

TODAY'S **family**

Dec2021 / Jan2022

Cuyahoga

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potential

7

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Peanut allergies

How to reduce
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TODAY'S family
Lake, Geauga & Cuyahoga Counties

P.O. Box 7316, Eastlake, Ohio 44097

www.TodaysFamilyMagazine.com

info@todaysfamilymagazine.com

440-799-8882

Publisher/Advertising

Kim Miller

General Manager/Editor

Dan Miller

Writers

Deanna Adams

Ante Logarusic

Stacy Turner

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How to reduce peanut and food allergies in children

By Dr. Yonit Estrin

Everyone recognizes the sign when they see it. A peanut in a big, red circle with a line running through it means this school or camp is a nut-free zone. Parents whose children have life-threatening peanut allergies are relieved to see these signs. But is there a way to prevent these serious allergies from developing in the first place? My answer? When starting solids, I recommend to include peanut products early and to feed them often!

Peanuts, tree nuts and seeds are among the most common food allergies with peanut allergy currently the leading cause of death by anaphylaxis in the US. In 1999, approximately 0.4% of US children had a peanut allergy but by 2010 that rate had increased to 2%. The highest rates of peanut allergy are in the US, UK, Canada and Australia with lower rates in other westernized countries such as France, Denmark and Israel. Peanut allergies are rare in Asian countries.

Many parents may recall their own parents and grandparents advising that certain foods be avoided until the age of 3 years. However, with allergy rates rising, it's apparent that avoiding these foods is not the solution.

In 2010 the American Academy of Pediatrics endorsed a new guideline published by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) stating that evidence did not support delaying peanut introduction. In 2015, the Learning Early About Peanut Allergy (LEAP) trial helped provide guidance on when to actually introduce peanut products. Previously, it had been observed that rates of peanut allergy in Jewish children living in the UK were 10-fold higher than in Jewish children living in Israel despite their similar ancestry. The major difference noted was in the timing of their diets. In Israel, babies are commonly given a puffed peanut snack called Bamba at 7 months, while in the UK, children are often introduced to peanut products much later. This led

researchers to hypothesize that early introduction of peanuts to the diet might offer protection against the development of peanut allergy.

The LEAP trial followed children 4-11 months old with severe skin rashes, egg allergy or both, conditions known to present increased risk of peanut allergy. The subjects were divided according to their avoidance or consumption of peanut products. At 5 years, all were given an oral peanut food challenge. Fourteen percent of the children in the avoidance group were allergic compared to fewer than 2% of the peanut-consuming group.

The LEAP trial was the first of its kind to study early allergen introduction as a means of preventing allergy. With this new information, NIAID developed feeding

guidelines placing babies into three groups:

1. Those with severe eczema (persistent or recurrent dry skin who need prescription creams frequently) and/or egg allergy. For these babies they recommended introducing peanut-containing food (not peanuts themselves which are a choking hazard, but foods like creamy peanut butter mixed in puree or baby cereal or Bamba,) as early as 4-6 months but after starting other solid foods. Parents of such children should talk with their doctors and possibly test for peanut allergy and/or see a specialist to further discuss peanut introduction.

2. Those with mild to moderate eczema. Peanut products can be introduced around 6 months old.

3. Those without eczema or food allergy. Peanut-containing foods can be introduced according to family preferences or cultural practice.

So, no need to fear the peanut. In fact, eating these foods early can be the answer to preventing allergy! And as always, if there is any doubt, discuss concerns with your doctor at your child's next well visit.

Yonit Estrin, MD, with Senders Pediatrics in South Euclid is a board certified pediatrician and a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Call them at 216-291-9210 to make an appointment or visit www.senderspeditriatics.com.



Helping children reach their full potential

Help Me Grow and Bright Beginnings

By Deanna Adams

When her son, Jacob, was a toddler, Jean Smith (*not their real names), began noticing some things that concerned her. He demonstrated attachment issues, and was unable to express himself verbally.

Smith soon learned about Bright Beginnings and immediately enrolled her son in their Early Intervention program, a service that supports families with children from birth to age 3 with developmental delays or disabilities. To take it a step further, Smith also enrolled herself in the Parents as Teachers program, a Home Visiting program in Cuyahoga County that supports and educates parents with a child's individual needs and helps them serve as teacher and guide.

"[Smith's] parent educator provided her with resources, support groups, and used the Parents as Teachers curriculum to assist her," explains Tom Wetzel, parent support department manager. A speech and language pathologist was assigned as the Early Intervention primary service provider, and provided speech therapy and other supports to the family to meet their goals.

Today, Jacob is thriving in preschool. After months of language activities and persistence, he is meeting developmental milestones and his language skills continue to improve. "He has opened up more, and is excited to see what activities and games the family would participate in each day," Wetzel notes. "The mother believes that taking part in the Early Intervention and Parents as Teachers programs gave her an opportunity to gain knowledge of child development, delays and milestones, and gave her child a brighter future. She is extremely active and engaged in her children's learning, growth and development," he says, adding that her other children are also enrolled in the Parents as Teachers program.

Helping Kids Grow

We all need a little help sometimes when it comes to getting a child off to a good start in those crucial early years. Bright Beginnings and its regional partners provide services that promote the health and development of infants and toddlers so that children start school healthy and ready to learn. The organization supports families and child caregivers through the Parents as Teachers program and early intervention services in Cuyahoga County, and provides connections to the Help Me Grow system and community resources throughout Ohio.

In 2018, Bright Beginnings, formerly Help Me Grow of Cuyahoga County, was selected by the Ohio Department of Health and the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities to be the single point of entry for the Help Me Grow system of supports.

"Early intervention can address all types of developmental concerns," says communications coordinator, Samantha Bernard. "We connect the parent to specific services and programs that a young family may need."

Those needs can range from a child's slow physical development, speech delays, or difficulties with social interaction among their peers. Whether you reside in Cuyahoga, Lake, Ashtabula, Geauga or Lorain counties, Help Me Grow/Bright Beginnings is just a phone call away. "We're proud to have recently earned a Blue Ribbon Affiliate," says Bernard. "I believe this high quality endorsement gives parents more confidence that we've taken the extra measures to make sure their individual needs will be addressed and taken care of."

Services are at no cost to families and can be home based or virtual. The main goal is to increase early childhood development and improve parenting skills by arming mothers and fathers with the knowledge and tools that support the well-being



and development of young children at every stage.

Bright Beginnings' Early Intervention can also help with other issues such as housing that relate to the child's special needs. "We had a child referred to Early Intervention (EI) in October 2020 from the Ohio Department of Health with an elevated blood lead level, due to lead paint in the home," explains early intervention manager, Katie Parker. "Their sibling was also engaged in EI services for lead exposure as well as developmental concerns around behavior, fine motor skills, and oral motor development, including communication."

A social worker was able to connect the family to legal aid and the city of Cleveland Health Department to address the lead concerns in the home. After attempts to work with the landlord to clean up the property didn't work out, the social worker assisted the family with understanding their rights, and finding

a new home. After three months in the new home, the children's lead blood levels reduced closer to normal levels. The family continues to receive occupational therapist services to support the outcomes related to oral motor development and communication.

Anyone can refer a family to Help Me Grow, and once a child is determined eligible for services, a team of early intervention professionals will be ready to help, including a service coordinator from Bright Beginnings, an occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech-language pathologist or a developmental specialist.

To make a referral or connect with a professional, go to www.brightbeginningskids.org or www.helpegrow.org to fill out the online referral form. Or simply email info@brightbeginningskids.org, call 216-930-3322 in Cuyahoga County, or 1-800-755-GROW (4769) to speak with an intake specialist.

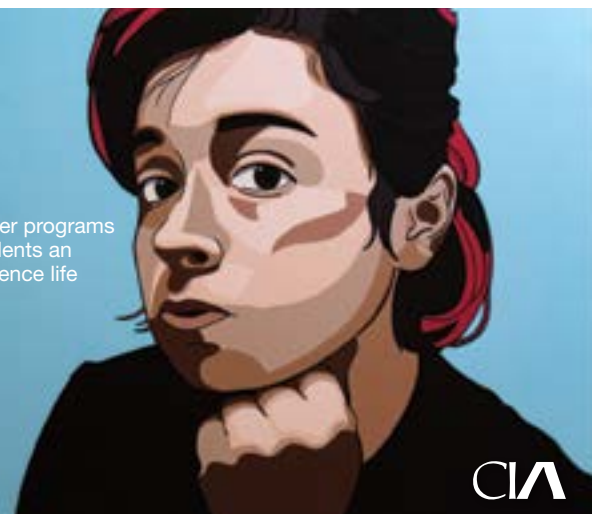
Happy Holidays

From Dan and Kim Miller – Today's Family Magazine

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Get some extra holiday cash at Once Upon A Child

Sell your gently used children's items
and/or buy them at a huge savings!

By Deanna Adams

Nowadays especially, every parent is looking to stretch their dollars a bit further, as well as relinquish items their children have outgrown or no longer play with. Why not do both by getting rid of those unwanted items and earn a little cash at the same time?

Once Upon a Child, with northeast Ohio locations in Mentor and Westlake, welcomes almost any children's items that you no longer need yet are still in good condition. The store is always interested in acquiring your quality, gently used children-related articles and can offer cash payment the very same day. This includes seasonal children's clothing, such as coats, boots, hats and gloves, along with toys, books and even furniture. So if you're in need of a little extra holiday cash, as well as more room in your household, now is the perfect time to get to Once Upon a Child.

"We get excited every day to see what comes into our store," says Tenealle Andrews, manager of the Mentor store. "We all have a passion for fashion and we know we're in competition with the bigger stores so we take pride in offering like-new

items that are ready to sell and at a more affordable retail price."

The story behind this top-rated children's corporation is an inspiring example of a parent having a much needed idea and running with it. In 1985, Lynn Blum, mother of three, decided to open up a resale shop for children's clothes and toys. The basic concept was to create an efficient and convenient way for parents to recycle their kid's outgrown items. It was an immediate hit and franchises were first offered in 1992. Today, it is a burgeoning multiple-brand franchise operation with nearly 500 stores throughout North America.

Linda Kessler is the proprietor of both the Mentor and Westlake stores. She calls what she sells, "Kids stuff with previous experience." She's always looking for baby gear and always willing to give cash for clothing, furniture, and equipment that is clean, with all parts and in good working condition. They accept any clothing from preemie sizes to preteen, including dresswear, footwear, sleepwear and dancewear. Any clothing with stains, fading, or excessive wear cannot be considered.

"We are condition-based more than brand-



based," Andrews says. "It doesn't have to be only high-end merchandise. We're all about quality. The items we select must meet current style, safety, and condition standards."

So how does it all work?

While you don't need an appointment to bring in your items, there are several guidelines to know ahead of time. "Especially since COVID-19, there are sanitation rules in effect," Andrews says. "We ask that customers bring their gently used items in a plastic bin, tote or laundry basket, and

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all clothing must be freshly laundered. Anything that comes in our store in plastic trash bags will not be accepted.” She explains that clothing which sits in a plastic bag for any amount of time can become moist and bacteria can set in. “And we all know, toys are always being touched by little hands and put into mouths, so these must be washed in hot, soapy water before being brought in.” The toys and games most desired by parents are Fisher-Price and Mattel, especially Little People and classic kids’ games like Chutes and Ladders, Connect 4, and Operation. Developmental toys are also in current demand due to the increase of kids being schooled at home more than ever before.

Once the items are dropped off, customers can shop while store employees go through the items one at a time to determine what is in good shape and has resale value. They maintain high merchandise standards by thoroughly inspecting all toys and equipment for any safety recalls. Andrews has a good measure for determining if your items will be taken. “Just think of it this way—whatever you most likely would buy here yourself is what we would buy

from you.” This means anything that parents will find affordable, convenient and sustainable. Items should be folded neatly or laid flat in a box for delivery.

“Whatever we can’t use, we like to recommend that they take those items and donate them to Birthright [the nonprofit charitable organization],” Andrews says. “And there is always The Salvation Army and Goodwill, too.”

Most customers who come into the store to offer up their items, stick around and shop for new things they need for their family. “We always tell our customers, come to us first before you go to the mall,” Andrews says. “It’s quite possible you’ll find what you’re looking for right here and you can often save up to 70% off.”

Once Upon a Child – Mentor
Colonial Plaza • 7537 Mentor Ave.
440-951-7222

Once Upon a Child – Westlake
25028 Center Ridge Road
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Hours: Mon.–Sat. 10–6 p.m.,
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www.ouonceuponachild.com

Elf The Musical coming to Beck Center Holiday fun for the entire family!

Beck Center for the Arts is excited to announce Elf The Musical, a soon to be holiday classic for the stage. The show runs December 3, 2021 – January 2, 2022.

Based on the beloved holiday film, this hilarious big-elf-living-in-a-small world comedy follows Buddy the Elf in his quest to find his true identity in a holiday bedazzled New York City.

Featuring songs written by the creator of Disney’s Aladdin on Broadway and a book by the writer of Annie, The Producers, and Hairspray this feels and sounds like a sweet holiday treat for all ages. Tickets are currently on sale at 216-521-2540 x10 or online at www.beckcenter.org. Ticket prices start at \$34 (adults), \$30 (for seniors 65+) and \$12 for students with valid ID. A \$3 service fee per single ticket will be applied at time of purchase. Curtain times are 7:30 p.m. weeknights and Saturdays, and 2:30 p.m. Sundays.

For more information on Elf The Musical and the 2021-22 Profes-



sional Theater Season please visit beckcenter.org.

Beck Center for the Arts is located at 17801 Detroit Avenue in Lakewood, just ten minutes west of downtown Cleveland. Free on-site parking is available.

Beck Center has made a number of investments in their HVAC and air filtration to provide a safe environment for patrons as they return to the theater. All actors have been fully vaccinated, as well as backstage crew. Theater patrons over the age of 2 must be masked at all times inside Beck Center buildings, and patrons over the age of 12 must show a vaccination card (or copy, or image on a smart phone), or proof of a negative COVID-19 test prior to entering the theater.

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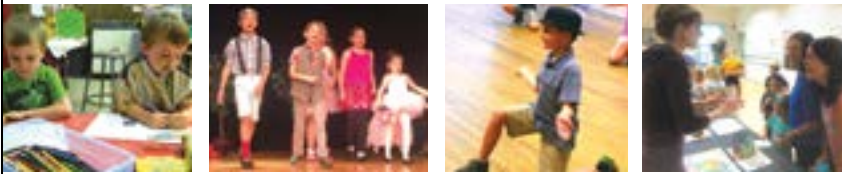
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Ice skating returns on Friday, December 3 to University Circle

The weather is growing colder and the fresh ice at The Rink at Wade Oval will welcome its first skaters Friday, December 3, with the help of sponsor PNC Bank.

Visitors can bring their own skates or rent them on site. A concession stand will feature seasonal treats, including hot cocoa, coffee and a variety of snacks.

Seasonal programming at The Rink will include the popular "Pink the Rink" throughout Valentine's Day weekend, and special open skate hours on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and Presidents Day.

"Many of us have a tendency to stay indoors during the winter months but The Rink at Wade Oval is a fun way to get outside and enjoy the winter weather with family and friends," said Pat Pastore, PNC regional president of Cleveland. "In addition to skating, many visit the museums and restaurants in the University Circle area, which provides a boost to the neighborhood economy."

Visitors to The Rink may show their admission wristbands at the Cleveland Botanical Garden, Cleveland History Center, and Cleveland Museum of Natural History for \$2 off same-day admission. Rink wristbands may also be shown at the Cleveland Museum of Art Café for a 10% discount.

The Rink will be open through Sunday, Feb. 27, 2022. Admission is \$2 for adults and \$1 for students, and skate rentals are \$3 for adults and \$2 for students, making The Rink an affordable winter experience.

Additional support for The Rink at Wade Oval is courtesy of Cleveland Public Power, Cleveland Department of Water, Cleveland Department of Water Pollution Control, and RTA.

For hours of operation, ticket reservations, special events, private event rentals and more information on The Rink at Wade Oval, visit universitycircle.org/rink.



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Planning ahead for the approaching holiday season as a caregiver

By Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging

Holidays often have a special meaning for older adults and their family members. They are occasions set aside to acknowledge the passage of time, celebrate significant events in our lives and bring families and friends together. By making the most of these special moments, we can truly value our time together with the ones we love.

However, if we are caring for a loved one throughout the holiday season, we may have concerns about balancing our traditional holiday celebrations with our responsibilities as a caregiver. The location of our event, invite list and pre-preparations can all be affected by our caregiving schedule, so we may need to plan ahead for festivities that are easy to manage and don't require complicated food preparation or significant cleanup.

Here are some tips we can follow to help us provide quality care for our loved one while also making the most of time spent with them during the holiday season:

1. Ask for help

Our friends and family may be willing to assist with cooking, cleanup and socializing with older loved ones, so we shouldn't hesitate to ask them

to lend a helping hand with any necessary tasks before, after and during the event.

2. Avoid overwhelming situations

If certain guests haven't seen our loved one recently, we may need to explain before they arrive that the loved one's health or memory may have declined since their last visit. Keep in mind that a family member with Alzheimer's or other memory disorder may become confused and overwhelmed by the hustle and bustle of guests, and that they may not be able to recognize some of the people they did previously. As a caregiver, we should watch closely to see if a loved one needs a brief timeout and some comforting words from us or our guests.

3. Plan holiday activities a loved one can participate in

There are a number of holiday activities we can recommend to a loved one to help them stay active. These tasks naturally vary by the holiday you're celebrating, but here are a few to consider:

- Choosing and wrapping gifts for friends and family.
- Making festive decorations.
- Watching classic holiday movies or reading holiday stories. If a loved one has grandchil-



dren, this may be a perfect opportunity to get them involved by having them read to their grandparent.

- Helping to prepare special holiday dishes and treats.
- Engaging in reminiscing.

4. Minimize stress

The holiday season can be especially stressful not only for loved ones with memory disorders, but also for caregivers. In addition to routine household chores, caregivers are also responsible for extra holiday tasks like cooking, baking, decorating and so on.

As caregivers, it's important to give ourselves some respite during this busy time of year. A short nap or other "timeout" to rest and relax will not only help us regain our energy, but also to appreciate what this special season means to us. For a more relaxed and meaningful holiday, we should

See **CAREGIVER** on page 10



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Wild Winter Lights returns to Cleveland Metroparks Zoo

Cleveland Metroparks Zoo is again transforming into a winter wonderland this holiday season with Wild Winter Lights presented by NOPEC. This year's show features over one million individual lights, a dynamic musical light show, and unique twists on holiday traditions.

Wild Winter Lights transforms the Zoo after dark with hundreds of dazzling displays across holiday-themed areas including Candyland, Enchanted Forest, Conservation Trail and Santa's Workshop, where guests can take photos with Santa Claus. This year, guests can again experience Wild Winter Lights on foot or in their personal vehicle.

Additional highlights of this year's event include carousel rides, costumed characters, model train displays, ice carvers, live music from festive choirs including the Singing Angels, and the return of the dynamic light show featuring an enchanting 50-foot tree.

Wild Winter Lights runs from



5:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. on select dates Thursdays through Sundays through Sunday, January 2.

Wild Winter Lights tickets are limited, and advance online reservations are strongly encouraged. The discounted cost for Zoo members is \$18 and \$20 for nonmembers, or a four-pack for \$54 for members and \$60 for nonmembers. Children under two are admitted for free. Tickets for the drive-through experience is \$54 per car for Zoo members and \$60 per car for nonmembers.

Visit FutureForWildlife.org/lights to reserve your spot today.

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www.beachwoodschools.org/fairmount.aspx

Caregiver from page 9

consider choosing activities that are most enjoyable to us and passing on the rest.

5. Choose a gift a loved one will value

We may find it difficult to choose holiday, birthday and gifts for other occasions for a loved one with memory loss. Some suggestions:

- Easy crossword & puzzle books.
- Warm socks, slippers, robes and pajamas.
- Family photograph albums or digital photo frames.
- A fruit basket, favorite plant or

flowers.

- Adult coloring books.
- A sensory blanket or quilt.
- Holiday and birthday cards created by grandchildren and other young relatives.

Benjamin Rose Institute on Aging is an over 110-year-old Cleveland-based nonprofit organization whose mission is to support caregivers and empower all people to age well through research, consumer-responsive services and client advocacy. Visit <https://benrose.org> for more information (and for an email form) or call them at 216-791-8000.



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Our site is keyword searchable and is mobile-friendly. Whatever local family information you need, you will most likely find it at

www.TodaysFamilyMagazine.com!

Fairmount Center for the Arts presents free, fun open house!

Saturday, January 8, 2022 • 9 a.m.–noon

Fairmount Center for the Arts invites everyone to their Winter Warm-Up Open House on Saturday, January 8, 2022, from 9 a.m.–noon. The open house is free and open to the community.

All ages, children through adults, can enjoy mini-workshops and performances in dance, art, music, theatre and storytelling; then warm up with hot cocoa and donuts from Patterson Fruit Farm.

Come make snowflakes, create art, participate in intro dance and theatre workshops, explore instruments or simply enjoy listening to a story and special music and dance performances.

The Winter Warm-Up is a perfect opportunity to learn about Fairmount's winter/spring classes, workshops and special programs ranging from 1–18 weeks long in visual arts, dance, music, theatre and fitness for all ages and ability levels. Winter/spring session begins January 10, 2022.



Fairmount Center for the Arts is located at 8400 Fairmount Road in Novelty. For complete information on the open house and to register for all winter/spring classes and programs, visit www.fairmountcenter.org or call 440-338-3171.

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Tis the season of giving

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

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

What to give? Seasonal décor you won't be using. Clothes that don't fit any longer. And housewares that you no longer use are all valuable donations to Goodwill stores. The stores will sell those donations and use the revenue from



those products to support a network of 28 different mission programs. Goodwill mission programs include job training and placement for people with disabilities and other barriers to employment, family strengthening programs, emergency services and more. Last year, donations to your local Goodwill provided support to more than 11,000 individuals in our community.

Locally, you can donate at Mayfield Heights, University Heights, Eastlake, Painesville and Chardon area locations.

For more information, log onto GoodwillGoodSkills.org.

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What I **get** to do this Christmas!

By Stacy Turner

In my early days of momhood, I used to feel frenzied about getting all the cleaning, shopping, baking and wrapping done in time for the holidays. When looking back at photos and talking with my family about our favorite holiday memories, I realized that many of the “must do” activities we rushed around to take advantage of didn’t even come to mind.

When my kids were tiny, many holidays included the additional chore of packing up Santa’s loot, prewrapped and stealthily hidden from prying eyes in a jam-packed car for the half-day road trip to spend the Christmas holiday with extended family. If we didn’t make the long trek, often amid winter weather advisories, to their home near Chicago, they would make the same track to our house, and we’d be frenzied, prepping to feed and house six additional humans for three or four days of fun and festivities.

It took a lot of patience and a great deal of planning, and to be totally honest, it was kind of a pain in the butt whether we traveled or hosted. It would mean weeks before spent at a frenzied pace, getting all the details taken care of, before the actual fun could begin. I’m sad to admit that I often let the stress of prepping for the visit, or packing up a picture-perfect holiday distract me



from enjoying the day-to-day joys of the actual holiday season.


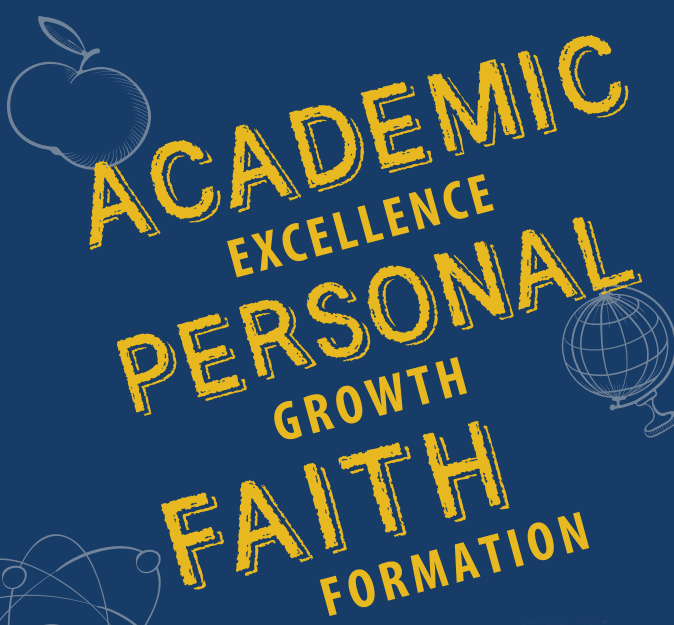
Now that the cousins are mostly grown and living on their own, we’ve stopped making those hectic, hard-to-pack-for trips, and they have too. Honestly, as much as I’m relieved to not be making the effort, I’ve missed those big, extended family gatherings. Looking back, I’m glad that we made all the effort, now that the opportunity to gather is much harder to come by. I know that times will continue to change, whether we’re ready or not. And with those changes comes the opportunity to reimagine what holidays can or should look like.


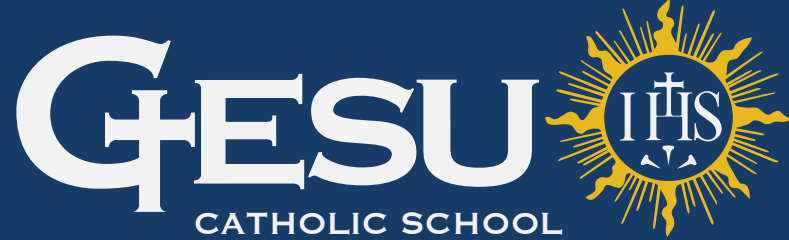
Meanwhile, the adults in the family have gotten distracted keeping score of which group has traveled more frequently to the other’s home, and

whose schedules are easier to upend in order to allow time to gather. Our kids, not bothered by such nonsense, have asked us to set that all aside to go and visit their cousins. So after many years of not gathering, we’ve agreed to hit the road and spend Christmas together. This time, however, I’m making a point not to get distracted by all the planning and packing, and to enjoy more of the process. I choose to focus on the simple fact that this Christmas, my kids and their cousins will be able to be together, in person for the holidays. Because we don’t know when we’ll have an opportunity like this again.

I now realize that we don’t have to go through the process of planning, packing, and traveling. It’s something we *get* to do that will enable us to gather together in this moment. I’m choosing to see these things as gifts not only for our kids and their cousins, but to us as well. This little shift in mindset has made a big difference; maybe it can help you, too.

During the holidays, it’s easy to let the stress and frantic pace of activities wear down your patience and turn what’s meant to be a season of peace and joy into one of stress and frustration. Changing our perspective from what we have to do to what we *get* to do is a gift we can choose, that will continue to bless us through the holiday season and into the new year.





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7 “experience gifts” to give kids this holiday

By Sarah Lyons

Does it feel like your kids already have more toys than they could ever want? I love the holidays and the spirit of gift giving but every year I wonder what toys my kids could possibly want and where they will go in our already crowded home? Experience gifts are a great gift option that has benefits for kids, parents, and other gift givers. With an experience gift, your child will create great memories while enjoying something they may not have had the opportunity to try otherwise. An added bonus is that there is no need to store the item after the child has grown tired of playing with it. Here are some great experience gift ideas for every child on your list.

Season pass

One of my family’s favorite gifts are seasonal family passes to local attractions. This not only saves us money but it also encourages us to get out, enjoy our city, and make memories along the way. Some attractions to consider are zoo admission, a local museum (consider a children’s museum if your children are of the right ages), amusement park tickets, or swimming season passes to the area pool.

Subscription box

A subscription box is a great gift idea for those that are tweens and teens that are hard to buy for. They are now available for any age, interest, and price range. If your child loves science, reading, art, games, or sports; chances are there is a subscription box that will fit their interests.

Classes and camps

Consider giving the gift of prepaid classes or camps that fit your child’s interest. Some ideas include dance, gymnastics, sports, cooking, art, or music. Classes and camps can be really expensive but are worth the money and give kids the opportunity to try something new.

Travel

Consider combining your holiday and vacation budget to take a family trip. Whether it’s an overnight trip



A gift card to Jump Start Gymnastics in Beachwood is a gift that could open a whole new world to your child. See page 2 for info!

to a nearby indoor water park or a cross country trip, traveling is a great way to expose your child to different places and build family memories at the same time.

Tickets

Tickets to a favorite sporting event, concert, or show is a great idea for a gift for the whole family. Combine the gift with a T-shirt to wear to the event or a backstage tour to make the day more memorable.

Box it up

If your budget is a little smaller, try putting together several things in a box for your child to enjoy. Create a movie box with a movie or video rental gift card, candy, popcorn, and a warm blanket so the family can enjoy a movie night at home. Combine art supplies, a sketch book, paints, and other craft items for an art box. You could also put together a cooking box, ingredients for homemade play dough with cookie cutters, or a gardening box with seeds, gardening gloves and tools. Get creative and combine your child’s interests to put together a customized box.

Adventure gifts

For the adventurous child, look for experience gifts that give them a chance to try something they wouldn’t normally get to do. Some ideas could include horseback riding, fishing, camping, rock climbing, indoor skydiving, or a day at a gym with an obstacle course or trampolines.

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A new home for the holidays

If adopting a pet this year is on your list, here are a few things to keep in mind

By Ante Logarusic

The holiday season is upon us and we're all thinking about that perfect gift. Wish lists are shared and it should come as no surprise to many parents when a new puppy or kitten is right at the top of that list.

If you've been thinking about adding a new member to the family, there are some important things to keep in mind.

If adopting from a breeder, do your homework and ensure that the breeder is reputable. Don't be afraid to ask to see where and how the dogs are housed – the breeder should not object. That great deal you find online may be the result of a life of misery at a puppy mill. In addition to unknown health and behavioral issues that can develop at a mass breeding facility, these dogs can also be susceptible to genetic disorders.

A great alternative is adopting through a shelter and the reason is simple; when you adopt a shelter animal, you save a life.

Adopting a pet is a long-term commitment that shouldn't be taken lightly and it's a decision that should be made by the whole family. Your family needs to determine how responsibilities will be split up and most importantly, you need to ensure that your family has the time to give your pet the



love and attention that it deserves.

"Everybody wants to have the cute puppy and cute kitten on Christmas morning with the bow on them, but families have to understand that this is a significant commitment and that they will need to spend time with the pet. A pet adoption should never be a surprise," says Lori Caszatt, interim executive director of the Lake Humane Society, "When a family comes here to adopt a pet, we require that all the adults in the family agree that the adoption is a good decision."

Lisa Ishee, community affairs coordinator with Geauga County's Rescue Village, agrees, "Everyone in the family is making a commitment and everyone has to be on board."

Your newest family member is going to be with you for quite a while so making the right choice matters. Some of the things to take into consideration include making sure your family's energy level is in line with your new pet's energy level. Puppies and kittens are incredibly cute but also require a lot of patience, training, and care. Messes will be made, and boundaries need to be set before poor behavior sets in.

Costs need to be weighed as well. Like humans, animals require medical exams and sometimes additional care to live a happy and healthy lifestyle. Another terrific benefit of adopting a shelter dog or cat is that the animals have been vetted and the initial round of wellness care has already been taken care of.

In some situations, older animals may be better suited and are often preferred. Seniors, as well as families with older children, will often gravitate towards an older pet because they have been trained and the commitment isn't quite as long.

"Our older pets are often adopted relatively quickly," says Ishee, "Something about them tugs at people's heartstrings. People want to get them out of the shelter life and back into a loving home."

For many of us of a certain age, getting a dog

See PETS on page 15

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Just For Laughs

Little Johnny wasn't getting good marks in school. One day he surprised the teacher with an announcement. He tapped her on the shoulder and said, "I don't want to scare you, but my daddy says if I don't start getting better grades, somebody is going to get a spanking!"

A kindergarten teacher was observing her classroom of children while they were drawing. She would occasionally walk around to see each child's work. As she got to one little girl who was working diligently, she asked what the drawing was. The girl replied, "I'm drawing God."

The teacher paused and said, "But no one knows what God looks like."

Without missing a beat, or looking up from her drawing, the girl replied, "They will in a minute."

Teacher: Students, you have 40 minutes to write an essay about a soccer match.

Richard: (After two minutes) Here's my paper, sir.

Teacher: What did you manage to write so quickly?

Richard: Match called off due to rain.

Three boys are in the schoolyard bragging about their fathers. The first boy says, "My dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, he calls it a poem, they give him \$50."

The second boy says, "That's nothing. My dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, he calls it a song, they give him \$100."

The third boy says, "I got you both beat. My dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, calls it a sermon, and it takes 8 people to collect the money!"

Pets from page 14

was once as simple as taking a trip to the pound. These days, many organizations utilize adoption counselors to ensure that pets enter the right situation and are a good fit for the family. Counselors will work with a family to get an idea of what they're looking for in a pet as well as assessing what kind of home they have to offer. They'll also spend time making sure that it's the right fit. Like humans, dogs and cats have unique personalities and some situations are better than others.

The worst situation is when a family and their new pet have bonded and have to be separated.

If you've checked all of the boxes and made the decision to move forward, keep in mind that any time is a good time to adopt. You'll be home for the holidays and that certainly helps, but experts agree that it takes about three months for a shelter pet to become completely acclimated to your environment and develop trust in your family.

The best thing you can do is establish a routine, define boundaries as well as positive reinforcement, and also give the pet the ability to have some space as well as quiet time to itself as it adjusts to its new home.

Most local shelters post available animals on their websites and those can change daily. People are encouraged to visit often to see if their perfect pet becomes available. Shelters have different hours, fees, and rules in place. Some host regular visiting hours while others are done by appointment only. Be sure to visit their websites to learn more.

CUYAHOGA COUNTY

Cuyahoga County Animal Shelter
www.cuyahogadogs.com

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Scuba Claus is coming to town

Ever talked to a jolly old elf while he was in 230,000 gallons of saltwater with sharks? Any “fin” is possible when it comes to the magical man in red. See Scuba Claus and discuss holiday cookie preferences, ask your diving questions or just wish him a merry “fish-mas” during special Scuba Claus Meet & Greet Days at Greater Cleveland Aquarium on Saturday or Sunday, December 18 or 19 from 8:30 a.m. – 10 a.m., or Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday, December 20, 21 or 22, from 4:30 – 7 p.m. Tickets (which include full aquarium access) are available by advance purchase only and are \$24.95 for guests ages 13+, \$18.95 for children ages 2-12. Adult and child annual passholders ages 2+ can reserve tickets for \$5 each. Admission is always free for children younger than 2.

“Guests explore the aquarium and complete an animal seek-and-find activity before spending a few minutes chatting with Scuba Claus while he’s underwater,” says Aquarium general manager Stephanie White. Scuba Claus Meet & Greet guests receive a complimentary digital pho-



to with Scuba Claus, a commemorative “I Saw Scuba Claus” sticker, a coloring sheet and a temporary tattoo.

Ho-ho-hoping a Christmas icon isn’t in too deep when it comes to diving with sharks, eels, angelfish and puffers? “He’s scuba-certified and always dives with a dive buddy elf, so there’s nothing to be concerned about,” assures White. “Plus, he knows which animals are on the ‘nice’ list.”

Aquarium capacity is limited, and arrival timed. Advance tickets for the public and annual passholders are required for this event. For tickets or details, call 216-862-8803 or visit greaterclevelandaquarium.com/event/scuba-claus.

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Explore art at Valley Art Center

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The children’s program is robust and thriving! From week-long summer camp experiences to after-school classes, young artists benefit from experienced instructors who bring out their creativity in a fun and engaging environment. This session check out the new Clay Play Wednesdays (pictured), Adventures in Art and Art Exploration classes.

New adult opportunities this year include: conversational critique sessions where artists of all levels can present their artwork and have it objectively and supportively dis-



cussed in a group setting. A two-day Indigo Shibori dyeing workshop will introduce students to the age old techniques of Japanese Shibori dyeing. Brunchtime Clay Date offers a weekend respite for adults to relax around the potter’s wheel.

Additionally, Valley Art Center now offers in-person art therapy group and individual sessions for both children and adults. Art therapy is using art in a therapeutic way to support overall well-being and building an understanding of yourself. Art therapy is about the process of creating art, not creating a perfect masterpiece, which opens the door for anyone to be an artist. The benefits of art therapy are many.

For more information call 440-247-7507 or visit valleyartcenter.org.

PET GIFT GUIDE



PetSafe Pagoda

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The Busy Buddy Cravin'

Corncob is butter scented and takes up to two PetSafe treat rings. Pet parents can spread peanut butter or pet toothpaste on the corn kernels for double the fun, and the textured surface helps to keep their teeth and gums clean. *[Publisher's note: Our dog LOVES this toy and won't stop playing with it!]*

The Busy Buddy Slab o' Sirloin is beef scented and holds up to two PetSafe treat rings in its refillable SnapFit treat-holding cups. The grooves on the back of the sirloin also allow for peanut butter or pet toothpaste to keep dogs engaged for longer periods of time.

The Frosty Cone is an ice cream cone designed just for dogs. Owners can fill and freeze the French vanilla-scented toy with dog-safe foods like nut butter, broth, meats, and veggies, or even try filling and freezing the cone with their dog's wet food for a slow feed option they can savor.

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The Sneaky, Snacky Squirrel Game! by Educational Insights

Ages 3+

Your forest friends are hungry and need your help! Spin the spinner, grab the matching colored acorn with your Squirrel Squeezer and stash it in your log. Be the first to fill your log with delicious acorns and you win. Sounds simple, but you could also spin a sad squirrel and lose a turn, or a sneaky squirrel and steal a nut from another player, so be strategic, little squirrel! Quick, fun game that can be played continuously in a short time.



Freeze Up! Game by Educational Insights

Ages 8+

A chilly pass-around wordplay game! Asks players to name something that starts with a particular letter in fast paced game play. Requires players to either answer quickly or choose another category or letter in order to stay in the game. Features over 170 categories and two modes of play with automatic scoring. For 2–8 players or teams. Requires 3 AA batteries (included).



1-2-3 Build It! Robot Factory from Learning Resources

Ages 2–6



Kids build their own twisting, turning STEM creations with the mix-and-match pieces of the 1-2-3 Build It! Robot Factory. Sized just right for little hands, this build-it-yourself toy's chunky plastic pieces are ready to help kids design, build, and tinker with their own robot squad during open-ended play sessions. Comes with an activity guide featuring recommended builds, which helps kids learn essential STEM skills ranging from critical thinking and early engineering to following directions.

Fort Explorer Kits

Ages 4+

Contains the essential components to build simple and fun forts. Older kids, teens and of course, Dad, will enjoy the process of constructing something incredible with one of each of the newest Make-A-Fort kits – perhaps an 11-foot long jet; a 6-foot tall giraffe or a 4-foot tall lemonade stand. A single kit is often enough for a solo play for a preschooler. Two or three kits work great for older kids allowing them to build bigger forts.



www.makeafort.fun

2021 Hess Cargo Plane and Jet

Ages 3+

The Cargo Plane is an impressive, heavy-load transport aircraft. Colored in white with a green undercarriage, bold green striping, sparkling chrome nose cone and accents, the plane includes six turbine engines, free-rolling, foldable landing gear, and 32 high-visibility lights that provide an impressive glow. A quick press of the taillight will release the rear cargo bay doors, providing access to the Jet. A hidden slide out ramp makes loading and unloading the expansive, internally illuminated cargo bay a breeze.



www.HessToyTruck.com

Smart Teddy

Ages 3–5

Smart Teddy is a connected soft toy that helps parents teach and engage their kids as well as develop good habits. Let's be real—no parent likes telling their kid to brush their teeth for the 40th night in a row. Smart Teddy bear can do it for you! So Smart Teddy becomes a positive, nurturing member of your family. He actively guides them towards healthy, positive activities. Using the innovative system, you can choose an activity and have Smart Teddy Bear lead your child through it. Available at SmartTeddy.store or Amazon.com.



World of Eric Carle The Very Hungry Caterpillar Picnic Basket Playset

Ages newborn–toddler

Kids Preferred presents this super cute, charmingly detailed picnic basket stuffed with plush toys. Babies, toddlers, and kids love fun, colorful playsets. Picnic basket includes plush caterpillar (5"), plush avocado rattle, plush bread slice with velcro closure, crinkly juice pouch, & felt tomato, lettuce, & swiss cheese. Machine washable.



Keep baby entertained, happy, and soothed with this adorable toy set featuring soft material, and rattle, crinkle. Textures and sounds stimulate baby's senses.

SimplyFun Family Favorite Game Set



Looking for games that stand the test of time? These SimplyFun classics have provided hours of fun for families small and large, and remain top sellers because of their great replayability. Games included:

Walk the Dogs • Ages 8+

With 63 adorable dogs, this family game barks fun while reinforcing basic math skills. But be careful, the dog catcher could catch you first! For 2–5 players.

Eye to Eye • Ages 10+

Ice-cream brands? Things that squeak? Write down three answers from the category card and see how well you know the other players. Be the player to see "Eye to Eye" the most to win. For 3–6 players.

Quartile • Ages 8+

Strategy, logic, addition... it's a math lover's delight in this fun update on dominos. Contains 49 solid wood tiles. For 2–6 players.

www.simplyfun.com

Find more great ideas in our Lake Geauga edition!

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