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THE BABY ISSUE!

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Before the Baby:

Planning for your pregnancy

By Christa Melnyk Hines

Not everyone gets the benefit of planning for pregnancy. But if you can plan, it can make a big difference in the health and well-being of both you and your future baby.

"The healthier you are going into pregnancy, the healthier your pregnancy is going to be," says Dr. Sara Talken, OB/GYN.

Schedule a preconception appointment. As soon as you begin thinking about starting a family, schedule a preconception appointment with your physician. Discuss your lifestyle and chronic health conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, autoimmune disease and mental health issues. Many health issues, if not carefully managed, can complicate a pregnancy.

Take a prenatal vitamin. Ideally, six months prior to conception, start taking a prenatal vitamin, containing at least 400 mcg, available over-the-counter or with a prescription. A prenatal vitamin helps to prevent spina bifida and anencephaly, which are neural tube defects occurring in the first four weeks of pregnancy—usually before a woman even realizes she's pregnant.

According to the CDC, if the neural tube (which later becomes the baby's spinal cord, spine, brain and skull), doesn't close properly, the developing brain and spinal cord is exposed to amniotic fluid. Spina bifida causes paralysis, hydrocephalus and learning disabilities. Anencephaly is fatal to an infant, often resulting in miscarriage or death soon after birth.

"Studies also show that if you take a prenatal vitamin at least three months before pregnancy, you can reduce your risk of preterm delivery and promote healthier outcomes," says perinatologist Devika Maulik, M.D.

Attain a healthy weight. Weight can affect your ability to conceive. According to WomensHealth.gov,

women who are underweight may have irregular menstrual cycles, and their bodies may stop producing estrogen. Obesity can make it harder to get pregnant too.

"If you're trying to get pregnant or thinking about getting pregnant, fertility greatly increases with just a five percent weight loss," Talken says.

Being overweight can also increase the risk for pregnancy complications like preeclampsia, gestational diabetes and preterm delivery. Ask your doctor for recommendations about how to achieve a healthy weight.

Eat from the rainbow. Get into the habit of integrating more wholesome foods into your diet. Keep meals well-rounded with healthy carbs, lean proteins and a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables. A fish oil supplement could also help prevent preterm birth, Maulik says.

Avoid restrictive diets like Keto or other low carb diets, especially while pregnant.

"A baby that is deprived of carbohydrates, which are needed for adequate development, can actually grow smaller and not in a healthy way," Maulik says.

Consider genetic testing. You and your partner may also wish to seek genetic counseling.

"If anything raises a red flag, then we can do genetic testing on the parents before they even conceive to see if anything that they're concerned about is actually an issue," Talken says.

A blood draw can determine if either of you are carriers for cystic fibrosis, spinal muscular atrophy or fragile X disorders.

Of a certain age? While it may not sound flattering, if you'll deliver your baby in your mid-thirties or older, you're considered "advanced maternal age." You may wish to ask for more extensive genetic testing prior to pregnancy and consult with a perinatologist during pregnancy for more detailed anatomy screening ultrasounds.



"We now have an amazing non-invasive prenatal test (NIPT), which is a simple blood draw taken as early as 10 to 11 weeks. It screens fetal DNA for trisomy 13, 18, 21 (Down syndrome) and also includes Xs and Ys to determine gender if desired," says Dr. Sharla Shipman, ob/gyn.

While these tests won't change the outcome of any health issues or developmental delays, they can help you plan ahead.

"It is often a great relief for higher-risk patients when they are negative. For an abnormal result, we can get started early pairing a family with a good specialty doctor and support system for their baby's challenges," Shipman says.

Avoid exposure to toxins. If you smoke, vape or abuse substances of any kind, now is the time to quit. As much as possible, avoid spending time in environments where you are exposed to second-hand smoke or other dangerous fumes.

If you live in an older neighborhood or home, ask your doctor for a blood test to check the levels of lead in your system.

"Lead can contribute to a lot of perinatal complications such as preeclampsia, which is like a hypertensive disorder in pregnancy," Maulik says.

Planning a babymoon? While many couples plan babymoons when an expectant mother is in her second trimester as one last hurrah before the baby arrives, others may prefer to plan a fun getaway before conception. But, if you're hoping to get pregnant in the near future, Shipman advises both partners steer clear of areas considered high risk for Zika.

According to the CDC, Zika is a virus spread by the bite of infected mosquito. Often, there are no symptoms of infection, and it can

be sexually transmitted from a male partner. The virus can cause severe brain defects, including microcephaly, which stunts the development of a baby's brain.

"Future moms and dads need to avoid travel to high-risk Zika areas for six months prior to trying for pregnancy," Shipman says. "This is a frustrating new factor for patients who wanted to travel to Mexico or certain Caribbean locations prior to starting a family."

Prioritize self-care. Strained relationships, demanding careers and exhausting lifestyles could make it harder to get pregnant and can interfere with a relaxed, healthy pregnancy and postpartum period. Manage stress through regular exercise, meditation, deep breathing and time with friends. If you continue to struggle, seek guidance from your physician, a licensed counselor or other trusted resources.

"When we empower ourselves to make good choices, we start to see ourselves as strong and become less willing to allow stressful situations and people in our lives," Shipman says. "I believe that 'empowerment decision' is a natural transition to becoming parents because we begin to see ourselves as moms and protectors."

Your Preconception Appointment

- Bring a list of your questions/concerns and current medications
- Be transparent about your lifestyle and past/current health issues (including STDs)
- Ask when/how to stop using birth control
- Include your partner (his health history can affect your pregnancy too)

Newborn Care 101

By Christa Melnyk Hines

Transitioning to life with a newborn can be as gratifying as it is overwhelming. Read on for time-tested tricks and expert tips that will help your baby, and you, thrive during the first few weeks postpartum.

Expect a learning curve. No, it's not just you. New parenthood is rife with uncertainty.

"As the mother of a newborn, I know from recent experience that every little thing can be challenging - from burping to changing diapers to breastfeeding and even trimming tiny nails, no matter if it's your first or third child," says family medicine physician Jenna Eschol, MD.

Gather information wisely. In the midst of a perplexing dilemma, what parent hasn't turned to Google or an online parent support group for quick answers? But, proceed with caution.

"If it doesn't seem like that online advice really fits your baby, maybe it really doesn't. Talk to your pediatrician or at least a trusted relative who has seen the baby and knows the situation a little better than generic online advice," says pediatrician Dr. Elizabeth Simpson.

Make it a date. Don't skip your newborn's well-baby checkups. Your baby's physician will assess their overall health and ensure they are gaining weight. A newborn should have regained their birth weight by around 10 to 14 days of age.

Your baby's appointment is also a good time for you to ask questions and raise any concerns.

Tiny renegades. Newborns don't

understand schedules. Plan to sleep when your baby sleeps.

"Babies are little rebels. They don't follow rules," Simpson says. "Babies are the schedulers and the parents are the people that get scheduled."

Hungry? Just as babies don't care about clocks when it comes to sleep, they also eat on demand, anywhere between eight and 12 times in a 24-hour period.

"Babies eat a lot during their first weeks thanks, in part, to their tiny tummy size, and the rapid physical and mental growth they experience in the first couple months of life," Eschol says.

If you're breastfeeding, how do you know if your baby is eating enough?

"If your baby seems happy and your pediatrician has assured you that weight gain is commensurate with the age, and enough dirty diapers are being produced (eight to 12 a day), then your baby is probably getting plenty to eat," Eschol says.

If you participate in a breastfeeding support group at an area hospital, lactation consultants usually conduct weigh-ins too.

Dry skin. Because a baby's skin is sensitive and thin, they are more susceptible to dry, chapped skin. Avoid long baths. Bathe your infant in lukewarm water only two or three times a week using fragrance-free hypoallergenic soaps.

"And no bubble baths!" Eschol says.

Power bonding. For a newborn, nothing is as comforting as mom or dad's arms.

"Babies have been held for the last nine months so they don't understand having to lay in their own crib.



They like to be held whenever they are awake," Simpson says.

In addition to skin-to-skin contact, talk and sing to your baby, and show her storybooks with high contrast colors like red, black and white.

Sleep safe. While you should cradle your baby as much as possible, don't fall asleep while holding him.

"The number one thing that causes sudden infant death (SIDS) is unsafe sleep practices," Simpson warns.

Place your infant on his back in his bassinet near your bed at night. Do not use fluffy blankets, pillows, stuffed animals or crib bumpers.

Baby tears. Babies often cry when they're hungry, tired or if they have a dirty diaper. Other times they seem to cry for no apparent reason.

"Colic isn't caused by pain," Eschol says. She suggests the following "tried-and-true" tips for a colicky baby:

- Try a pacifier
- Hold your baby while rocking in a rocking chair or glider.
- Place your baby in a mechanical swing.
- Softly talk or sing or play soothing lullabies at a low volume.
- Cuddle your baby or try carrying them in a sling or baby carrier.
- Take them for a stroller or car ride.
- Give your baby a warm bath.

Sometimes tears can signal a health issue. Call your doctor if your baby seems sick, has difficulty breathing or isn't feeding.

If you find yourself becoming increasingly frustrated with your

crying baby and no one is around to help, take a time out.

"Lay the baby safely on their back in their crib and hop in the shower for a sec to get out of earshot or use headphones to get out of earshot for a short period of time and give yourself a little break," Simpson says.

Find support. Without taking time for self care, attending to your baby's needs can become exceptionally challenging and overwhelming.

"A good support system is essential for all moms and can include friends, families, counselors or support groups," says Kelli Knapp, a board certified women's health nurse practitioner.

Sleep deprivation can exacerbate depression and anxiety. Sleep while your partner, a relative or a friend watches the baby. Or hire a nanny, baby nurse or postpartum doula. Taking breaks away from your baby, like a shower or a walk outside are also beneficial.

"Even finding 10 to 15 minutes for yourself each day can improve your outlook," Knapp says.

Know that postpartum mood disorders are common and curable. Contact your healthcare provider if you are struggling.

"A mom who admits she needs help is an amazingly strong woman and mom," Knapp says. "Women who experience disorders during pregnancy or after a baby often feel like they are failing as a mom. A mom who reaches out for help is giving her child a huge gift, and they are already making a big step to the road to recovery."

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Fun-filled classes for babies and caregivers

By Deanna Adams

New parents are always anxious to see their child learn something new, and it can start soon after the baby's birth. Even at the infant stage, babies are responsive and receptive learners. With a special grown-up on deck to guide and nurture, a child can learn a wide range of activities and grow intellectually and physically at a rapid rate.

If you're anxious to find fun, interactive activities that you can do with your baby, as well as adventures your child can enjoy on their own, there are several companies in Northeast Ohio that offer an array of programs and classes to get your child off to a creative and cerebral start in life.

Thrive Arts Center

Music has been proven to be the best way to stimulate brain development in children and give them a strong foundation to grow and thrive. The Thrive Arts Center, located in Beachwood, offers classes in Kindermusik, as well as dance, art, instruments and voice.

"We like to get children started with Kindermusik," says owner and director, Cathy Huser. "The overall value and purpose of Kindermusik is amazing for the development of any child. Music is therapeutic by nature, it enhances the development of the brain, body and soul."

Studies have shown that music helps unlock a child's creativity, intelligence and potential. And Kindermusik is known to be a "perfect mix of imaginative play, joyful moments, and musical exploration," and offers a great musical and developmental head start for the child.

"Babies are wired for music," Huser adds. "Kindermusik uses music-and-movements activities, which opens even small children up to language, cognitive and social development."

The classes are age appropriate, designed for specific age groups, though not always chronologically, but developmentally centered. All of the instructors are skilled and experienced Kindermusik educators who specialize in early childhood development.

There are four levels of Kindermusik, with the first three specifically designed for babies and toddlers.

Kindermusik Foundation is designed for infants to 1½ years of age, and conducted in a sensory-rich environment, complete with music and baby-style fun-filled movement. This class helps build social connections for you and your baby through the joys of musical learning.

Kindermusik Level 1, for toddlers, 1 to 2 years old, is a good introduction to basic musical concepts that provide the child with a growing ability to recognize and follow patterns in music. Activities join parents and babies together to sing, play and move to music using brightly colored scarves, hoops, mirrors, and jingling bells.

Kindermusik Level 2, for children ages 1½ to 3½, engages the child in upbeat songs and chants that help develop the child's vocabulary. The "Stop-and-Go" games join bouncy bodies with singing and playful interactions. Every Level 2 class includes creative movement activities designed to help your child develop a strong sense of rhythm, increased vocabulary, and a joyful self-expression.

A Kindermusik Kit, which includes a special child-safe musical instrument, activity book, two CDs of class music, and board book, is available for an additional cost of \$70 for parents who want to continue the fun and learning at home.

In addition to Kindermusik, there are art classes for children, starting at 18 months. "Art Beginnings" includes fun activities that combines play with color and textures, for babies up to three years old, accompanied by a parent or caregiver. "Art classes are great for eye and hand coordinating," Huser notes. "And it's very relaxing for a child."

Check their website for the School Year Foundations Schedule to find a class on a day and time that best suits you. Huser encourages all caregivers to stop in and attend an introductory class. Tuition is for 17 classes with an enrollment fee of \$20. Enrolling after the start of the school year will prorate your tuition.

Fine Arts Association

The Fine Arts Association (FAA) in Willoughby, has been offering a variety of classes and programs under the arts umbrella since its inception in 1957. Its mission is to enhance lives through arts education,



Mother and son enjoy a group dance in a Kindermusik class at Thrive Arts Center in Beachwood.

therapies, performance, community partnerships and advocacy. This full-service art center offers students, pre-K through senior citizens, an array of enriching arts and educational experiences including needs-based scholarships, discounted rates for student and senior citizen groups, and free performances and events.

It can all start at the infant stage with the Munchkin & Me program. These classes, which are four-week sessions, are specifically designed for small children who are not yet potty-trained, and not quite ready for an independent class. Caregivers are encouraged to bring in their child to the Music Makin' classes, which are perfect for infants up to age 5. These classes are great fun for you and your child to enjoy a myriad of various activities that include song, dance, playing age-appropriate instruments, and stimulating the senses. The four-week sessions cost \$53 for the spring class that begins in April.

"As a music therapist and mom of two children with a rare genetic illness, I know first-hand how powerful music is for all little ones," says Ann Marie Raddell, creative arts therapies coordinator at FAA. "It's also important for children and parents to interact and learn new things together, and music is a perfect way to start."

The Nursery Rhyme Time is for little ones ages 2 to 4, accompanied by an adult. This class explores familiar nursery rhymes through music and art experiences, combining one-half hour of art with one-half hour of music each week. This, too, is a four-

week class. The current fee is \$46 and the spring class begins in April.

"For instance, we'll sing Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, and then do an outer space theme where they'll make a project with planets and stars," Raddell says. "So it all ties together, and they're having lots of fun while learning." She adds that she often collaborates with visual arts teacher, Melissa Sexstella.

At Fine Arts, it's all about providing a family-centered, safe, creative environment where students can experience the arts in their own very personal way. Raddell works closely with parents and caregivers to develop goals based on the individual's physical, behavioral, social, emotional, cognitive, language and communication needs.

The Little Gym

The Little Gym of Shaker Heights offers a wide range of activities for kids, including parent/child classes, kids dance, gymnastics, and other sports skills. The unique programs revolve around active play but also complement and enhance the traditional school experience that can begin with babies just 4 months old, and continue on through 12 years of age.

"We're not just a gym, we consider ourselves an enrichment program where a child can learn physical activities along with educational activities," says owner Paula Pascarella. "When my sons were little, I was looking for programs for them that would be fun and help them

Continued on page 22

Baby Quirks

Strange (but normal!) things babies do

By Christa Melnyk Hines

Every new parent at some point wonders: Is my baby supposed to do that? Is this normal?

Morgan Shandler recalls several moments of new mama anxiety during the first few weeks home with her daughter, who is now a busy one year old.

"One thing that particularly freaked me out was when Violet would bob her head when attempting to nurse. It almost looked like she was having a seizure or like she was a broken down robot," Shandler says. "But my pediatrician assured me it was a completely normal part of 'rooting' for the breast."

Startle reflex. Parents also worry about seizures when their infant suddenly throws out their arms and legs as if they're falling.

Pediatrician Jennifer Mellick, MD, FAAP, says that the startle or Moro Reflex is a normal neurological infantile reflex that disappears as the nervous system matures.

"If you believe in evolution, there's probably some reason why mammals and homo sapiens have this instinctual need to grasp, and if they're falling, reach out to find something and grab on. Babies do that same kind of thing. If they feel like they are falling, they are going to throw their arms and legs out wide to find their caregiver and grab," Mellick says.

If you're ever concerned about strange movements that your baby makes, try to video record it, suggests Jennifer McBride, MD, internal medicine and pediatric specialist.

"Nine times out of ten, baby won't do the motion when in the office with us. If parents record it, I can see what the baby looks like when they are doing that movement and either reassure them or decide if we need to do something else," McBride says.

Funny breathing. Babies have breathing patterns that alarm many newbie parents. Physicians call it "periodic breathing of the newborn" and it's completely normal.

"They will almost pant for a period of time and then they will pause for several seconds which in baby breathing seems like a really, really long

time. Then, they take a deep breath, let out a deep sigh and they pant again," Mellick says.

Babies also often make lots of "gurgly, snorty sounds," says Michael Greenfield, MD, internal medicine and pediatric specialist.

"This is pretty normal because babies have to breathe through their nose when they're eating and a lot of babies have congestion so it will make their breathing sound much worse than it really is," Greenfield says.

Bless you! Just as babies make funny sounds when they breathe, they often sneeze, which leads parents to wonder if their child suffers from allergies or is getting sick.

"That's just how the baby clears out his nose because they can't blow their nose like we can," McBride says.

Hiccups. Just like the rest of us, babies experience hiccups, which are sudden contractions of the diaphragm. Often a baby can get hiccups after a feeding.

"Babies will hiccup for hours on end, which doesn't bother them at all," Greenfield says.

Scaly scalp. Cradle cap, which is a greasy, yellowish, scaly rash on the head, may not look cute, but it's usually nothing to worry about. Try brushing your baby's hair or head once a day with a soft baby brush, which will help loosen the natural oils on the scalp to avoid build up. Moisturizers like baby oil, mineral oil or coconut oil can also help.

"If it seems to be getting worse or looking really red, that would be a time to see the pediatrician. It could be a sign that baby is going to have eczema, which typically runs in families," McBride says.

Strange colored poop. Depending on whether your baby is breast-fed or formula-fed, the color of their poo can range from green and yellow to brown. Breast-fed babies will have more color variations since breastmilk is comprised of mom's diet.

"I get worried if the poop is a gray color or lacking in the brown or green tones or if there is ever blood or red in the diaper," McBride says.

Difficulty pooping. Your baby may appear to struggle when they go,



but as long as their poop is soft and doesn't look like pellets or rocks (a sign of constipation), don't worry.

Babies can have dirty diapers anywhere from once a day to every few days.

"Formula-fed babies don't necessarily poop every day and sometimes that concerns parents, but the body doesn't process formula as fast as it does breastmilk," McBride explains.

If your little one is passing watery diarrhea, contact your doctor as this can be a sign of an infection.

Jeepers, creepers... It may look

weird, but babies sometimes sleep with their eyes half open or appear as if their eyes are rolling around in their head.

"I don't know that anyone knows why eyes roll around the head. It's probably something to do with their sleep patterns. They don't have well-organized R.E.M. sleep at that age," Mellick says.

Occasionally, it may appear that your baby's eyes are crossing, which is normal up to 18 months of age. If your baby's eyes seem persistently

Continued on page 8

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Baby quirks from page 7

crossed or turned in or out, however, talk with your physician.

More zzz's...pretty please?

Among the most popular questions pediatricians field from tired parents has to do with sleep and when everyone in the family can get more of it.

"Sleep is the Holy Grail of parenthood," Mellick says.

Babies generally don't sleep for long periods of time because they need to eat every few hours. Their tiny tummies can only hold so much milk.

"As they get older, they still need

to eat frequently because they need a large volume to get the calories they need to grow," Mellick says.

By about six months, your baby should be sleeping for a seven to eight hour stretch.

Wait, they changed. What is normal today probably won't last since babies grow and change rapidly, but always consult your family physician with any concerns.

"We'd rather you call with a question that isn't really something to be alarmed about than miss something that is," Mellick says.

Your child's development and joy is our #1 priority



Kindermusik
at Thrive Arts Center

www.ThriveArts.center

216 991-1063

Caring for your baby's teeth

By Mary Flenner



Baby teeth. They start causing little ones grief long before they reveal themselves, and then suddenly, they're here! Those little teeth often appear earlier than parents anticipated, and Mom and Dad may be unsure of how to take care of them, but proper dental care is essential, even at a young age.

Dr. Trista Onesti specializes in pediatric dentistry and recommends that babies make their first visit to the dentist by age one, or six months after their first tooth comes in. All teeth can get a cavity, so it is important to start preventing cavities early on—and routine dental care allows for that," Dr. Trista says.

What to expect at their first visit

"All preventative visits are comprised of an exam, cleaning, and fluoride application.

Based on needs, children may receive x-rays," says Dr. Trista.

"We know both the parents and

the children may feel apprehensive, but proper preparation at home—role playing, reading books about going to the dentist—will help prepare everyone and make the visit go as smooth as possible," she recommends.

What sets Dr. Trista's Pediatric Dentistry in Lyndhurst apart from other practices is the level of staff expertise. Each team member has years of experience working with children. Her team is expertly trained in pediatric teeth and know the specific challenges and most important things to look for.

Kids love the comforting and fun environment of the beach-themed office at Dr. Trista's Children's

Dentistry. They are greeted with bright, cheery walls and usually a kid-friendly movie on in the waiting room, which immediately puts them at ease.

"We do a lot to make the kids feel comfortable. We'll tell stories, sing songs, whatever we can do to relate to them. We're also trained in behavioral management techniques," she continues.

Dr. Trista says her favorite part of her job is the children's smiles. "I love working to create great smiles through prevention and through the care I provide. I love watching the children attached to these smiles grow and their personalities develop. Watching the children leave my office with the prize toy they have earned, smiling from ear to ear because we worked together to have a fun and successful visit, brings me joy," she says.

Dr. Trista's Pediatric Dentistry is located at 5255 Mayfield Rd. in Lyndhurst. To schedule a visit call (440) 459-2100 or learn more online at DrTristaSmiles.com.

Recommended care for baby teeth

0-12 Months

- Begin by wiping milky residue off of baby's tongue with a warm washcloth before bed or during bath time to prevent bacterial growth.
- Start brushing teeth as soon as they come in.
- Regular preventative checkups are recommended every 6 months.

Age 1+

- Flossing can begin as soon as two teeth are next to each other. Dr. Trista says, "Parents should assist with flossing until the child has developed the manual dexterity to do the proper technique alone, usually around 7-8 years of age."
- Parents should assist and supervise tooth brushing until the child is about 7-8 years old.
- Thumb-sucking is recommended to be weaned by age 5, or when teeth become wiggly.
- Children should continue regular checkups and cleanings every six months.



SENSORY FRIENDLY SUNDAY

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FEBRUARY 23

9:30 AM TO NOON

Visit CMNH.org for more information.

People on the autism spectrum can now enjoy the Museum in a gentler way.

- Arrive before open hours to avoid crowds, noise, and distractions.
- Stroll through the galleries at your own pace.
- Relax in designated "quiet areas."
- Enjoy a modified experience of *Ultimate Dinosaurs* and planetarium shows.
- View live animals outside, weather permitting

Those with ASD and Museum members: Free
Nonmembers: \$10 per person
Parking: \$6

A limited number of scholarships are available for those who need financial assistance. For information, contact Megan Johnson at 216.231.4600 x3254 or mjohnson@cmnh.org.





Sensory Friendly Sunday is supported by the William J. & Dorothy K. O'Neill Foundation.

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PRIVATE SCHOOL

guide

Finding the right private school for your family

By Jan Pierce

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

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

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

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

1. What are your educational priorities?

Some private schools are faith-based and some are not. You'll want to decide as a family your basic priorities. Is it most important to find high academic standards, or more important to support your family's faith? Do you expect accelerated programs

such as advanced placement classes or extensive access to STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) programs? How important are extracurricular activities? Are you comfortable with homework policies and school rules?

2. What is the culture of the school?

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

3. What role do parents play in the school?

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

4. What are the costs? Are there scholarships available?

It's a sacrifice to pay for your child's education when public schools are free. And there are huge variations in the expenses involved. When researching possible schools, be sure to check not only the tuitions, but also book fees, sports or other extracurricular expenses and possible transportation fees. Check on scholarships available and the

possibility of a sliding scale based on family income.

5. Is the staff credentialed and the school accredited?

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

6. Is the curriculum up to date?

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

7. Does the school provide transportation?

Do buses transport students

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

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

If a particular school offers classes such as K-6 or K-8, do they work closely with a sister high school? What provisions are made to make a smooth transition from one school to another? If students transfer into the school either at the beginning of a year or mid-year, what provisions are made to welcome them? How do children fare when they need to move from this school to another?

9. What is the school's reputation?

Most private schools have a reputation to uphold. Are they the best in college prep? Are they known for a friendly, family community spirit? Who do you know with firsthand information and experience with the school? What recommendations can you find amongst friends and acquaintances? **Continued on page 18**



Villa Angela-St. Joseph
HIGH SCHOOL

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FAMILY

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Admissions Open House:
March 12, 2020 at 6 p.m.
vasj.com/admissions



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Catholic Schools Week Open House
Sunday, January 26, 2020 | 11:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.

K-8 Sneak Peek
Thursday, January 30, 2020 | 8:30 a.m.

Education Fair
Thursday, March 19, 2020 | 5:30–7:00 p.m



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5360 Wilson Mills Road, Highland Heights, OH 44143 • www.saintpaschal.com

**All Saints of
St. John Vianney School**
28702 Euclid Avenue, Wickliffe
(440) 943-1395
www.allsaintssjv.org

All Saints of St. John Vianney School in Wickliffe is a vibrant elementary and middle school attracting students from Mentor, Willoughby, Willoughby Hills, Wickliffe, Willowick, Eastlake, Euclid and various other communities in the area. With a history of academic excellence, All Saints develops independent leaders, academically prepared individuals who are effective communicators.

Located on the campus of the Center for Pastoral Leadership in Wickliffe, the school offers a faith-based, technology-enriched learning environment for students in preschool through eighth grade.

Their core curriculum includes religion, math, language arts, social studies, science and computer science. All-day pre-K, Latin, music, art, and physical education are also offered, in addition to extracurricular sports and activities. The school's highly experienced teachers and staff are dedicated to helping students achieve their fullest potential and meet the diverse educational needs of students and their families.

All Saints is committed to preparing 21st-century thinkers and learners, as well as good stewards of the Catholic church, empowering students to thrive in high school, college and beyond.

Cleveland Montessori
12510 Mayfield Road, Cleveland
(216) 421-0700
www.clevelandmontessori.org

Cleveland Montessori is celebrating 25 years of serving the children of Greater Cleveland. The school is located in the historic Alta House. Students in preschool through middle school thrive within this unique urban campus inclusive of Little Italy and University Circle. A Cleveland Montessori education looks at each child's individual potential academically, socially, emotionally and spiritually. Their students become independent thinkers with compassionate hearts.

The authentic Montessori curriculum incorporates a variety of

opportunities to extend learning beyond the classroom to the culturally rich neighborhood of Little Italy. Their proximity to University Circle provides many extensions for cultural and scientific exploration setting the stage for an experience rich in diversity, growth and joy. Cleveland Montessori operates on a school year calendar, September to June.

Call to arrange a personal tour or visit their website for more information.

**Communion of Saints
School**

2160 Stillman Road
Cleveland Heights
(216) 932-4177

www.communionofsaintsschool.org

Communion of Saints School, formerly St. Ann's, located in Cleveland Heights, is on the corner of Cedar and Coventry Roads. They offer a Catholic education alternative to students residing in Cleveland Heights, University Heights, East Cleveland, South Euclid, and surrounding areas. Their vision is to prepare today's youth for a successful future by providing a foundation in the Catholic faith and moral teachings in conjunction with a rigorous 21st Century education.

As a Catholic school, Communion of Saints strives to carry out the mission of the parish. Their program is permeated with a spirit of mutual respect while fostering a sense of community among the parish and school families. The curriculum is compliant with the Ohio State Standards.

Enrollment for the 2020/2021 school year opens in February. Please inquire about options for tuition aid. Come see what they have to offer!

For information or to schedule a tour, please call (216) 932-4177 or email admissions@communionofsaintsparish.org.

Corpus Christi Academy
5655 Mayfield Road, Lyndhurst
(440) 449-4242
www.corpuschristiacad.org



PRIVATE SCHOOL *guide*

Creative Playrooms Montessori & Child Care Centers

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

A well-known and trusted name in Montessori and early childcare throughout the Cleveland area has a lot to be excited about. Under the new ownership of the nationally recognized Early Learning Academies, Creative Playrooms provides a loving, safe, learning environment for children ages birth through elementary years.

Serving families for more than 50 years, Creative Playrooms is proud to offer a private kindergarten program chartered by the Ohio Department of Education, with an instructional focus on language arts, math, science, and social studies. Students are also exposed to Spanish, a modern computer lab, art, music, swim-

ming, and much more!

Recognized as one of the best childcare providers in northeast Ohio, Creative Playrooms offers seamless before-and-after-kindergarten care in an environment that consistently obtains the highest ratings from all licensing and monitoring agencies.

For more information about their six locations and program offerings visit creativeplayrooms.com.

Gesu Catholic School

2450 Miramar Boulevard
University Heights
(216) 932-0620
www.gesu.com

Gesu Catholic School is an educational community created in partnership with students, their families, and the Church of the Gesu. Founded in 1926 under the direction of the Sisters of Notre Dame and the Society of Jesus, the school community is committed to the Jesuit traditions of Catholic faith formation, academic rigor and excellence, personal growth, service to others, and global citizenship, "all for the



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• *Please inquire about options for tuition aid*

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Computer Room
CYO Sports
Daily Religious Instruction
Drama Club (Grades 6, 7 & 8)

Future Teachers (Grade 8)
Intervention Specialists
Jr. Achievement Program (K-8)
Leadership Team
Latin (Grade 4-8)
Music
Operation Keepsake (Jr. High)

Physical Education
Science Lab/Makerspace
Second Step Program
Ski Club
Spelling Bee (Jr. High)
State of the Art Technology
STREAM



2019 8TH GRADE ACRE SCORES:

Profession of Faith - All Saints Avg. 97% (National Avg. 69%)
Liturgy and Sacraments - All Saints Avg. 94% (National Avg. 69%)
Life in Christ (Morality) - All Saints Avg. 98% (National Avg. 79%)
Christian Prayer - All Saints Avg. 98% (National Avg. 73%)

OPEN HOUSE

Sunday - February 9, 2020 • 11:00 am – 1:00 pm

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Westlake.....	440.835.5858
Strongsville.....	440.572.9365
Maple Hts.*.....	216.475.6464
Independence*.....	216.524.8008

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440-423-2955 or
visit hawken.edu/admission

HAWKEN
SCHOOL
Coed Toddler – Grade 12



PRIVATE SCHOOL guide

GESU School cont'd

greater glory of God.”

They are proud to be part of the Diocese of Cleveland’s “Better Together: Exceptional Catholic education for every student” initiative and to be a “Designated STEM School” by the state of Ohio.

The school community includes approximately 632 students in kindergarten through grade 8 with another 97 students in the Gesu preschool.

For preschool, kindergarten, or admissions information for grades 1–8, please contact Judi Herbert at (216) 932-0620, ext. 117 or email jherbert@gmail.com.

Gilmour Academy

34001 Cedar Road, Gates Mills
(440) 473-8050
admissions@gilmour.org
www.gilmour.org

Gross Schechter Day School

27601 Fairmount Boulevard
Pepper Pike
(216) 763-1400
www.grossschechter.org

Gross Schechter is a coed, Jewish independent school in Pepper Pike for children from 6 weeks through 8th grade. Gross Schechter Day School inspires its students to love learning, become their best selves, and embrace Jewish practice, values, and community in a challenging and encouraging academic environment.

Hathaway Brown School

19600 North Park Boulevard
Shaker Heights
(216) 932-4214
HB.edu

Since 1876, HB has given students the tools they need to confidently embrace all the possibilities that exist for them beyond their Shaker Heights campus. The faculty’s dedication to hands-on experiential learning at all levels can be observed every day in the classrooms, libraries, science labs, theatres, dance studios and art rooms, as well as on the athletic fields.

In addition to the superior academic preparation they receive, at every turn HB students are inspired to become the best people they can be. They encourage

girls of all ages and boys in their Early Childhood program to take chances, stretch their minds, work together, and pick themselves up and start over when they need to.

They offer tuition assistance in the form of financial aid and merit awards. Visit HB.edu to learn more and call (216) 320-8767 to schedule your personal tour. They’d love to show you around.

Hawken School

www.hawken.edu
Lyndhurst Campus
(Preschool–Grade 8)
5000 Clubside Road
(440) 423-2950

Gates Mills Campus
(Grades 9–12)

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

The Birchwood School of Hawken
(Preschool–Grade 8)

4400 West 140th St., Cleveland
(216) 251-2321

University Circle Urban Extension Center

The Sally & Bob Gries Center for Experiential and Service Learning
10823 Magnolia Drive, Cleveland

At Hawken, they not only teach children to be great students – they encourage them to be great people. Hawken School’s long tradition of academic excellence and nationally recognized forward-focused programming emphasizes the development of the creative and critical thinking skills needed to thrive in an increasingly complex and dynamic world.

They are a coeducational, diverse, globally-minded community committed to the development of both character and intellect. Innovative schedules and state-of-the-art facilities optimize learning, while educational partnerships with local businesses and world-renowned institutions provide real-world experiences. With international study opportunities, STEM Pathways, Entrepreneurial Studies and a language program that begins at the pre-K level, students are prepared for all the opportunities the world offers.

Learn more about Hawken’s programs and campuses – including the Mastery School of Hawken (grades 9–12) opening in University Circle in 2020. Call (440) 423-2955 to schedule a visit or visit www.hawken.edu for more details.

PRIVATE SCHOOL *guide*

Julie Billiard School

4982 Clubside Road, Lyndhurst
(216) 381-1191
www.juliebilliardschool.org

Laurel School

www.LaurelSchool.org
(216) 464-0946

Lyman Campus

One Lyman Circle, Shaker Heights

Butler Campus

7420 Fairmount Road
Russell Township

Laurel School, founded in 1896, is a nationally recognized college preparatory, independent day school for girls, kindergarten through grade 12, with a coeducational preprimary school. Laurel students come from 74 communities in northeast Ohio. Its traditional Lyman Campus is in Shaker Heights and its 150-acre Butler Campus is in Russell Township. The Butler Campus is home to competitive athletics and outdoor experiential learning, including northeast Ohio's first outdoor preprimary school.

Laurel's Center for Research

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

Call (216) 464-0946 or visit LaurelSchool.org/Admissions to schedule a tour today!

Montessori School of University Heights

23599 Cedar Road, Lyndhurst
(216) 381-8388
www.ms-uh.org

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

- Providing comprehensive, individualized opportuni-



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Jenny Millett, Principal
JMillett@OLLEuclid.org



East 200th Street • Euclid, OH 44119 • 216-481-6824
www.OLLEuclidSchool.org

Montessori School of UH cont'd

ties for growth. Each child is introduced to the materials as the child becomes ready for the concepts that the material embodies. Children develop order, concentration, coordination, independence, and self-discipline.

- Engaging children in a caring, supportive community. Their multi-age environment, serving children ages 3 through 6 years old, provides a family-like atmosphere. Children develop compassion and confidence.
- Respecting each child's developmental abilities and personality. Montessori children enjoy choosing their own work each day guided by adults who are sensitive to each child's unique personality. Children experience joy in learning.

They warmly encourage interested parents to schedule a personal tour.



Our Lady of the Lake School

175 East 200th Street, Euclid
(216) 481-6824
olleuclidschool.org

Our Lady of the Lake School, grounded in Catholic faith and values, provides a program of academic excellence in an environment that engages students, families, faculty and community. Small classrooms, individual attention and strong curriculum together provide exceptional learning opportunities, and advanced programs and educational partnerships challenge their students to excel.

Learning goes beyond the classroom. Students enlarge their world with service learning and field trips. Outreach programs bring a wealth of resources into the school, and students also engage in hands-on learning through technology, with interactive boards in every classroom, a cutting-edge Maker Space, and iPads for curriculum use. Even their youngest students take part, with preschool-

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CLEVELAND MONTESSORI

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PRIVATE SCHOOL *guide*

Our Lady of the Lake cont'd

ers making full use of the gymnasium, art rooms, Maker Space and library.

Students are also encouraged to develop their talents through art and music programs and a variety of clubs and extracurriculars.

A fully-equipped gym hosts an array of sports and athletics. An active parent-teacher organization keeps the school community engaged and welcoming.

Applications are now being accepted for its flexible full- and half-day preschool classes. Call today for a tour or to get more information.

St. Dominic School

3455 Norwood Road
Shaker Heights
(216) 561-4400
www.stdominicschool.net

St. Francis of Assisi School

6850 Mayfield Road, Gates Mills
(440) 442-7450
www.stfrancismgm.com

Ss. Robert & William Catholic School

351 East 260th Street, Euclid
(216) 731-3060
www.srwschool.cc

St. Paschal Baylon Catholic School

5360 Wilson Mills Road
Highland Heights
(440) 442-6766
www.saintpaschal.net

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

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

The academic program is aligned with diocesan, state and national standards. In addition, Saint Paschal Baylon offers daily religion instruction, Spanish (pre-k through 8), fine arts, service learning opportunities, co-curricular activities, gifted education classes, as well as psychological, speech/language, intervention, and learning disability services. Please call the school for more information or to schedule a tour.

University School

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

Villa Angela-St. Joseph High School

18491 Lakeshore Boulevard
Cleveland
(216) 481-8414
www.vasj.com

Villa Angela-St. Joseph High School is a Catholic, comprehensive college-preparatory school and the only school in the world co-sponsored by the Ursuline Sisters and Marianist Brothers. VASJ is committed to helping students grow in their faith, be challenged academically, follow their passions, and create high school memories and friendships that will last a lifetime.

The family spirit is felt by all who enter the school and makes VASJ a special place to learn and grow. If you're looking for a school that feels like a family, they invite you to join them at an Admissions Open House to experience the family environment that makes VASJ something truly special. Open Houses provide an opportunity to speak with students, teachers and coaches about the school's unique academic, campus ministry and athletic programs. They'd love to have you be part of the VASJ family!



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GESU

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1857 South Green Road, South Euclid Ohio

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LAUREL

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Girls Kindergarten–Grade 12 and Coed Pre-Primary
LaurelSchool.org
216.464.0946

LYMAN CAMPUS
One Lyman Circle
Shaker Heights, Ohio

BUTLER CAMPUS
7420 Fairmount Road
Russell Township, Ohio

Contact us today to schedule your visit.
216.464.0946 • LaurelSchool.org/Admissions

Finding a private school From page 11

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

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

When you've narrowed your search to several schools, be sure to take the time for a personal visit. Talk with an administrator, take the tour and gather

any written information they've prepared for prospective students. Discuss pertinent questions and voice any concerns you may have about your child's specific needs. Above all, gauge your "feel" of the school. Is it the right place for you and your family?

Selecting the perfect private school is well worth the time it takes to research, visit and finally make your selection. This is the place your children will make important friendships, learn and grow, and pave the way to their bright futures.

Calendar of Events



Visit www.TodaysFamilyMagazine.com for a calendar of events all over north-east Ohio!

If you have an event that you would like to have considered for publication on our site, please email the details and a photo (if you have one) to info@todaysfamilymagazine.com. We'd love to hear from you!



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mommy chronicles

Valentine's Day

A day filled with color, kindness and chocolate is what most of us can use right now

By Stacy Turner

Valentine's Day as a single person may have been just another night. It could have been a fun night out with friends, or maybe even a surprise delivery of flowers from a secret admirer. Valentine's Day, as part of a couple, either dating or newly married, could have meant flowers and candy, a romantic dinner, or maybe a weekend getaway. But Valentine's Day with a family is just another excuse to be together, celebrate love, and eat chocolate.

Even with all that going for it, today's Valentine's Day still makes me a little nostalgic for the Valentine's Days of my youth. As a kid, a week or two before the big day, the teacher would send home a list that contained the names of each and every student. We were told to practice our cursive handwriting, while making a valentine for everyone, so no one was left out. We each brought in a shoebox that we'd transform, using pink, red, and white construction paper, into our very own valentine mailbox. We'd dutifully write out the cards and decorate our shoeboxes, anticipating the sugar-filled cupcakes and bright red punch that would most certainly make up our class party. Before school that day, if we were lucky, we might find a mini heart-shaped box of candy, a special treat from Mom and Dad.

At school, when the day of the party began, every child traveled up and down the rows dropping cards into the appropriate mail slots on each desk. We looked forward to school that day for the chance to receive a special valentine from someone we liked, and hopefully not from someone we didn't. Sometimes, a valentine or two might include a lollipop or a special box of conversation hearts -- those chalk-like lozenges in pastel pink, green, purple, yellow, orange, and white. Each color was supposed to taste like a particular fruit -- lime (green), cherry (pink), grape (purple), banana (yellow), and orange. The white (wintergreen) ended up making the entire box taste like mint-flavored chalk. Still, every kid wanted their

own box just to see who got the best messages. Sayings, like "true love", "you & me" or "XOXO" were what we often found. The conversations in boxes today seem less valentine-like, with phrases like "yeah, right", "LOL", and "text me" instead.

Today's class parties are different, as well. Classrooms now have strict requirements for acceptable treats and snacks. Homemade items are no longer allowed for fear of allergens like peanuts or gluten, and the red punch of my youth has been banned in favor of juice from actual fruit or bottled water. Parents are encouraged to send in items like stickers, fun pencils, or small toys, instead of candy to accompany their child's Frozen- or Avenger-themed cards. Most parents ignore this request, so the Valentine party haul rivals the fall harvest (formerly know as Halloween) party. Fun activities are expected, so bring your A-game, room parents.

Construction paper hearts are now passé. Full-fledged Valentine's Day décor is now a thing both at home and at school, having appeared in stores as soon as the Christmas items were removed. Valentine clothing like T-shirts, sweatshirts, and socks are sold everywhere, so there's no reason you and your family can't look festive as they celebrate the day, too. And I really don't mind it.

Now that Christmas and New Years are over and winter break is in the past, an extra dose of color seems like just what we need. With spring still out of reach, a day filled with color, kindness, and chocolate seems like the perfect solution. It may be a bit flashier than what we remember, but sometimes, different is good.

So however you choose to celebrate, whether with old school boxes of tiny cards, new fangled gluten-free cupcakes, gorgeous flowers, or festive T-shirts, do something to celebrate the day with your special somebody. Don't mind me, I'll be sitting with my feet propped up in valentine socks, sorting through a box of conversation hearts and waiting for my valentines to come home and celebrate.

Camp Guide Preview

How to choose a summer camp your kids will love and you'll approve

By Kimberly Blaker

Whether you're looking for enrichment for your child, a way to keep your child occupied and supervised while you work, or a short reprieve from parenting, there's a summer camp out there that's just right for every family.

The benefits of summer camp

Summer camp offers plenty of benefits, and many kids thrill at the idea of going away to summer camp. But for some kids, particularly those who are shy, introverted, or homebodies, the thought of going away for a night, let alone a week or more, can be cause for considerable anxiety. For kids who are adamantly opposed, forcing summer camp on them may not be in their best interest.

But for kids who are more than eager – or at the very least willing

to give it a shot without too much fuss – summer camp offers lots of opportunities kids aren't likely to experience at home or anywhere else. If you're not familiar with the benefits, summer camp:

- Fosters independence.
- Is a place to develop new and lasting friendships.
- Helps kids develop new skills.
- Leads kids to discover new interests and hobbies.
- Provides the opportunity for creative expression.
- Gives kids a break from being plugged-in.
- Offers daily exercise.
- Improves their self-esteem.
- Teaches kids to work with others.
- Makes kids feel part of a community.
- Prevents or reduces summer learning loss.

Getting started in your search

Before you begin looking into

summer camps, first create a list of the criteria you're looking for. Here are some initial things to consider.

- What is your budget for summer camp?
- What is the purpose of sending your child to summer camp?
- Do you want a resident (overnight) or a day camp?
- Are you looking for a short-term (week or two) or summer-long program?
- Do you want a camp that's very structured or one that provides your child lots of freedom and choices?
- What are your child's interests, such as a particular sport, hobby, or other interest?

Once you've narrowed down some of the criteria, you can begin your search. [An excellent place to start is Today's Family magazine. A full listing of camps will appear in the March issues.] The American Camp Association (ACA) accredits



summer camps. So this is another excellent place to look for a camp. The ACA educates camp owners and directors in health and safety for staff and campers as well as program quality. It then accredits camps that meet the organization's standards.

Next steps to finding the perfect summer camp

Once you've selected a few summer camps that meet your primary criteria and that fit your child's interests, share the choices to see what excites your child. Let your child know up front that you still need to thoroughly investigate the camps before making a final decision. But do keep your child's choices in mind to ensure your child gets the most out of summer camp.

Once you and your child have
Continued on page 20

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- American Camp Association Accredited Camp since 1959.
- 1:4 staff/camper ratio allows excellent supervision and instruction.

Young Adventurers Summer Camp (ages 6–10)

- Special one week intro sessions includes all camp activities
- Designed to give first time younger campers an outstanding 'first adventure'
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Camp Guide Preview

Choosing a camp From page 19

narrowed the list to a manageable selection, you'll want to investigate the camps further. There are several things you'll want to consider.

What are the staff's qualifications?

Many summer camps use teens to staff the camps. Teens make excellent mentors and can bring liveliness to summer camp programs. However, the programs themselves should be developed by professionals and have professional oversight to ensure kids are getting the most from the camp programs.

How does the camp ensure your child's safety?

Find out what kind of safety training the camp provides its staffers. Also, is there staff on hand at all

times that knows CPR? What are the camp's procedures in the event your child becomes ill, has an accident, or there's an emergency?

What is the daily schedule for campers?

Ask for a daily itinerary, so you know your child will be getting everything you and your child anticipate from the program.

What are the rules?

Each camp has its own set of rules. So, find out whether your child is allowed to call you. If it's a summer-long residential camp, can parents come and visit? Can your child bring along a cell phone or electronics? Also, how much money should your child bring, and how is your child's money managed?

Fun Day Monday: February 17

Animals have all sorts of adaptations that help them survive in the wild. And some of them are pretty gross! Explore some of these adaptations through a variety of fun indoor and outdoor activities at Fun Day Monday: Animal Grossology on February 17 at Penitentiary Glen Reservation. Stop by the Nature Center between 10am and 3pm and enjoy scavenger hunts, a seasonal nature craft, s'mores, animal programs and much more. This event is free for all ages, no registration required.

Inside the Nature Center, visitors can interact with hands-on nature exhibits and displays and watch for wildlife through the "Window on Wildlife." Snowshoe Lodge will be open for hot beverages.



Outdoors, explore the interactive Nature Play area, rent snowshoes (both weather permitting), meet wildlife animal ambassadors in the Kevin P. Clinton Wildlife Center yard, and hike on more than 8.5 miles of trails.

Penitentiary Glen Reservation is located at 8668 Kirtland-Chardon Rd. in Kirtland. For more information about Fun Day activities, visit www.lakemetroparks.com and click on events or call (440) 256-1404.



Registration begins February 10 for Lake County residents!



Register at lakemetroparks.com or call 440-358-7275 or 800-669-9226

- Extended care available for most camps
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Sensory Friendly Sunday at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History

The Cleveland Museum of Natural History presents its fourth Sensory Friendly Day which will take place on Sunday, February 23, 2020. Sensory Friendly Day provides those with autism spectrum disorder an opportunity to enjoy a gentler way to experience the Museum.

Thanks to the O'Neill Foundation's generosity, the Museum is able to offer free and reduced admission to the Museum from 9:30am to noon for all ASD families.

All individuals with ASD will receive FREE admission and any nonmember accompanying them will be charged \$10 per person. Parking is \$6.

The Museum is also able to offer a limited number of scholarships for

those who need financial assistance. To request free scholarship admission please email Megan Johnson at mjohnson@cmnh.org.

Sensory Friendly Day includes access to the entire Museum and a number of unique accommodations such as:

- Enjoy a modified experience of Ultimate Dinosaurs and planetary shows
- The Ralph Perkins II Wildlife Center & Woods Garden will be open, weather permitting

This event is for the entire family and those of any age with autism spectrum disorder.

Visit www.cmnh.org or call (216) 231-4600 for info and to purchase tickets.

Parent/child classes from page 6

with their development. I discovered this franchise and was so impressed. What differentiates Little Gym from others is that there are experts in the field, such as pediatricians and psychologists, whose knowledge goes into every lesson plan, and every level of development."

The Little Gym gives children a safe and inspiring space to direct their energy, build confidence, and develop key skills. Pascarella encourages parents to start their children as soon as possible. "Even at 4 months, there are benefits to taking them to programs such as our Perfect Start program, for ages 4 months up to three years of age. The classes promote early development and provide a strong foundation by helping them learn the skills correctly and gives a child more confidence."

Parents are required and encouraged to be actively involved in the program with their baby and toddler. The Little Gym defines the classes in three categories: Get Moving encourages a child to just enjoy being a kid through active play. Brain Boost offers ways to help nurture the child's growing brain, such as color recognition and language development. Citizen Kid encourages the varying

degrees of healthy living, both independently and socially.

Tuition plans start at \$22 per class and you can begin at anytime.

"We really are like a family here," says Pascarella, whose youngest son is currently the gym director. "We get to know the parents very well and many continue here for years because they bring in their third and fourth child. Our goal is always what's best for each individual child. We strive to create an environment that opens them up to a world of learning so they can grow and learn in a safe, comfortable environment - all the while having tons of fun!"

Thrive Arts Center

23600 Commerce Park, Beachwood
(216) 991-1063
www.thrivearts.center/kindermusik-classes

The Fine Arts Association

38660 Mentor Avenue, Willoughby
(440) 951-7500
www.fineartsassociation.org

The Little Gym

20707 Chagrin Blvd., Shaker Hts.
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Fun for all ages at the 2020 Great Big Home + Garden Show



Get the whole family involved in the fun at the Great Big Home + Garden Show, January 31 through February 9, at Cleveland's I-X Center. Kids can learn gardening and construction techniques through simple hands-on projects, get excited about their next family road trip in the Garden Showcase or enjoy outdoor fun at Playground World's KidZone.

Kids' activities at the show include:

Family Days

Families can enjoy hands-on home and garden projects from Home Depot and Petitti's Garden Center on Saturday, Feb. 1 and Sunday, Feb. 2 before stopping by Playground World's KidZone for some outdoor fun.

Kids' Gardening Day

Petitti Garden Center is hosting its annual Kids' Gardening Day on Sunday, Feb. 2 from noon-4pm. Families with children 12 years and under are invited to stop by the Petitti Gardening Stage to have

some fun completing simple, D.I.Y. gardening projects. The Petitti Gardening Stage is located near the main entrance to the show, across the main aisle from the Garden Showcase.

Playground World's KidZone

At Playground World's KidZone, children can slide, swing, shoot hoops and bounce on the world's safest, fully enclosed spring-free trampoline. Parents can sign up to win their choice of one of three high-quality products that kids can enjoy for years. Visit them at booth #601A or pgworld.com for more information.

Home Depot Kids' Workshops

Bring the kids for a Home Depot Kids' Workshop! Children will learn how to use a hammer while constructing a small project of their choice and leave with their own orange workshop apron. Visit greatbighomeandgarden.com for the workshop schedule or stop by booth #869.

Farmer Monday at Farmpark

Monday, February 17 • 9 am to 5 pm

Come be a farmer for a day at Lake Metroparks Farmpark during Farmer Monday. Hours are 9am to 5pm on February 17.

Participate in hands-on farm-themed activities including ice cream making and cow milking. Meet all of the baby farm animals including Duncan, the Ayrshire calf. Take a wagon ride, visit the Plant Science Center, discover the power of the horse, be a junior vet and learn how farmers care for lambs and more.

If the snow flies, snowshoes will be available on a first-come, first-served



basis.

Regular Farmpark admission or membership applies. Farmpark members and children under 2 get in free.

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



Dinner and a Movie!!

\$50 at Texas Roadhouse and 4 Passes at Atlas Cinemas

Entering is easy. Visit www.TodaysFamilyMagazine.com and sign up for our monthly e-newsletter. If you are already signed up, you are already entered! The link to sign up is located in the upper left corner of the home page.

Deadline to enter is February 29, 2020. One subscriber will be chosen and notified by email. That person will have 48 hours to respond to claim their prize and become the official winner. If that person does not respond within 48 hours, a new subscriber's name will be chosen and the process will be repeated until an official winner is named.

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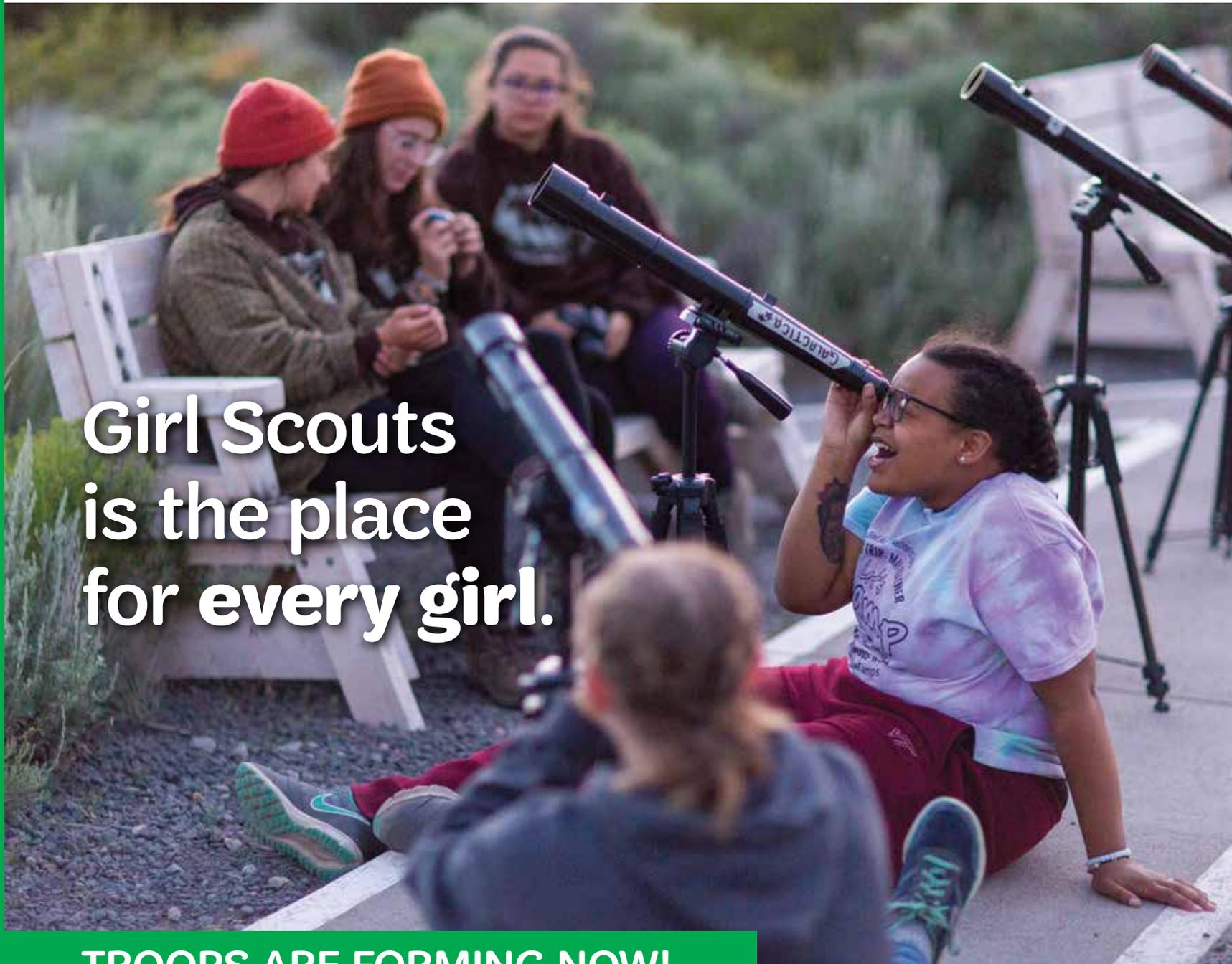


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