

TODAY'S family

Dec2021 / Jan2022

Lake Geauga

FREE!

Once Upon A Child

Save on gently used
kid's clothing,
toys & more

7

Experience gift ideas for kids

Bright Beginnings

Helps children reach
their potential

Adopting a pet this year?

Things to consider
before you do

Holiday Gift Guides

For kids and
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Peanut allergies

How to reduce
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For more info: Sarah@LNSportspark.com



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www.LNSportsPark.com

TODAY'S family

Lake, Geauga & Cuyahoga Counties

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contents



Peanut allergies and how to reduce them

Read online at TodaysFamilyMagazine.com



Bright Beginnings

Helping young families
Page 3



Once Upon A Child

Page 6



Adopting a pet

Page 14

PLUS

Mommy Chronicles

Page 12

7 great "experience gift" ideas for kids

Page 13

Holiday Gift Guides

Pages 18-19

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

See BEGINNINGS on page 4

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Winter fun in Geauga Park District

It can be hard to get out during a northeast Ohio winter, but Geauga Park District has you covered when it comes to motivation! There's no shortage of great activities to enjoy in the parks. A few ideas can be found below, with more details on all of these suggestions available at www.geaugaparkdistrict.org.



Winter programs

Treat yourself by scheduling some time to take a park adventure with a naturalist. Many programs require advance registration, so mark your calendars for December 20 at 10 a.m. if you're a resident, or December 27 if you're out of county, to check the new list of programs and sign up before spots run out.

Cleared trails for walking

Park operations crews regularly clear snow from paved trails in six parks:

- Orchard Hills Park, Chesterland
- Sunnybrook Preserve, Chesterland
- Bessie Benner Metzbaum Park, Chesterland
- Walter C. Best Wildlife Preserve, Chardon
- Frohring Meadows, Bainbridge
- The Maple Highlands Trail-North from Fifth Avenue in Chardon to the Lake County line

Bird in the Hand Feeding Station

Head to The West Woods for the magical experience of having birds eat right out of your hand!

Snowshoe borrowing

Don't have snowshoes of your own? Borrow some free of charge

(if you're a Geauga resident) and explore The West Woods when the snow is deep.

Snowmobiling

Snowmobiling will be available this winter at Observatory Park and The Maple Highlands Trail with a permit.

Sledding

Sledding hills can be found at Orchard Hills Park and Beartown Lakes Reservation.

Cross-country skiing

Did you know they groom along the central section of The Maple Highlands Trail? Watch social media for updates.

Ice fishing

Have the equipment? You can fish in the wintertime in the same places you can fish during warm weather! Please note: a boating permit is still required to fish at Bass Lake Preserve.

Snow-related closures

Should extreme weather close the nature centers or cancel the programs, please refer to their social media/website, WKYC or WEWS for notice.

Beginnings from page 3

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 patholo-

gist or a developmental specialist.

To make a referral or connect with a professional, go to www.brightbeginningskids.org or www.helpmegrow.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.

Exclusively at TodaysFamilyMagazine.com



How to reduce peanut and food allergies in children

Sprinkling some safety on your holiday spirit

“It’s the most wonderful time of the year – there’ll be Christmas trees glowing and candle flames burning and good times when loved ones are near – it’s the most wonderful time of the year!”

Making the season merry and bright can be beautiful yet dangerous. Let’s get in the holiday spirit by putting safety first!

- Whether your Christmas tree is real or fake, keep it a safe distance from a fireplace, wood burning stove, or other heat-producing sources. Three strings of lights should be the limit on any power strips or outlets. Be sure the UL symbol appears on the electrical items you purchase and pay attention to the color – green means it’s for indoor use while red is for indoor/outdoor. When using older lights, check that the cords or wires are not cracked or frayed. Always unplug indoor lights when you leave your home.
- Candles are pretty, but they’re still open flames. December is the peak time of year for candle-related house fires. Sure they set a glowy holiday mood, but lit flames and Christmas decorations don’t exactly mix. Here are a few important reminders:
 - ★ Never leave a burning candle unattended.
 - ★ Keep lit candles at least 12 inches away from surrounding objects.
 - ★ Trim wicks to a quarter of an inch before you light them.



- ★ Keep candles and matches out of reach of children.
- ★ Don’t burn candles near trees, curtains, or other flammable items.
- ★ Candles should be on a sturdy surface.
- When decorating your tree, refrain from putting glass or breakable ornaments within children’s reach. When trying to reach up high, use a stepladder rather than a chair or other piece of furniture.
- When selecting gifts for young children, stay away from toys with coin lithium batteries or small parts that could easily be ingested or create

a choking hazard.

- Never toss anything but logs into your fireplace. Don’t try to burn evergreens or wreaths in a fireplace or wood stove. Greenery and tree needles burn much faster than logs, creating sparks, which can fly into the room or onto the roof. Don’t burn wrapping paper because it can contain metallic materials that could be hazardous to breathe in. Always make sure the fire is out and the embers have cooled before you leave the house or go to bed.
- Don’t forget to prep the outside of your house. Keep your driveway and walkways clear of ice and snow, especially if you’re expecting guests.

Wishing you all a safe and happy holiday season!

Courtesy of the Corsaro Insurance Group and Central Insurance Companies.

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



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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

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a plastic bin, tote or laundry basket, and 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
440-899-1100

Hours: Mon.–Sat. 10–6 p.m.,
closed on Sunday
www.ouonachild.com

Live theatre and music are back this holiday season at FAA

Last holiday season was unusual to say the least for live community theatre. This year, performances are back in the spotlight at The Fine Arts Association! There is something for everyone to enjoy going into the new year from holiday productions to new recitals and comedy shows.

Performances and recitals from December through February:

Holiday Production:
Miracle on 34th Street the Musical
December 10, & 17 @ 7:30 p.m.
December 4, 5, 11, 12, 18, & 19*
@ 2:00 p.m.
*sign interpreted performance

Creative Arts Therapies Share Day
*sign interpreted performance on
December 8, 2021

Holiday Concert: A Tribute to the music of Vince Guaraldi
December 11, 2021

Adult Comedy: Chili Con Comedy
February 5, 2022

Yarnell Youth Production: The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe
February 11, 18, & 25, 2022
@ 7:30 p.m.

February 12, 13, 19, 20, 26, & 27*,
2022 @ 2:00 p.m.
*sign interpreted performance

Artist in Residence Series:
Third Stream Duo
February 23–24, 2022

Faculty Recital Series:
Dr. Matthew Saunders, trombone
January 12, 2022

Faculty Recital Series:
FAA Faculty Jazz Combo
February 19, 2022

The Fine Arts Association spring 2022 semester begins January 24. Public registration will open in December for all classes, private music lessons, and workshops.

The Fine Arts Association is located at 38660 Mentor Avenue in Willoughby. To learn more, visit www.fineartsassociation.org or call 440-951-7500.



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Rabbit Run Community Arts Association

Registration for winter classes is now open at Rabbit Run Community Arts Association in Madison. RRCAA is a comprehensive fine arts association offering private and group instruction in all the major disciplines of the fine and performing arts.

Dance classes are available for young children in creative movement, pre-ballet and pre-tap. School-aged youth, whether just starting in dance or with some dance experience, may register for classes in ballet, jazz/tap or Hip Hop.

Also available are Modern Dance,

Zumba® and Lyrical Dance. For adults looking to get back into shape Adult Ballet Fitness or Beginning Tap may be just the thing. Ballroom Basics is offered for all ages on Saturdays.

We also offer private music lessons for most musical instruments as well as visual art classes for all ages.

For specific class information visit www.rabbitrn.org or call RRCAA at 440-428-5913. RRCAA is a non-profit organization that receives partial funding from the Ohio Arts Council and is located at 49 Park St. in Madison.

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Read official rules and sign up by Dec. 31 at bit.ly/gpdwhatsnew
www.geaugaparkdistrict.org



Great Lakes Mall holiday activities

Photos with Santa – Through Christmas Eve. Guests can save time this holiday season and reserve their photo time slot in advance. Walk-ins are also welcome.

Sensitive Santa® – Sunday, Dec. 12 from 9–10 a.m. For children on the autism spectrum and those with related sensory sensitivities, and will include crafts, refreshments, free books and a free ride on the All Smiles Aboard trackless train. Space is limited. Registration is required.

Paws & Claus – Mondays, Dec. 13 & 20 from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Dog owners are invited to mix and mingle as they get their favorite pet's photos taken with Santa. Pets will enjoy a special treat after their visit.

Holiday Entertainment – While you are shopping at GLM this holiday season, enjoy the sights and sounds of local performers.

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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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18 months - PreK Open House

Saturday, January 8, 2022
9:00 - 11:00 am

Visit LaurelSchool.org/OpenHouse
or call 216.464.0946

LAUREL



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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- Archive of all our articles
- Calendar of events
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- Family-related news
- PDF copies of previous issues
- Preschool Guide
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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!](http://www.TodaysFamilyMagazine.com)

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.



Lake County's Emergency Rental Assistance Program

FOR HOUSEHOLDS AFFECTED BY COVID-19



Funded by:



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Eligibility Criteria:

1

Directly or indirectly due to COVID 19, at least 1 adult in the household qualifies for unemployment or has reduced income, significant costs or financial hardships;

2

Demonstrates a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability; AND

3

Has a household income at or below 80% area median income.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 2-1-1
OR VISIT WWW.FHRC.ORG

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.

ENRICHING LIVES THROUGH THE ARTS
FAIRMOUNT CENTER
for the Arts



Tis the season to **donate**

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.

'tis the season to



GoodwillGoodSkills.org     

Goodwill

CHARDON | EASTLAKE | PAINESVILLE | MAYFIELD HEIGHTS | UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS

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.



A gift card to Lost Nation Sports Park in Willoughby is a gift that could open a whole new world to your child. See page 2 for info!

Travel

Consider combining your holiday and vacation budget to take a family trip. Whether it’s an overnight trip 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, rock climbing, indoor skydiving, or a day at a gym with an obstacle course or trampolines.



From Dan & Kim Miller
Owners, Today’s Family
Magazine

THIS HOLIDAY SEASON SHOP IN MENTOR

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A new home for the holidays

If adopting a pet is on your list this year, 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

Give yourself permission to ask for help.

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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.

LAKE COUNTY

Lake Humane Society
www.lakehumane.org

GEAUGA COUNTY

Rescue Village
www.rescuevillage.org

CUYAHOGA COUNTY

Cuyahoga County Animal Shelter
www.cuyahogadogs.com



Holiday Events For All Ages!



Home for the Holidays Group Day

December 2

Bring your group to the most spectacular display of holiday trees and decorations in Lake County. Enjoy the sound of our "Magical Musical Machines." Find one-of-a-kind gifts and stocking stuffers from vendors & shop our Mistletoe Market. Have an early lunch in the Candy Cane Café. Call for times. **Groups of 7 or more - \$18 per person**

Home for the Holidays

December 2-22

If you haven't decorated and love Christmas trees, you will be enamored with our displays. Enjoy the magical wonders of the holidays with a tour of the beautifully decorated Lake County History Center. **\$7 per person**

Breakfast or Lunch with Santa

December 5, 11, 12, 18, 19

Have breakfast or lunch in your PJs with Santa in Heritage Hall. Visit the land of misfit toys in our event barn and make an ornament to take home!!!

Breakfast 9 a.m. & 11 a.m.

Scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, breakfast potatoes & fresh fruit.

Lunch 1 p.m. & 3 p.m.

Lemon chicken, redskin potatoes, mac & cheese, chicken fingers, pizza & green salad.

\$16 adults • \$13 for 4-12 yrs • \$4 for 3 & under

Limited seating! Book early & bring your camera!!!

Holiday Tea

December 11

Take time from your hectic holiday schedule to relax, enjoy friends and family and a delightful treat of tea and sandwiches, fruit and delicious sweets.

Special Presentation: "Twelve Days of Christmas"

\$18 member • \$20 nonmember • \$12.50 for 4-12yrs

New Years at Noon

December 31

Elvis will be in the building! Come and bring in the new year at noon with heavy appetizers and entertainment with one of Ohio's leading Elvis impersonators.

Menu: Trio of canapes, bacon-wrapped chestnuts, Asian chicken skewers, artichoke & spinach bruschetta, bourbon meatballs & pizza. **\$35 member • \$40 nonmember**

Registration is now open.

Call 440-639-2945 or sign up on Eventbrite.com.

Due to COVID-19 and social distancing guidelines, all programs and special events are subject to change or cancellation.

Lake County History Center

415 Riverside Drive, Painesville Township



(440) 639-2945
www.LakeHistory.org



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(See ad on page 12 for more information!)

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All our service professionals are background checked and randomly drug tested. They also go through regular, rigorous training and all our repairs are done to the state of Ohio code. We always quote our repairs up front before we begin any work. It is very important to us that our customers know exactly what we will be doing and exactly what it will cost before we begin any work.

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Visit www.BenjaminFranklinPlumbingNEOhio.com or www.Debordinc.com for additional information and special offers!

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.

Great events at the library!

Toddler Time

Mondays, Dec. 6 & 13 • 10:30 a.m.
Morley Library
184 Phelps Street, Painesville
440-352-3383
www.morleylibrary.org.

Calling all toddlers and their grown-ups: join us in the story room on the 2nd floor for stories, dancing, bubbles, and more! This interactive storytime builds readers through talking, singing, reading and playing. Stories and activities are prepared for children ages 18 months - 3 years old, but all children are welcome. *Masks are required for everyone two years of age and older.*

Green Screen Holiday Photos

Tue., December 7 • 3:30–7 p.m.
Mentor Public Library
The HUB at Mentor High School
477 Center Street, Mentor
440-205-6011

Make a fun, festive, and totally unique holiday photo using The HUB's green screen. All ages welcome. No registration required.

Family Holiday Cookie Decorating

Sat., December 11 • 10 a.m.–noon
Morley Library
184 Phelps Street, Painesville
440-352-3383
www.morleylibrary.org

Families are invited to join us to decorate prebaked cookies, then enjoy them here or take them

home for a special treat. Cookies and decorating supplies will be provided. Registration required.

Magic Nate Magic Show

Saturday, December 11 • 11 a.m.
Wickliffe Public Library
1713 Lincoln Road
440-944-6010
www.wickliffepl.org

Attention all magic lovers Kindergarten–5th grade! Magic Nate will be performing his famous “Case Show.” This show features tricks that Nate has mastered and he is sure to amaze. Registration required.

Paws 2 Read

Thursday, Dec. 16 • 4–6:30pm
Morley Library
184 Phelps Street, Painesville
Come hang out in the library with a therapy dog as your reading buddy! Registration and masks required for this event. Program suggested for grades K-4th grade. Please call 440-352-3383 to reserve your 15-minute reading slot.

Gingerbread House Decorating

Tue., December 21 • 6:30–8 p.m.
Willowick Public Library
263 E. 305th Street
440-943-4151
www.we247.org

Design and construct your own gingerbread house for the holidays. Grades 6–12. Registration required.

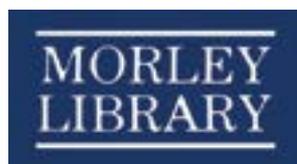
Mentor tree lighting ceremony

This annual ceremony will take place on Tuesday, December 7 from 6:00–7:30 p.m. at the Mentor Municipal Center Complex.

Santa will arrive in his horse-drawn carriage and will be available for photos while choirs from Mentor schools present holiday favorites.



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www.morleylibrary.org

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- Ergonomically designed to fit most ears — the smallest and lightest true wireless earphones.
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- Engineered with a patented automatic placement recognition, so there is no need to look for right or left earbud. Just play.
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- Simple button control. Just insert any K-Cup® pod or ground coffee and use the button controls to brew a delicious cup and carafe.

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Silky-smooth boat shoe made with responsibly sourced eucalyptus tree fiber fits naturally into any situation.

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- Visit allbirds.com to see their entire collection of clothes and shoes for men and women.

Sandra Boynton Puzzles



Puzzle Complaints 500-Piece Puzzle, filled with the signature humor of Sandra Boynton, is a puzzle like no other. Containing all the typical (and not so typical) puzzle flaws: upside down lettering, suddenly changing fonts, a seemingly misplaced piece from another puzzle, inexplicably shouting chickens—the works—Puzzle Complaints is sure to inspire frustration and bursts of laughter!

Available on Amazon.com.

Amazing Lifelike LOL Cat Plush Toy



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www.cutesycup.com



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TOY & GIFT Ideas

Wooden Solar System Large Round Space Planets Jigsaw Puzzle by iPlay iLearn

Ages 36 months–12 years

This floor puzzle is made of natural wood, each piece is chunky and solid, durable enough for your toddlers to use over and over again.



Geomag Mechanics Gravity Loops & Turns

Ages 8+



Detailed instructions make it easy to connect all the pieces and build the winding, looping ball-bearing track.

Then, ready to race?

Send one of the ball bearings rolling down the slope. As soon as it turns through the curves - SNAP - it collides with the first magnetic cannon and another bearing is sent racing through a loop-de-loop.

VTech

KidiGo Basketball Hoop

Ages 5–13 years



An interactive scoreboard keeps score and cheers you on, celebrating each basket with lights and sounds. Five game modes offer options to play solo or with up

to five players with four built-in games. Play solo in Color Challenge, timing your shot with the colored scoreboard lights, or make the game-winning basket before time runs out in Time Challenge. Now it's team time! Gather up to four other players or play solo in Score Challenge, sinking as many shots as you can in one minute. When play is done, flip up the hoop for easy storage. Backboard attaches over most doors with included padded door hooks, or can be mounted with the backboard holes.

POCKIMALS

These mini stuffies are designed to fit perfectly in the hands that play with them. Pockimals button securely into the custom designed pockets in T-shirts and backpacks.

Pockimal Zoo Bundle (other options available)

Can't pick just one Pockimal? Pick a Pockimals bundle pack!

Our Zoo bundle includes Elephant, Lion and Payton Bear, these small stuffed animals nestle into any of our super soft clothing and accessories and button in for safe keeping.



3 Pocket Backpack

(Pockimals not included)

This junior size backpack displays 3 Pockimals and carries as many Pockimals as your little one can stuff into it.



www.pockimals.com

CEACO PUZZLES

Thomas Kinkade Disney Mickey and Minnie Paris 750-piece puzzle

Thomas Kinkade Disney Collection is a group of paintings inspired by great moments from famous Walt Disney movies. This 750-piece puzzle features Minnie Mouse and Mickey Mouse in Paris, walking under an umbrella with the Eiffel Tower in the distance.



Selfies – Dog Delight 550-piece puzzle

Howard Robinson's "Selfies" puzzles depict a variety of animals taking pictures of themselves all over the world. This one features a group of adorable dogs.



Disney – Pixar 3 (5 in 1 multipack)



What is better than one Disney puzzle? Five Disney Pixar puzzles in one box! This box contains two 300-piece puzzles, two 500-piece puzzles and one 750-piece puzzle featuring images from the movies Onward, Coco, Toy Story 4 and more! www.ceaco.com

Multiplication Master Electronic Flash Card from Learning Resources

Ages 7–11



Answer as many problems as you can in 60 seconds! Select a skill level and choose which times tables (0–12) to practice. Read the equations on the screen. Solve them as fast as you can!

Vertical problem format, two skill levels, timed/untimed modes plus fun sound effects. Requires 3 AAA batteries, not included.

The Emoji Game by Ginger Fox

Age 8+



Emotions are sure to run high in this riotous family card game! Be the first to collect a full set of emotions but beware, the devious action cards may hamper your progress in this hilarious family card game!

Contents: One deck of action cards (including four rules cards) and one deck of emoji cards. Available on Amazon.com.

Brushalot Tooth Fairy Kit



Brushalot is chosen by parents, teachers, and moms as the go-to resource for a little extra help in getting children motivated to brush their teeth, helping them develop healthy dental habits while also upgrading the Tooth Fairy's visit.

When your child loses their tooth, Incisor (the plush toy) keeps their lost-tooth safe. When that magic moment arrives for the Tooth Fairy visit, the nightlight glows Brushalot blue to let the Tooth Fairy know a tooth is ready to be picked up.

Celebri Cats Jigsaw Puzzle by Ginger Fox

Ages 8+



Complete this 1000-piece puzzle to reveal an A-list cast of famous felines, and see how many celebrity cats you can recognize. Featuring Katy Purry, Jude Paw, Uma Furman, David Meowie and many more. Available on Amazon.com.

Leap Frog

100 Words About Places I Go

Ages 18–60 months



Explore words about places kids love with this bilingual learning book! Featuring age-appropriate words, this interactive book teaches about people and objects in 12 unique places in both English and Spanish. The school, the park, the farm, the amusement park and more locations can light up your child's world and spur their imagination. Ten touch-sensitive locations on each page teach about words, colors and counting in the context of 12 unique places. Inspire toddlers and preschoolers who are ready to go places!



*Merry Christmas
& Happy New Year*

from

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