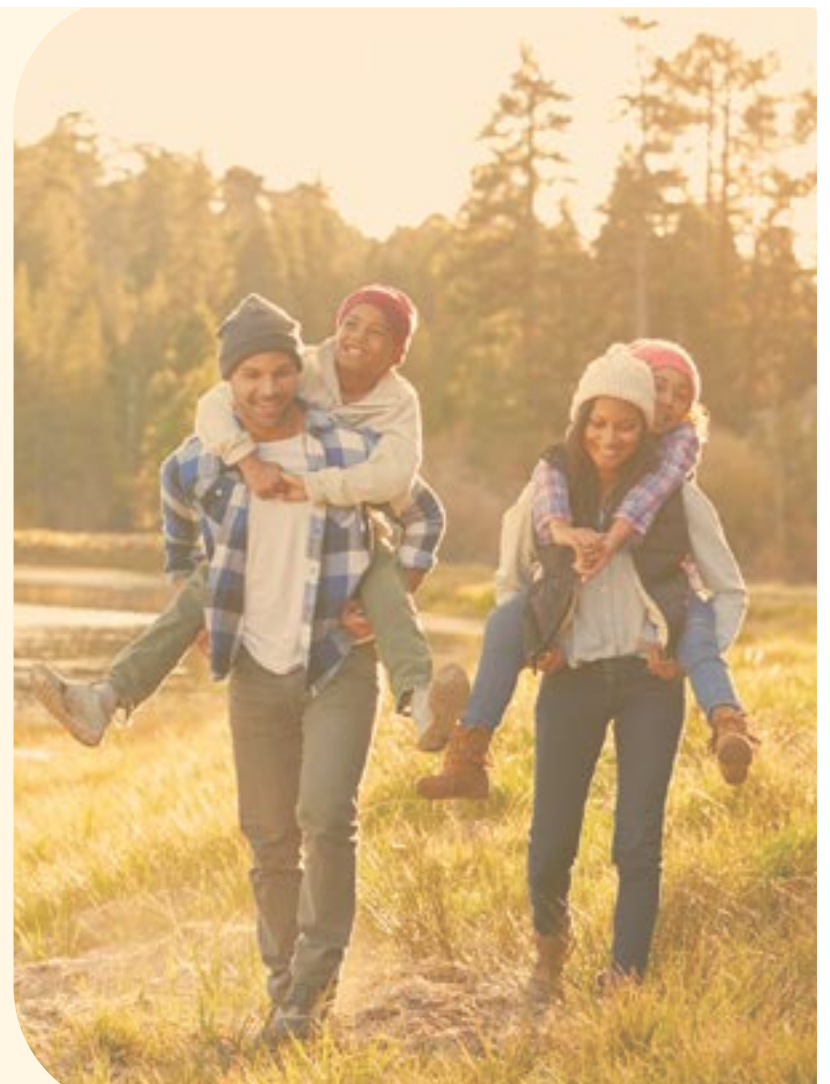
NOVEMBER

is National Adoption Month

Right now, children in Geauga County are waiting for a place to feel safe, valued, and loved.

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The COSCO 5-Piece Folding Table and Chair Set provides convenient extra seating for four, making it ideal for holiday gatherings and entertaining.

The set includes a sturdy 34-inch square table with an easy-to-clean surface and four upholstered chairs featuring padded seats and backs for added comfort.

Durable steel frames with a powder-coated finish provide lasting strength, while reinforced cross braces add stability.

Protective rubber tips help prevent slipping and floor damage. When not in use, the table and chairs fold neatly for compact storage.



Go With Me® Uplift Deluxe Portable High Chair

www.babydelight.com

This portable high chair makes eating on the go or at home easy and convenient. It is standard table height and is made of a durable indoor/outdoor fabric that can easily be wiped clean. The fully removable plastic tray is wide enough for a plate and has a convenient cup holder. And when dinner time gets really messy, the tray can be put in the dishwasher. The five-point harness, paired with a stable flared leg system, provides added safety. The Uplift unfolds in just seconds and locks into place by pushing down on two latches.

TOSSWARE

www.tossware.com

TOSSWARE has a wide range of products that are shatterproof, recyclable and made with ocean-bound plastic or sustainably sourced paper. Parties never looked more elevated and sustainable.

Designed for peace of mind and casual handling. The selection is so amazing – check out their website!

Thankful - POP 14oz Vino

Gather, give thanks, and raise a cup with the Thanksgiving drinkware set. From Friendsgiving to family feasts, they are perfect for serving your favorite seasonal drinks and celebrating the season together.

The POP Collection is made with a mixture of 100% recyclable PET and material from recycled water bottles. All the cups in this collection are shatterproof, stackable, & BPA-free.



Dear Santa,
This year, me and my baby Sister are at
Providence House for Christmas.
We really need Warm clothes and PJs.
There are lots of Other kids
here too. I hope you could
bring us all some new toys and Snacks!
Please come visit us here!
We love you, Santa!



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



Do you know someone who
deserves the **SPOTLIGHT?**

We're always looking to share inspiring, heartwarming stories. If you know someone whose story would inspire or uplift Today's Family readers, please send us an email and tell us about them!

SCAN TO
EMAIL US!



My Birthday Comes With Gravy

By Dan Miller, Today's Family

I was born on Thanksgiving Day, and every year I manage to tell someone that my birth is the real reason people should be giving thanks. Of course, I'm kidding. Everyone knows the entire world doesn't celebrate Thanksgiving. Okay, I'll stop.

This year, my birthday falls on Thanksgiving again, which has me thinking about what it was like growing up with a holiday birthday. There are some advantages. There is always food. People are already gathered together. Nobody has to wonder what they're doing that day. There are also some drawbacks. Mainly, Thanksgiving has always been considerably more famous than I am.

The story I heard throughout childhood was that I arrived a little late and caused my parents to miss Thanksgiving dinner at my grandparents' house. My apologies, Mom and Dad. I'll try harder next time not to be born on a major holiday. Besides, they got leftovers. And me — all 8 pounds, 14 ounces of love.

Apparently, being born on Thanksgiving also gave relatives permission to work poultry into my identity. I was "the little turkey," "our turkey" and probably several other variations I have mercifully forgotten. Dad went in a different direction and called me "Meatball" because I was round and chunky. Strangely, I always liked that one.

Most Thanksgivings when I was young were spent at my maternal grandparents' house with my parents, younger brother and an aunt who never married. One year, however, there was a much larger gathering in my grandparents' basement with relatives coming in from out of town. I remember my mother introducing me to her cousin Jean, whom I was instructed to call Aunt Jean. Mom described her as "amazing." Jean immediately corrected her: "Yes,

amazingly plump." She was referring to herself, not me, which is probably why I found it hysterical. I was about 8 years old, and I still remember the exchange almost word for word. It's funny which tiny moments decide to take up permanent residence in your brain.

One Thanksgiving was especially traumatic by childhood standards. A friend of my mother's got married, and the wedding happened to fall on my birthday. I had to attend Mass. On my birthday. Then celebrate with somebody else's family. The nerve. I only got one day a year when I could reasonably expect to be the center of attention, and this woman scheduled a wedding right on top of it. Looking back, I recognize that this was perhaps a slightly selfish reaction, even for a 12-year-old. Still, there was no Grandma's stuffing. And worse, no leftovers. Oh, the humanity.

My parents also never quite figured out the birthday-sharing thing. My brother's birthday is Dec. 12, and there were years when they celebrated both of our birthdays together. I never understood the math. He got his presents more than two weeks early, while I had to surrender part of my day. Later, Mom would make him a special birthday dinner every Dec. 12. When I occasionally pointed out that I didn't get one, she reminded me that she made me a birthday dinner every year. On Thanksgiving. I loved my parents, but that particular logic remains under review.

As I got older, birthdays naturally became less important. I've only had two actual birthday parties as an adult. My wife surprised me with one years ago, and two years ago I used a milestone birthday as an excuse to gather family and friends in one place — honestly, more to celebrate having them in my life rather than to celebrate myself.

Still, when Nov. 26 rolls around, I appreciate a little extra attention. What became strange later in life was that my parents gradually began recognizing my birthday on Thanks-

giving rather than on Nov. 26. Whatever date Thanksgiving happened to fall on, that was apparently now my birthday. It never bothered me much because I knew the phone call was coming. Mom and Dad would sing "Happy Birthday," with Dad accompanying them on guitar.

The first birthday after he died, there was no call. Of all the birthday traditions I've had over the years, that is the one I would give just about anything to have back.

This year will be different again. My wife surprised me by asking her mother if we could host Thanksgiving and then checking with her siblings and our many grown nieces and nephews about changing venues for one year. So, for the first time, Thanksgiving — and my birthday —

will happen at our house.

Naturally, we're pulling out all the stops: a live turkey show, a historically questionable reenactment of the first Thanksgiving, and personalized cornucopia party favors for everyone. OK. None of that is happening. I'll just be happy having everyone here.

And I should probably remind our guests that they are coming to celebrate Thanksgiving, not my birthday. Nobody needs to bring a card or gift. In fact, please don't. But if someone absolutely insists, twenties and fifties are remarkably easy to wrap.

I suppose sharing a birthday with Thanksgiving hasn't been so bad. After all, sharing a birthday with a turkey is one thing. My nephew was born on Christmas. Try competing with the Savior of the world.

Donate & Save November 12-18 @CLEAquarium

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greaterclevelandaquarium.com/event/nourish-our-neighbors/

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



Explore the New Primate Forest at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo

Expanded animal habitats, interactive exhibits and an indoor playspace highlight the Zoo's largest capital project.

A new chapter is beginning at Cleveland Metroparks Zoo with the opening of Primate Forest, an immersive experience that brings visitors closer to wildlife while showcasing the importance of animal care and conservation.

The first phase of the Zoo's largest capital project opened October 22, featuring expanded orangutan habitats, a renovated Tropical Forest, interactive exhibits and Cleveland Metroparks Zoo's first indoor playspace. The attraction is home to 65 animal species and offers new opportunities for visitors of all ages to learn about wildlife and the natural world.

A Forest Full of Discovery

Visitors begin their journey in Forest Home, a gathering space designed to surround guests with the sights and sounds of a forest. Innovative projection-mapping technology brings the environment to life, while a towering "Mother Tree" serves as the centerpiece, illustrating the connections among forests, animals and people.

The space also includes expanded dining and retail areas.

One of the most exciting additions is Orangutan Forest, where the Zoo's orangutans will have access to outdoor habitats for the first time.

The exhibit expands upon the familiar 40-foot-tall geodesic dome, incorporating outdoor climbing



structures, ropes and nesting areas that encourage natural behaviors. An elevated viewing deck gives visitors a different perspective as the orangutans climb, explore and interact with their surroundings.

A new two-story dayroom connects the indoor and outdoor environments, allowing the animals to choose where they spend their time. Visitors will also have opportunities to observe animal training, enrichment activities and the daily care provided by Zoo professionals.

Conservation in Action

Primate Forest also introduces a Care and Conservation Center featuring toads, turtles and snakes. The exhibit gives visitors a behind-the-scenes perspective on the Zoo's efforts to protect threatened species.

Among the conservation successes already taking place is the breeding of Puerto Rican crested toads in their new habitat.

Visitors can also discover marine toads, a species new to Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. Native to Central and South America, these large amphibians can weigh up to three pounds.

Younger visitors will find plenty to enjoy in the Zoo's indoor Adventure Playspace. Inspired by a natural forest environment, the second-level attraction features accessible sensory, tactile and creative play activities, with views overlooking the outdoor orangutan habitat.

More to Come

The approximately \$70 million first phase builds upon the legacy of the former RainForest, which introduced generations of Cleveland families to plants and animals from tropical regions around the world.

Additional improvements are planned as part of the \$120 million, multi-phase project. A future Gorilla Forest will feature approximately 25,000 square feet of habitat and surrounding space, including gardens, a viewing tower and opportunities to observe gorilla training and healthcare.

Planning a Visit

Admission is included with regular Zoo admission and memberships. Timed entry is required. After arriving at the Zoo, visitors can register using a QR code beginning at 10 a.m. until 90 minutes before closing. For more info and to purchase tickets visit www.clevelandmetroparks.com/zoo.

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Geauga Park District Family Fun

Ho Ho Ho Hiking with Santa & Buddy the Elf

Friday, December 11
10–11:30 AM

Saturday, December 12

10–11:30 AM & 1–2:30 PM

The West Woods, Nature Center

Discover the wonders of the season on a magical hike with Santa, Mrs. Claus and Buddy the Elf! Santa will also be available after the hike for photos and wish lists. Registration required for all attending.



Drop-in Nature Craft

Sunday, December 27,
10–11:30 AM
The West Woods
Nature Center

Drop in to create a fuse bead snowflake, available while supplies last. Children must be accompanied by an adult. No registration required. Wheelchair/stroller accessible.

For more on Geauga Park District offerings, call 440-286-9516 or visit them at www.geaugaparkdistrict.org.

YMCA Turkey Day 5K

Before the turkey, stuffing and pumpkin pie, families can get moving at the Lake County YMCA Turkey Day 5K on Thanksgiving morning.

The annual run and walk steps off Thursday, Nov. 26, at 8:30 a.m. from the Central YMCA, 933 Mentor Ave. in Painesville. Runners, walkers and participants of all ages are welcome, whether they're chasing a fast time, wearing their favorite Thanksgiving costume or simply looking for a fun way to start the holiday.

Registration: \$30 through Nov. 15,

\$35 Nov. 16–25 and \$40 on race day. Registration includes a T-shirt. A \$30 virtual option is also available for those who will be out of town or prefer to complete the 5K on their own.

Pre-event bib and shirt pickup will be held at the Central YMCA on Tue., Nov. 24, from 8:30 a.m.–8 p.m. and Wed., Nov. 25, from 8:30 a.m.–6 p.m. Race-day registration and pickup begin at 7:30 a.m., with registration closing at 8 a.m.

Visit the YMCA Turkey Day 5K page at RunSignup.com.

Cleveland Orchestra 2026–27 Family Concert Series and Music Explorers Series

Family Concerts offer performances in beautiful Mandel Concert Hall at Severance Music Center that blend education and entertainment for children ages 7–12. Each concert is designed to spark curiosity and imagination, pairing engaging performances with interactive pre-concert activities that begin one hour prior.

The series continues on January 10 at 3 p.m. as The Cleveland Orchestra, led by Assistant Conductor Taichi Fukumura, presents The Snowman in Concert. The Orchestra accompanies the Oscar-nominated film adaptation of Raymond Briggs's beloved classic, following James and his snowman on a magical journey through wintry skies.

The Orchestra and Fukumura conclude the series with The Magical World of Music on Friday evening, April 9, at 7:30 p.m. and the sensory-friendly option on Saturday morning, April 10, at 11:30 a.m. This captivating program introduces young audiences to a range of musical storytelling, from the enchanting



music from the Harry Potter film series to Grieg's always popular In the Hall of the Mountain King.

Throughout the series, sensory-friendly concerts provide a welcoming and inclusive experience for people of any age who may benefit from a more flexible concert environment, including those with autism spectrum disorder or other sensory sensitivities. Audience guidelines are modified to welcome talking, clapping, and moving around.

Tickets for adults start at just \$15 and young people (age 17 and under) are free (with purchase of adult ticket)! Not available for box seating.

Visit www.clevelandorchestra.com to purchase tickets.



MORAL VALUES DISCOVERY ACHIEVEMENT

2027 OPEN HOUSE SCHEDULE

JANUARY 27 6 - 8PM

JANUARY 31 11 - 1PM

FEBRUARY 24 6 - 8PM

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Nex Playground

Ages 5+



Nex Playground connects to your TV and turns screen time into active family playtime with five included games and an optional subscription with games like Fruit Ninja, Whack-a-Mole, and Go Keeper. With simple, natural gestures and no extra sensors or clunky wearables, everyone can jump right in. Expand your game library with either a quarterly play pass or a yearly play pass!

Wood Peg Game - Boredom Buster Kit

Ages 3+

Players of any age will recognize these wood games, they are timeless classics! With 12 games, plenty of people can gather and play against each other. Inspire conversation, bonding, and some friendly competition!

www.orientaltrading.com.



Fisher-Price Little People Ultimate Mountain Playset

Ages 1+



Toddlers can embark on all sorts of imaginative outdoor adventures. Standing 18 inches tall and over 2 feet wide, this Little People playset is packed with toddler-friendly storytelling and vehicle play all around. Kids can roll the SUV up, down and around the winding roads, send the camper figure kayaking or boarding down the waterfall slide, explore the shop, take in the view from the overlook, and more.

MEGA BLOKS Fisher-Price Build & Chomp Dinosaur T-Rex

Ages 3+

Introducing a new way to build, play and display with the MEGA BLOKS Build & Chomp Dinosaur! This 3 in 1 preschool set includes 25 blocks to build a T-Rex Dinosaur, Pterodactyl or Dragon with rolling wheels. Little builders can open and close the Dino's mouth for cool chomping action! Kids can build up their problem-solving skills and confidence when they use our easy-to-follow building steps. Little dinosaur lovers can roll into playtime and build roaring adventures with their chomping dino.



tumple!

Ages 8+



Tumple takes you in every direction! This game of strategy and chance has your building plan changing on the fly. Be the player who has the least bricks in hand when the final brick is drawn and win! It's a blast for the whole family, and great at parties too. Strategically place wood bricks and obstacles, called 'tumps'... watching the structure form... up, down, sideways and every way. Build it, name it, love it, memorialize it!

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Growsy Smart Drawing Robot

www.growsy.com

Ages 3+



The Growsy Smart Drawing Robot features an audio-visual interactive experience by providing engaging sound effects, step-by-step voice guidance, and real-time responsive lighting, creating a progressive, immersive learning environment that helps children explore and build confidence in their learning. Featuring

light and voice guidance, along with a scanning function, it includes 150 cards, 12 markers, 5 drawing pens, 1 reusable board, and a Type-C cable, everything children need to start creating right away.

Growsy Wooden Baby Walker

www.growsy.com

Ages 9 months+

This versatile 3-in-1 baby walker is designed to grow with your child, transforming from a sturdy first walker into a Montessori-inspired busy board and a convenient storage cart.

The spacious rear storage bin provides plenty of room for toys, blocks, and stuffed animals, encouraging children to develop organization and tidying habits while supporting play from infancy through the toddler years. For added safety, the walker features adjustable speed control that allows parents to increase or decrease wheel resistance, preventing the walker from moving too quickly for beginners and enabling smoother movement as confidence and balance improve.



Kids Preferred Peanuts Jack in the Box with Snoopy

Age 6 months +



The Peanuts Jack-in-the-Box features a soft Snoopy puppet that surprises and delights, adorned with vibrant comic panels of beloved characters like Charlie Brown and Linus. Kiddos will learn about cause and effect through play as they turn the crank and hear a music box rendition of "You Are My Sunshine" before a cute and soft puppet Snoopy pops up from the box top.

Swing Shot Tower Party Game

Ages 8+

You'll be hooked from your very first fling with Swing Shot Tower, the party game for up to 6 players. Instead of swinging a ring toward a single hook, players take turns flinging the ring tetherball-style around a central post that bristles with 14 target pegs! If the ring lands on one of the pegs--score! Pull the peg from the tower and keep it as a point. The challenge increases as available pegs begin to disappear. The first player to collect the required number of pegs wins!



Qwirkle Tile Matching Game

Ages 6+



Match colors, line up shapes, and keep your strategy sharp in this addictive family classic. Easy to learn and surprisingly tactical, Qwirkle rewards clever moves. Look for opportunities to score big by placing a tile that touches multiple pieces with matching attributes; create a line of all six in a row, to score a "Qwirkle". With quick turns and just

enough luck to keep everyone guessing, it's the perfect activity for game night that gets three generations engaged!

Celebrate Christmas at Lake County History Center

UPCOMING EVENTS

Christmas Home for the Holidays

Thursday thru Sunday, December 3-6

11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Christmas High Tea Party

Wednesday, December 16 • 4 p.m.

Breakfast with Santa and Mrs. Claus

Saturday and Sunday, December 12 & 13

9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. seating



Lake County Historical Society

415 Riverside Drive, Painesville Twp.

440-639-2945

www.lakehistory.org

email: info@lakehistory.org



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November is National Adoption Month



Call us to learn more about adoption

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

Call our hotline:
(440) 350-4218

Find us online:
www.lakecountyfostercare.com



Lake County Department of Job and Family Services