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CALENDAR

Because of potential ongoing citywide cancellations due to COVID-19, we will not be publishing calendar listings this month. Please visit www.austinfamily.com for updated calendar listings.

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FILM REVIEW

By Jack Kyser

A Shaun the Sheep Movie: Farmageddon

Read online at: www.austinfamily.com/films



Tune in:

Catch *Austin Family Magazine* live on "Good Day Austin" every Thursday morning and "Despierta Austin" monthly.



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Nathaniel was a 2020 Cover Kid Winner and he loves the outdoors, swimming, climbing, and hiking. Wardrobe furnished by Dragonsnaps, and world globe by Terra Toys. Cover photographed by Jordan-Ashley Photography.

It's been, well, an unusual few weeks. Fears are running high around concerns about the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19). What's the latest news? How will it affect our daily lives? How do we talk about the pandemic with our children? What about school and work and playtime? So many of the conversations we've all been watching and listening to have included more questions than answers.

My middle schooler is worried... and curious. And because April 22 is the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, we bring our conversations back to how powerful— and sometimes unpredictable— nature can be. What we do know is that we are all in this together. No matter where we hail from in this vast world, what affects some of us will eventually affect us all. And how we treat each other— whether we're being vigilant about washing our hands or reducing our plastic consumption— makes a difference in the lives of our loved ones, neighbors, and people we've never met. We talk about making good choices for ourselves and for the planet.



EDITOR'S NOTE

JENNIFER HILL ROBENALT

Robenalt is an editor, content creator, creative writer, and mother

For this "nature" issue, I interviewed Janis Bookout, executive director of Earth Day ATX. She had spearheaded plans for a glorious public event filled with interactive experiences designed to educate families about the environment and sustainability. However, like all major events in Austin, they had to cancel this year's festivities. Earth Day's message is more pertinent than ever— in times of uncertainty, let's make good choices that sustain our world. Let's take care of each other.

Jennifer

PUBLISHER

Kaye Kemper Lowak

EDITOR

Jennifer Hill Robenalt: editor2003@austinfamily.com

COPY EDITOR

Barb Matijevich

ADVISING EDITORS

Dr. Betty Kehl Richardson, Barb Matijevich

CALENDAR EDITOR

Betty Kemper: calendar2003@austinfamily.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Cate Berry, Kimberly Blaker, Alison Bogle, Jack Kyser, Janeen Lewis, Dr. Betty Richardson, Jennifer Hill Robenalt, Brenda Schoolfield

TRANSLATION

Maribel Ruvalcaba

MEDIA RELATIONS

Alison Bogle

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Layout: Susie Forbes Ads: Kim Crisler
Illustrator: Fritz Robenalt

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Jordan Ashley Photography

ADVERTISING SALES

Kaye Kemper Lowak: kaye2003@austinfamily.com

BUSINESS AND DISTRIBUTION

Greg Lowak: greg@austinfamily.com

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product recalls

Companies Recall Pajamas, Toy Shopping Carts, Nightgowns



Joules USA Inc. has recalled about 12,000 children's pajamas and robes. The children's garments fail to meet the federal flammability standard for children's sleepwear, posing a risk of burn injuries to children. This recall involves Joules girls' and boys' pajamas and robes sold in multiple prints and sizes. Joules is printed on the sewn-in neck label. Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled garments, take them away from children, and contact

Joules USA for a full refund. No injuries have been reported. The recalled items were sold at children's boutiques nationwide and online at www.joulesusa.com from Nov. 2017 through Dec. 2019 for \$20-70. For more information, call Joules USA at 800-583-9559 from 3 a.m. to 1 p.m. ET Monday through Friday, email at product.recall@joules.com with "Recall" as the email subject, or go online at www.joulesusa.com and click on the "Recall" tab at the top of the page.



The Step2 Company has recalled about 17,000 Little Helper's children's grocery shopping carts. The shopping cart's basket can break into sharp pieces, posing a laceration hazard. This recall involves the following model numbers and color combinations: 700000 (blue basket with tan cart), 708500 (pink basket with white cart), and 8567KL (pink basket with gray cart). Consumers should immediately take away the recalled

shopping carts from children and contact Step2 for a free replacement shopping cart or a refund in the form of a \$40 credit towards the purchase price of another Step2 product on www.Step2.com. Step2 has received 22 reports of cart baskets breaking. No injuries have been reported. The carts were sold at BJ Wholesale Club, Kohl's, and other stores nationwide and online at Step2.com from May 2019 through October 2019 for about \$40. For more information, contact Step2 at 800-347-8372 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET Monday through Friday or go online at www.step2.com and click on "Services & Recall" and then on "Product Recalls" at the top of the page.



Ishtex Textile Products is recalling about 450 Just Blanks-branded children's nightgowns. The nightgowns fail to meet the federal flammability standard for children's sleepwear, posing a risk of burn injuries to children. They were sold in sizes 12 months through size 12 and in two prints: birthday and elephant. Consumers should immediately take the recalled nightgowns away from children and contact

Ishtex Textile Products for a full refund. No injuries have been reported. The items were sold at children's boutiques nationwide from August 2019 through December 2019 for about \$30. For more information, contact Ishtex Textile Products at 800-935-0914 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET Monday through Friday, email at salesishtex@gmail.com with "Product Recall" as the email subject, or go online at www.ishtex.com and click on the "Product Recall Notice" link at the bottom of the page.

The US Consumer Products Safety Commission works to protect the public from unreasonable risks of serious injury or death from more than 15,000 types of consumer products.

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AROUND

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AISD Crisis Support Fund

Austin ISD is adapting quickly to serve students and families as guidance on curbing the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) is updated daily. AISD staff continues to serve students and the community by making plans for meal provision, remote learning, and attending to the health and social and emotional needs of students, faculty, and staff. The Austin Ed Fund announced the AISD Crisis Support Fund – an effort to support school communities by supplementing access to food services, health programs, and remote learning. They will be closely monitoring the greatest need during this ever-changing situation and responding to new needs.

Nearly 67% or about 54,000 AISD students qualify for meal benefits and many rely on school meals during the school day. With support, AISD can leverage the existing student meal delivery system and expand to serve an estimated 4,800 meals to parents per day. The district receives funding from the USDA to support free and reduced price meals for students. With this resource, AISD will offer curbside meals at 16 school sites and delivery routes in 67 attendance zones throughout the city. Expanding AISD's delivery system is an efficient way to reach families, many of whom may be more vulnerable to the economic impacts of our community's response to COVID-19.

Contributions to the AISD Crisis Support Fund expand the reach of student meal service to parents and caregivers during the week, and also adds Weekend Packs so families can have food security over the weekends. Dollars will go directly to food and supplies and additional staffing and other needs. Curbside meals will allow families to take meals away from the meal sites to be consumed elsewhere, thus allowing for social distancing. AISD will not be taking donations on-site due to health concerns.

Donate online or mail your check payable to: Austin Ed Fund, c/o Austin Community Foundation (AISD Crisis Support Fund), 4315 Guadalupe Street, Suite 300, Austin, TX 78751. Donate online at Austinedfund.kimbia.com/crisissupport.

Must-Do This

April

- Spend Time in Nature
- Check in with Elderly Neighbors and Loved Ones Often
- Keep Calm and Wash Your Hands

STEM Competition

The 2020 Capital Area (Austin) Divisional STEM Competition was hosted at The University of Texas at Austin, Engineering Education & Research Center and brought together more than 209 student competitors from across the region for the free event.

Texas students from grades 6 through 12 competed in individual math and science tests and as part of a team to solve an Engineering Design Challenge.

The Texas Alliance for Minorities in Engineering (TAME) is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to inspiring and preparing Texas students to join a strong and diverse STEM workforce. TAME programs encourage students to build skills and explore STEM concepts through hands-on activities, TAME Clubs, and statewide and divisional STEM Competitions.

The top six finishers in each test and the top three teams from the Engineering Design Challenge were recognized. Three teams also received a special Judges' Choice Award for creative problem solving. One student from each grade level was recognized as the Ace Award Winner for the highest combined math and science score.

For a complete list of winners, visit Tame.org/capital-area-austin.



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Boys & Girls Clubs

To continue providing support for Austin-area kids, Boys & Girls Clubs of the Austin Area (BGCAA) will be distributing weekly “Club on the Go” kits to current members and their families while AISD and BGCAA’s 32 locations are shuttered for coronavirus-related social distancing. Kit distribution includes curbside pickup at eight locations throughout Austin – specifically locations where AISD school sites are not already providing resource-related assistance.

BGCAA anticipates distributing 3,000 kits each week during this season of closures given that the nonprofit’s registered annual membership tops 8,200 kids and its 32 locations typically serve up to 3,000 kids each weekday across Greater Austin.

Weekly “Club on the Go” kit will include snacks, themed DIY activities, guidelines and tips for parents, resource lists, and more.

Members with questions are encouraged to call 512.444.7199 or visit www.bgcaustin.org for more information.

Energy Leadership

Austin ISD has launched an Energy Leadership Program across the district, which could reduce energy and water utility costs 15 percent. Sustainability efforts to reduce energy and water consumption and costs are focused on eliminating waste by ensuring equipment is only operated when needed, utilizing energy and water efficiently by improving equipment and systems, and promoting the use of renewable energy and water resources while ensuring a comfortable and safe learning environment.

Working collaboratively with contractor Performance Services, Austin ISD facilities team members have established energy conservation guidelines to plan, monitor and improve the district’s energy and water performance. The Performance Services’ awarded contract also includes an energy savings improvement project at 10 district buildings. Improvements are focused on integrating responsible energy management and water conservation into both equipment and building controls.



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COVID-19

Information regarding the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) is quickly changing. The City of Austin has restricted public events and facilities. Austinites can keep updated about community best practices by visiting local government and school district websites which provide information on events and classes that may need to



be rescheduled or canceled. Camps listed in this issue of *Austin Family Magazine* may change, so check individual websites before making plans. In order to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, including flu and COVID-19, follow these measures:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or use a tissue to cover it, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Observe "social distancing" until further recommendations are available.

For more information, visit sites including Austintexas.gov and CDC.gov.

by the numbers



1 in 3
Households that grow their own food

Source: *Garden.org*



82%
U.S. parents who think spending time in nature is "very important"

Source: *Nature.org*



500-600 years
Estimated age of Austin's beloved Treaty Oak tree

Source: *Storyoftexas.org*



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Don't Mess with Texas

Texas students enrolled in kindergarten through twelfth grade are invited to participate in the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and Keep Texas Beautiful (KTB) Don't mess with Texas K-12 Art contest to create artwork for the 2021 Don't mess with Texas calendar. Each entry will promote the Don't mess with Texas and/or Keep Texas Beautiful litter prevention initiatives in order to encourage the protection of Texas roadways and environment. The purpose of the Contest is to inspire future leaders to refrain from littering, advocate for litter prevention, and keep Texas beautiful.

Students who create the top 14 designs will have their artwork assigned to a month or featured on the cover or back cover of the 2021 Don't mess with Texas calendar. All featured winners will have their winning artwork returned and framed and will also win a Samsung Galaxy Tab A 10.1 tablet. Winners will also receive a gift basket with Buc-ee's merchandise. Teachers representing students who produce the top 14 designs will win a \$100 H-E-B/Central Market gift card, donated by H-E-B and Central Market. All entries must be submitted or postmarked by April 24, 2020. Winners will be announced in May 2020 and prizes will be distributed by May 29, 2020. For more information, visit Dontmesswithtexas.org.



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BY JENNIFER HILL ROBENALT

For the Love of Live Oaks

Austin is, by far, one of the greenest cities in Texas. And we have the trees to prove it! In every part of the city, families can find any number of ancient live oak trees to visit and admire. We visited three of our favorite ones which have become great friends to our family over the years.

Treaty Oak

Estimated between 500-600 years old, the Treaty Oak is one of Austin's oldest and most famous trees located in Treaty Oak Park. Back in 1989, the Treaty Oak was poisoned by a disgruntled feed store employee and the historic tree nearly perished. But, thankfully, it survived and continues to thrive. The smaller tree under the canopy was planted from an acorn of the Treaty Oak itself as a "nurse tree." Since live oak roots graft, the thought process was that it would help provide nutrients and support the growth of the larger tree after it was attacked. The Treaty Oak is the last remaining tree of a sacred live oak grove American Indians in the area called the Council Oaks. Why? The Tonkawa and Comanche signed a boundary treaty with Stephen F. Austin and his settlers in the grove. Today, the Treaty Oak is currently surrounded by a protective fence, but there are benches and a picnic table available for visitors interested in admiring its glorious canopy. According to Austin Parks and Wildlife, there are no current plans to remove the fencing, but you can still enjoy the sheer majesty of the Treaty Oak. Street parking is available on Baylor St. between 5th and 6th Streets.



Yum Yum Tree

This tree is fun. So fun. Located near the playground of Central Market on N. Lamar Blvd., it is an expansive marvel of tree perfection. Kids love to play under its comforting leaves, climb its generous branches, and be one with this truly kid-friendly natural wonder. After we grabbed our own "yum yums" at Central Market, we headed out to the tree where we met three energetic young ladies who had a lot to say about their love of the Yum Yum Tree. According to Maia, age 7, "It's super fun!" Emma, also age 7, expanded on that sentiment and stated, "It's special because there are lots of ways kids can climb on it and play." And Merrill, age 11, said, "It's giant! I love it because there are lots of things to do and I can climb everywhere."



Butler Tree

It's a shame that this magnificent tree doesn't yet have an official name. And no one knows for sure how old it is. But, according to Joshua Erickson, Urban Forestry Program Manager with Austin Parks and Recreation, "Without photos with associated dates, there is no way to know (the age). Live oaks are 'diffuse porous' meaning they do not have rings that can be counted like many other trees. I would estimate (it is) between 50 and 75 years old." The Butler Tree, which is what I'm calling it now, stands out because of its incredible canopy that creates a pristine dome-like cavern perfect for a shaded picnic, meditation, playing music, or simply serving as an escape from a scorching sun or sudden downpour. The area underneath its nurturing branches is large enough for several people to freely walk around and enjoy the space. I love this tree because of its proximity to the Liz Carpenter Fountain and Doug Sahm Hill. The tree rests nicely on the edge of the wide-open field in the Michael Butler Park at Town Lake Metro Park next to the Palmer Events Center. Some of the area of the park is currently under construction, but visitors can still trek up the hill and feed the turtles and ducks. Remember-- bread and crackers are bad for water critters. We recommend veggies and seeds. Afterwards, take a picnic and sit under the Butler Tree. Or whatever you'd like to call it. Parking is available next to the Alliance Children's Garden by the Dougherty Arts Center located at 1000 Barton Springs Rd.

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BY JENNIFER HILL ROBENALT

I Made a Promise Earth Day Austin's Janis Bookout on Parenting for a Sustainable Future

By the time Janis Bookout began working on environmental issues in 2013, she had successful careers as a business consultant, elementary teacher, and professional writer. She had also trained for many years in transformational work. Now, as executive director of Earth Day Austin, she brings together her wealth of experience to promote ideas for a sustainable future. And, she made an important promise to her kids.

AF: What did you talk to your kids about?

JB: I really started dealing with the realities of climate change in particular when I became a mother. I have two boys who are amazing people. As a mother, I was going to commit to protect them and create a future that works for them. In the face of climate change, I could choose to be completely disempowered about what was happening in the world or I could stake my claim in it. And so, when they were old enough, I sat my boys down and promised them I would help to end to the climate crisis before it's too late.

AF: That sounds like a major promise.

JB: It sounds kind of crazy and way beyond my personal capacity. And it's not something I could ever do alone, obviously. But making that promise did put me on the hook for the future I was committed to—not just for my kids, but for everyone's kids. It's such a potentially overwhelming topic to regularly engage in. It can be depressing and even scary at times. It's can feel miniscule in comparison to what's needed. But coming at it from the perspective of the possibility of actually ending it sort of empowers you to resolve it. It's why I do everything I do now.

AF: How did your boys react to this bold commitment?

JB: I was surprised about how much they both knew and how little they had shared with me about their concerns. Originally, my concern in making that promise was that I would be adding something to their plates that they couldn't handle. The truth was, it opened up a conversation that made them feel less alone. Climate change was something they were already concerned about. That kind of shocked me. And that's been my consistent experience with children over the age of nine. They're very aware—much more aware than adults realize. And they're alone in dealing with it because it's hard to talk about.

AF: Are there other ways you learn about the environment with your family?

JB: Yes. We've had a lot of fun experiences based on our family interest in the environment. One day, I scraped a peanut butter jar and got an entire serving out of it. I was teaching them about food waste, and it became a game. I even felt connected to my grandmother because she used to do that all the time. And we recycle, of course. There was a day that, as a family, we celebrated having only one

bag of trash for an entire two weeks! So, as a family, we make it fun to see how little trash we can produce or how much food we can save. We're about to start a garden to see how much of our vegetable intake we can offset by growing our own food—and that's going to help our budget. And my kids know how to garden better than I do, so they're going to teach me a lot. All of these experiences are opportunities to discover values as a family, and it's fun. And it doesn't require coming from any particular viewpoint or belief. As a family, you can decide how to explore ways to take care of our environment.

AF: The 50th Anniversary of Earth Day is this month, but Earth Day Austin had to be postponed due to concerns about the coronavirus (COVID-19). Can you talk a little bit about it, and if there are any future plans?

JB: Earth Day Austin is really about raising the conversation regarding what we are doing to the environment and what we can do to create a path forward that includes everyone. Our mission is reinventing sustainability as an unprecedented cultural phenomenon with equity at the center. We provide a venue that brings thousands of community members together with hundreds of organizations and businesses in the interest of sustainability, innovation, and environmental justice. After reviewing the city's current policy, as well as doing extensive research into what is happening around the world and in communities across the country, the Board of Directors and I were unanimous in our decision to postpone, even though we knew we could technically meet the requirements for events with attendees over 2500. Think about it this way—right now I would not want my own parents to come to the festival. If that is the case, then I should not produce one at all. We're working on what we can provide to the community on April

22 and on a possible date for a reschedule, and we'll be updating the website as we move forward.

AF: In terms of promoting sustainability, what does that mean to you?

JB: It's simple. If my personal life is sustainable, but yours isn't, how is that functionally sustainable as a society? Fundamentally we're all connected in the environment that we all share whether we realize it or not. This applies to families, communities, the world. So, if life doesn't work for you, then it doesn't work for me. That's that how I've come to define sustainability. In that sense, sustainability and equity are closely linked. You can't talk about sustainability without including the concept of equity.

AF: How does that work in a family environment?

JB: If we understand where our resources come from as a family, we can all make better decisions. Then we can make better choices that are not just good for our family, but for all of us. The environment is what's around you. It includes your family, your neighbors, everyone. Then we ask ourselves, "Are we leaving the world a better, more functional place for everybody to enjoy?" I think it boils down to what makes life worth living. So, if you have someone in your family who loves plants or birds or the ocean, then other family members can learn and share in that. That creates bonds. It's fundamentally about connecting to life itself and cherishing and honoring the beauty of life together. There's not one right way to explore the environment and sustainability as a family. There are countless right ways to do that.

AF: What do you say to parents who believe they can't really accomplish much, and that the younger generation will assume responsibility for the environmental issues that are facing the planet?

JB: I would say I don't take that approach because I feel like that puts a pretty big burden on our kids. And I think they know that's kind of a cop out. My perspective is that it's my job, and my generation's duty, to do everything we can right now. And if my kids choose to take on that responsibility, then great. I love that because this work has been very satisfying for me. But I don't want the buck to go any further than me. I don't want to keep kicking the can down the line.

AF: Are you hopeful about the future?

JB: There's a different kind of hope that comes from being actively engaged and committed to making a difference. It's an active hope based on a future you're committed to. Kids really need something more than optimism. They need to be empowered. They need to find hope in the face of reality. They need to participate. And that's where I think the real joy is. My kids say so, too.

Editor's Note: Since canceling Earth Day ATX, the organization's leadership has organized the Community Resilience Trust, a coordinated effort with local area leaders and officials. The group plans to coordinate community response efforts to COVID-19. For more information visit, www.coronavirusaustin.org. For updates on Earth Day Austin, visit www.EarthDayAustin.com.



Jonathan, Janis, Evan, and Ryan Bookout



THE Learning curve

ALISON BOGLE

Bogle is an Austin-based freelance writer and mom of three.

How Nature Impacts Childhood Development

The statistics on how much time American children spend outside each day is startling. The National Recreation and Park Association states that the average child spends only four to seven minutes engaged in unstructured play outdoors, while spending an average of seven and a half hours in front of screens. Outdoor recess time helps elementary school-aged children increase those numbers slightly, but not every child has access to recess every day. Also, cold or rainy weather usually leads to “indoor recess,” which typically means watching a movie, further reducing outdoor time totals.

When you take into account the fact that the American Association of Pediatrics recommends at least 60 minutes a day of physical activity, the four to seven-minute statistic becomes further alarming. Today’s children are starved, not only of movement, but of time spent outdoors and of the experience of connecting with nature. This generation of children is spending more time indoors than any other generation.

The U.S. National Wildlife Federation suggests that children should spend at least one hour a day outside. To that aim, it has developed the “Green Hour Program,” designed to encourage parents, schools, camps, grandparents, and others to adopt a goal of an hour per day of time for children to play and learn outdoors in nature.

Why all of the emphasis on getting kids outside? Research has shown a strong health benefit for young people who spend time in nature. Studies have shown that

being in nature can reduce negative emotions like anger, fear, and stress, while increasing positive feelings. Exposure to nature also improves immune function in children, making them less susceptible to illness. Children are also more likely to be active outdoors, thereby improving their physical fitness and coordination. Interestingly, time spent outdoors in childhood also reduces the likelihood of needing glasses for nearsightedness. The current thinking is that the brighter light outside stimulates a release of dopamine from the retina, which slows

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Studies have shown that being in nature can reduce negative emotions like anger, fear, and stress, while increasing positive feelings.

down the growth of the eye, preventing nearsightedness.

Outdoor time also affects children's engagement and attention when learning. Researchers at the University of Illinois determined that just 30 minutes of time in a park-like setting can help children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) to be able to concentrate in the classroom and/or to act more calmly and be more focused at home. Time outdoors also led to an increase in curiosity and problem-solving ability.

It doesn't take much. Being outside confers attention and engagement benefits, even if there is no student interaction or free play allowed. It is the act of being outside that helps students to focus better. Research found that when students received outdoor lessons, they were significantly more engaged in their next indoor class period than if the same class was held indoors. In some cases, teachers only had to redirect off-task behavior half as often!

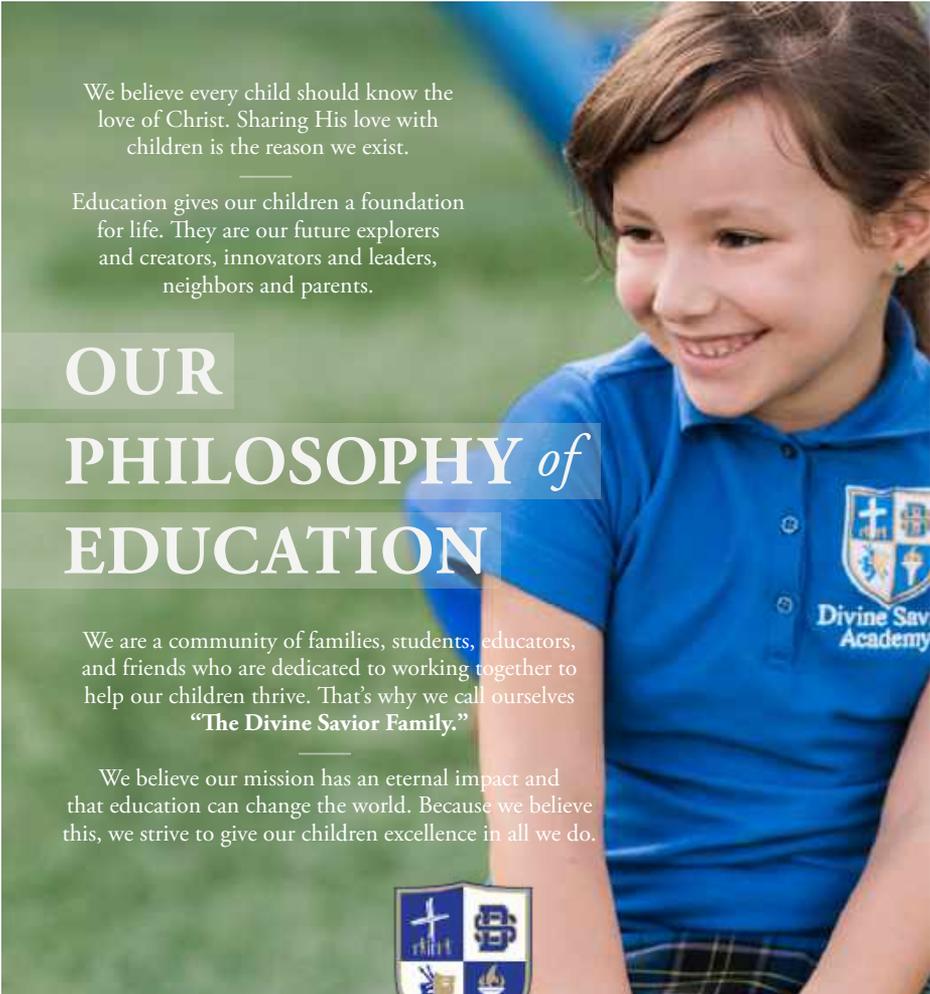
As if you needed any more reason to get your child outside, research also shows that the best way to connect a child to a lifelong interest in nature and wildlife is through time spent outdoors. A Cornell University study found that children who spend a significant amount of time in nature doing activities such as camping or hiking when they are young, are more likely to be conservationists, or at least conservation-minded as adults.

So how can you help your child get more time in nature? Being aware of the benefits to doing so is the best first step. Then, make it manageable for your family. If you can't get outside an hour a day, aim for 30 minutes a day. If that doesn't work with your busy schedule, break your goal time into 10-minute chunks. Encourage your child to play outside, but don't forget to include yourself in the fun – you deserve the benefits, too! Take a family walk after dinner. Read your child's bedtime story out on the porch. Turn

dinner into a picnic on the lawn. Lay a blanket out and count the stars together.

One caveat? Don't approach getting outside as one more thing on the to-do list. Your children will pick up on the fact that spending time outside is viewed as a chore, or one more scheduled activity. In the long run, it might hurt their desire to be outside. Sometimes the easiest way to approach increasing your time in nature is to look at what you already do as a family

to determine if you could be doing some of those activities outside, instead. When you encourage your child to go outside to play and have fun, and he or she also sees you taking time to enjoy nature yourself, the message is clear. Nature is one of our greatest gifts, and time spent outside is a priority we should set for the health and happiness of ourselves and of our children.



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Dig This 10 Big Benefits of Gardening with Kids

BY JANEEN LEWIS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRITZ ROBENALT

Most parents want their children to get outside away from phones, TV, and video games, and gardening is a great way to achieve this goal. However, recent research shows that there are several other benefits to gardening with kids. Here are 10 great reasons to get kids gardening:

1. Students who garden score higher on science tests.

Gardening is full of science. Children learn about plant classification, weather, soil, and plant pests, and disease. They are introduced to botany in a natural, hands-on way. Recent research shows that students who had gardening experiences as part of their school curriculum did better on standardized science tests than students who were not exposed to gardening in school.

2. If they grow it, they will eat it.

As a teacher, I've taught STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and have served as a Junior Master Garden club leader. In these roles I witnessed the "if they grow it, they will eat it" phenomenon. Students love to dig up what they have grown, and then curiosity gets the better of them – they want to taste it.

Master Gardener Beth Tovi volunteered to mentor students in the garden for eight years at the elementary school where she served as a media specialist. She sees the nutritional and health benefits children gain from gardening.

"With the growing concerns about obesity, diabetes, and even high blood pressure in children, gardening gets them physically active and outdoors. And children will eat anything they grow – even if it's green."

3. Digging in the dirt can make kids healthier.

Several studies show that children who were raised on farms don't have as many respiratory allergies, asthma, or autoimmune disorders as children who were raised in urban areas. This is because children who live on farms are

exposed to more microbes and fungi in the dirt. Letting children get outside and get in the dirt may actually make them healthier than keeping them tidy, clean, and inside.

4. Gardening strengthens emotional and interpersonal skills.

Children who garden learn responsibility, patience, perseverance and how to deal with disappointment if the garden doesn't grow the way they expected. How do they collaborate with other siblings, friends, or school mates to get the garden work done? These are character-building skills that research shows children reap in the garden. I witnessed this one year at a school garden when we had a drought. Watering the plants and trying to keep them healthy was an arduous task, and the students and I learned about perseverance and teamwork.

5. Gardening connects children with nature.

When children garden, they gain ownership in what they are cultivating. I have seen my own children grow "attached" to the plants in the containers on our patio garden. As children become more knowledgeable about all the living things in the garden, they are less likely to be afraid of touching the plants, getting soil on their hands, or being near bugs. They are no longer afraid of the unknown when they become familiar with what is in the garden.

6. Gardening helps relieve stress for the whole family.

A garden can be therapeutic. Not that your fourth grader is battling traffic, raising children, and feeling the demands of a pressure-ridden job, but even kids can feel stress. The garden is good for eliminating it. In fact, a study in the Netherlands showed that after 30 minutes of gardening, subjects who had shown stress before they gardened had a "fully restored" positive mood. And if the adults in the family are feeling stressed, and they garden with their children, it can help the whole family feel more harmonious.

7. Gardening teaches kids to problem-solve.

"When they garden, children learn problem-solving skills," Tovi says. "They say 'This trellis doesn't work very well. How can we make one that will better support this kind of plant?'" In a garden, children ask questions like "What is eating this plant?" or "Is this tree dying?" Once children become absorbed in solving the problems in a garden, they want to research to find the best answers." They become sleuths, starting in the garden and heading into the computers," Tovi says.

8. Gardening is a good work out.

Gardening is good physical labor involving muscles that don't always get a workout. Even

the most seasoned gym-goer may admit to being sore the day after working in a garden. Gardening involves stretching, bending, digging, lifting, pulling, and raking. Gross and fine motor skills are used, and even the youngest gardener with simple tasks gets physical activity.

9. Gardening helps children become environmental stewards.

When children start reaping the food and flowers that come from a garden, they realize a garden's impact on them and their impact on the garden. Once they have this tangible experience, it is much easier to teach them to care for the environment.

10. Gardening can lead to a longer life.

Studies show that adults who garden in their later years live longer. Instead of living a sedentary life, gardeners get off the couch and are active in nature. Teaching children good habits when they are young will make them more likely to follow them through life. Sow the seeds of a garden with your child today and see them reap the benefits for a lifetime.

Janeen Lewis is a freelance journalist and mother of two. She loves to teach gardening to children.

Creative Theme Gardens to Grow with Kids



Pizza Garden

Grow all the herbs to add to a pizza. For an extra touch, make the garden round like a pizza.

Fairy Garden

This garden includes both plants and miniature structures and is a great place for your child's imagination to grow.

Pollinator Garden

Build a garden that attracts butterflies, bees, birds, bats, and other insects and animals that will help pollinate plants. Try planting milkweed, zinnias, and snapdragons.

Maze Garden

Create a maze with hedges, grasses, or corn. In the middle of the maze, put something interesting like a sculpture, fountain, or another special garden bed.

Peter Rabbit Garden

Grow the vegetables found in Mr. McGregor's garden. The great thing about this garden is that you can grow some of the vegetables – carrots, lettuce, radishes, and cabbage – in cool weather, so you could continue to garden into fall.

Wildflower Garden

Visit the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center to discover the native wildflower plants in your area. Use what you learn as inspiration for your own garden.

Three Sister's Garden

Teach children about plants that grow well together, like corn, beans, and squash by cultivating the three in one mound.

A photograph of a young girl with brown hair and glasses, smiling. She is wearing a dark blue school uniform with a white collar. The background is blurred, showing other children in a classroom setting.

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Fun Family Hiking Ideas

BY KIMBERLY BLAKER

What better way to spend quality time with your family and get in touch with nature than a fresh, invigorating walk in the woods, along a river, or at the beach? What's more, family hikes make for fun learning opportunities for kids and parents alike. So, try some of these hiking activities with your family.

A stone is a stone is a...mineral?

Go on an excursion to learn about rocks and minerals. Shorelines offer a variety of stones. Before you go, learn which rocks and minerals are abundant in the area, and have each family member choose several to scout for. Take along a small plastic container with dividers, a descriptive rock and mineral guide, and a magnifying glass for viewing the colors, layers, and details. As you identify stones and minerals, discuss their uses and other neat facts.

Sounds of nature

Wander through a forest and listen carefully for a variety of bird and animal sounds. Before you go, visit your library for a DVD or audio CD of birds and wild animal calls. Then download an audio recorder on your phone and carry it on your hike to record some of the sounds you hear. Listen to the recording again at home and play a game of detective to determine the source of the sounds you can't make out. Search the Internet, encyclopedias, and books to discover the makers of the mystery calls.

Photo adventure

Capture nature's splendor. Hiking trails provide plenty of photo opportunities, and kids will love snapping the shots. Discuss in advance what each family member wants to photograph, such as a huge oak

tree, a monarch butterfly, deer tracks, or a close-up of a nibbling squirrel. When you get home, print out the best photos, and create a nature scrapbook with them.

Tree tales

These giants of nature are not only intriguing because of their size but also because of their many variations. Borrow some books on trees from your library that describe the unique features of trees and their history. Use clues such as the shape of the leaves, texture of bark, and size of the trunk to identify the kind of tree.

Which way do we go?

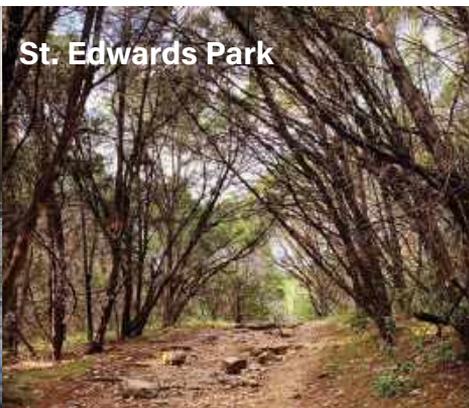
Roam the countryside and teach your children directional skills such as how to read a map and use a compass or the sun to determine direction. Before setting out, choose a trail system that provides maps, or make up your own. Take a trail that branches off several times, allowing for plenty of skill-building opportunities. For even more fun, turn the excursion into a treasure hunt. Hide a small prize just off the trail under a bush or pile of leaves, mark the location on your map, and let the journey begin.

Animals all around

Take a quiet hike in a wooded area with grassy clearings and see how many animals you meet. Watch for snakes, turtles, and geese if there's a nearby lake or stream. Also, look for chipmunks and squirrels playing chase or gathering food; birds of



McKinney Falls



St. Edwards Park

prey circling overhead; or grazing rabbits and deer. Discuss the animal's unique characteristics and how those qualities help or hinder the animal. Talk about what the animals eat, their shelters, and species they are related to. Also, keep your eyes peeled for animal tracks to identify and determine how recently they were made.

Creepy crawly things

Scouting for insects is an all-time favorite among kids, and the variety of creepy-crawly creatures in the woods is remarkable. Carry an insect book, clear container, tweezers, and a magnifying glass for close examination of insects' fascinating features. Bring a journal and track the types of insects you find. Read about insects' defense behaviors and characteristics such as colors that indicate danger to predators.

Plantlife, old and new

Discover with your kids the fantastic diversity of plant life. Before you head out, review some books on plants to spark your children's interest. On each hiking trip, choose a different trail or area and see what plants grow in certain types

of soil, climates, and in each season. As you inspect plants, look for their seeds, and notice the variations. Talk about how seeds travel by blowing in the wind or catching on the fur of animals. Carefully brush away the ground cover and look for seeds that have sprouted their roots that will soon develop into a new plant or tree. Learn how individual plants have evolved to have natural defenses to protect against creatures that would otherwise devour them.

Where to find trails

You might be surprised to discover nearby trails that you never knew existed. Check with city, county, and state parks and for trails along rivers or near lake shores and beaches. There are also national forests and parks throughout the United States with extensive trail systems. If you have access to a wooded area near you that isn't too dense, a trail may not be necessary. When hiking off trails, use safety precautions to protect against tripping, poison ivy, getting lost, or other hazards.

Before you go

Plan your activities before you leave so

you'll arrive prepared. For your comfort and convenience, carry a small daypack, extra clothing for cold air along trails, and don't forget hiking boots. For your protection, bring along hats, sunglasses, sunblock, and insect repellent. Be prepared for emergencies by carrying a small flashlight and batteries, watch, map, bandages, and don't forget plenty of water and snacks. Finally, make the most of your nature quest by carrying binoculars, a magnifying glass, and a small camera.

Trekin' tips for tikes

When hiking with children, keep these suggestions in mind.

- Allow small legs plenty of time for breaks and making the journey and know your child's limitations.
- Be familiar with potential dangers in the area in which you'll explore and teach your children trail and animal safety.
- Before you set out, prepare your kids by informing them that there may be rules against taking their nature finds home.

Kimberly Blaker is a freelance parenting and lifestyle writer.



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LIFELINES

BRENDA SCHOOLFIELD

Schoolfield is a freelance medical writer who splits her time between Austin and Seattle.

Treating Bug Bites and Stings

As the weather becomes warmer, the risk of bug bites and stings increases. Although most bug bites are harmless, some can cause serious illness. The number of people who have contracted diseases from infected mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas has tripled in the past 13 years. Here's what you need to know to be prepared.

Protect Your Child from Biting and Stinging Bugs

You can prevent many bug bites and stings by taking these simple steps:

Dress Your Child to Protect Against Mosquito and Tick Bites. If your child is going to be playing in a wooded area or an area with tall grass and weeds, dress her in long pants and a long-sleeved shirt. Choose shoes with closed toes instead of sandals. Tuck the shirt into the pants and the pants legs into the socks. This will protect most of the child's skin.

Apply insect repellent. When you know your child will be exposed to mosquitos or ticks, apply insect repellent on uncovered

skin. Go to the EPA website for a list of registered insect repellents that contain ingredients proven to be effective. Don't choose a sunscreen and bug spray combination product. To be effective, sunscreen must be applied in a thick layer and reapplied at least every two hours. Many bug sprays work for a much longer time and should be applied sparingly. Some products contain ingredients that shouldn't be used on children younger than 3 years old so check the label.

Wear outdoor clothing that has been treated with permethrin. You can buy clothes for outdoor wear that have been treated with permethrin, an insect repellent. There are also products available for applying it yourself.

Inspect play areas for insects. Check your child's play area for nesting insects and fire ant mounds. Look for stinging insects swarming around a trash can or discarded food. In your yard and home, dump out items that hold standing water, such as trash bins, flowerpots, toys, and pools. This will stop mosquitoes from laying eggs in the water.

Monitor your child's activities outside. Kids love bugs and want to play with them. Monitor your child's activities to make sure she is safe. Don't let her play with spiders, catch bees, or pick up biting and stinging insects.

Keep your pets up to date on their flea and tick preventive medicine. Fleas and ticks transmit disease. Talk to your veterinarian about the most effective prevention treatment for your pet. Give pets their medicine as directed.

Be Prepared with First-Aid Supplies

Some bites and stings itch. Others cause pain, swelling, or a rash. Put together your bug bite first-aid kit ahead of time so that you can treat a bite or sting promptly. Here is what to include:

- **Soap and water.** It is a good idea to the wash injured area with soap and water. This may flush away some of the venom. First, wet the area. Gently rub with soap, then rinse with lots of water.

- **Anti-itch ointment.** The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) advises using an over-the-counter anti-itch product, such as hydrocortisone, if your child wants to scratch the bite.
- **Antihistamine.** You may also give your child an antihistamine to help with itching. Be sure to read the label and choose a product that is indicated for your child's age.
- **Pain killer.** For stings or painful bites, you may use an over-the-counter painkiller, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Follow dosing directions on the label.
- **Ice pack.** Apply an icepack to reduce swelling or help alleviate pain. If you are at home, a bag of frozen peas makes a great ice pack substitute.
- **Tweezers, tape.** If your child is stung, check the area to see if the stinger is still in the skin. You may need to use tweezers to pull it out. Some people apply a piece of tape to the area and then lift it off to remove the stinger. If your child has a tick attached to her skin, use tweezers to remove it. See "How to Remove a Tick" on the ADA.com website.
- **Small plastic bag.** If possible, place the bug in a plastic bag. This will help healthcare providers identify the toxin if your child needs medical help later.
- **Epinephrine autoinjector (EpiPen).** If your child has known allergies to insect bites and stings, she should have an epinephrine autoinjector available for immediate use wherever she goes—this includes at home, school, sports events, afterschool activities, and friends' houses.

Get Medical Help for These Symptoms

The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) recommends immediate emergency care for anyone who has one or more of the following symptoms after a bug bite or sting:

- Trouble breathing
- Swelling in the face, lips, or tongue
- Chest pain or racing heartbeat that lasts for more than a few minutes
- Vomiting
- Dizziness or headache
- A red, donut-shaped rash in the area of a tick bite
- A red or black spotty rash that spreads in addition to a fever

If you have been bitten or stung, see a dermatologist if you develop a rash, headache, fever, or body aches or if you feel tired all the time.



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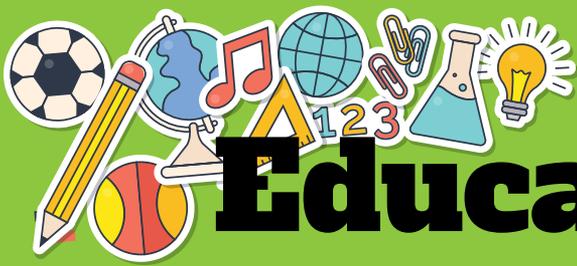


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BRENTWOOD CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

BCS is a passionate leader in fine arts, a fiery competitor in athletics, and a nationally recognized accredited leader in education, but we are so much more. We are a community. North Austin, 512-835-5983 www.brentwoodchristian.org Grades 1-12

CATHEDRAL SCHOOL OF SAINT MARY

Cathedral School of Saint Mary enriches students and their families spiritually, academically, and socially by fostering a diverse community through, with, and in the teachings of Jesus Christ. Downtown Austin, 512-476-1480 www.smcschoolaustin.org Grades Pre-K-3-8

CHALLENGER SCHOOL

By beginning with the end in mind, this school builds from the very earliest 3-year-old preschool class toward the knowledge and skills expected of its eighth-graders. Avery Ranch, 512-341-8000 Grades PreK-8 Pond Springs, 512-258-1299 Grades PreSch-K Round Rock, 512-255-8844 Grades PreSch-K www.challengerschool.com

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HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Holy Family Catholic School is a regional school that works with parents to nurture the growth of the whole child - spiritually, intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. Avery Ranch, 512-246-4455 www.holyfamilycs.org Ages 4-8



KIRBY HALL SCHOOL

At Kirby Hall School, our passion is helping children to discover their intellectual gifts from PreK through 12th grade. What sets us apart is our academic rigor in a loving, nurturing environment made possible by small class sizes. Close proximity to UT affords our students access to campus libraries, events, and college-level coursework. Central Austin, 512-474-1770 www.kirbyhallschool.org Ages 4-12

REDEEMER LUTHERAN SCHOOL

This Christ-centered school develops lifelong learners with leadership in service and care for others. New Kinder Bridge program for 4- and 5-year-olds. North Austin, 512-451-6478 www.redeemersschool.net Ages 15 mos.–Grade 8

SAN JUAN DIEGO CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

San Juan Diego Catholic High School provides highly motivated students the opportunity to earn a Catholic, college preparatory education enriched by participation in a corporate internship program. South Austin, 512-804-1935 www.sjdchs.org Grades 9-12

SANTA CRUZ CATHOLIC

Santa Cruz Catholic School mission is to educate students to be lifelong learners and the next generation of Catholic leaders, following Christ's message of Service, Compassion, Courage, and Spirit. Buda, 512-312-2137 www.sccstx.org Ages 3-8

ST. AUSTIN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

St. Austin Catholic School prepares students to be Christ-centered, academically strong, moral community leaders. Downtown Austin, 512-477-3751 www.staustinschool.org Ages 3-8

ST. DOMINIC SAVIO CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

St. Dominic Savio Catholic High School expresses the Church's educational mission through faith formation, social development and awareness, and a strong academic program. Avery Ranch, 512-388-8846 www.saviochs.org Grades 9-12



ST. GABRIEL'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

St. Gabriel's is a place where effort, problem solving, and service are valued, and students are empowered to make thoughtful decisions and care for others. West Austin, 512-327-7755 www.sgs-austin.org Ages 4-8

ST. HELEN CATHOLIC SCHOOL

We believe that parents and guardians are the primary educators of their children and that it is the responsibility of the Catholic Community of Saint Helen to assist in this endeavor. Georgetown, 512-869-3244 www.shclsions.org Ages 4-8

ST. IGNATIUS MARTYR CATHOLIC SCHOOL

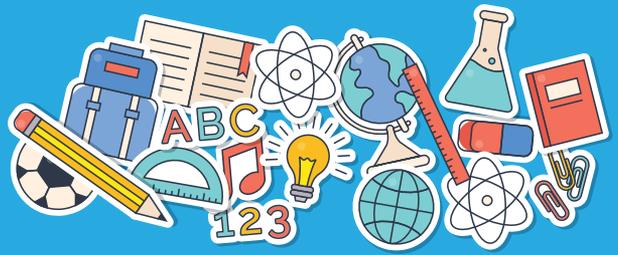
St. Ignatius educates the mind and forms the hearts of children. Catholic school education seeks to guide students to answers in an atmosphere that is wholly unique. South Austin, 512-442-8547 www.school.st-ignatius.org Ages 3-8

ST. LOUIS CATHOLIC SCHOOL

We view education as a unified enterprise, the goal of which is not to communicate knowledge of isolated "subjects," but to train the mind in wisdom. We seek to form students who have the wisdom to be able to see the good, the holiness to love it, and the eloquence and skill to be able to share it with others. North Austin, 512-614-6622 www.slcsaustin.org Grades K-8 + Montessori

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

There are three stages to classical education: grammar, logic, and rhetoric. Each of these stages incorporates our Catholic faith and teaches the students the ultimate truth of the Incarnation and Salvation History. Taylor, 512-352-2313 www.stmarystaylor.org Ages 3-8



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West Austin, 512-328-2323
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Grades 9–12

ST. THERESA'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

St. Theresa's Catholic School's goal is to develop all students to their full potential by educating them in a Catholic and academically excellent environment, preparing them to share God's love through a life of faith and service.

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Ages 4–8

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Sterling Classical School is changing the face of education through our innovative, hands-on curriculum. We follow a classical, Christian, Charlotte Mason, college preparatory model which prepares our students for wherever God leads them. Families appreciate the flexible campus days, allowing for more family time.

12800 Angel Side Dr., Leander
512-259-2722
www.sterlingclassicalschool.com
Grades PreK–12th

- TEA's accountability rating.
- 512-989-2672
- www.chaparralstaracademy.com
- Grades K–12

IDEA PUBLIC SCHOOL

- IDEA offers a structured learning environment, individualized learning in the form of computer-based programs, and a Pre-AP, AP, or IB curriculum. We are on track to send 100% of our seniors to college for the 14th straight year.
- IDEA Bluff Springs, 512-822-4200
- IDEA Health Professions, 512-822-4350
- IDEA Kyle, 512-669-8761
- IDEA Montopolis, 512-646-2800
- IDEA Parmer Park, 512-822-4850
- IDEA Pflugerville, 512-822-4700
- IDEA Round Rock Teck, 512-822-4750
- IDEA Rundberg, 512-822-4800
- www.ideapublicschools.org/austin
- Grades K-12



CHARTER SCHOOLS

BASIS.ED

Basis schools celebrate and pass on a love of learning to all students and value critical thinking, responsibility, and motivation. Coming soon to Austin.
www.basisaustinprimary.org
Grades K-4

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Ours is an open-enrollment public charter school serving approximately 400 students. We offer a rigorous, college preparatory curriculum in a compacted four-hour daily schedule and are proud to be one of the only 25% of Texas public schools to have earned an "A" on

MONTESSORI/ DAY CARE/ AFTER-SCHOOL

COUNTRY HOME LEARNING CENTER

- Students experience a variety of hands-on activities that encourage them to explore, discover solutions, and engage in countless projects that excite young minds.
- North, 512-331-1442
- South, 512-288-8220
- www.countryhomelearningcenter.com
- Ages Infant–Afterschool

EXTEND-A-CARE FOR KIDS

- EAC's after-school program complements the school day by reinforcing curriculum concepts and objectives. Summer programs

- keep children physically active and engaged in learning.
- 77 area campuses
- 512-472-9402
- www.eackids.org
- Ages 3 yr.–Grade 8

GUIDEPOST MONTESSORI

- Guidepost's mission is to implement a platform that enables any school to pursue a path to become a quality Montessori school, with high standards for excellence.
- Cedar Park Cypress Creek 512-250-3000
- www.guidepostmontessori.com/cypress-creek
- Ages 18 mos.–Elementary
- Cedar Park Brushy Creek 512-259-3333
- www.guidepostmontessori.com/brushy-creek
- Ages 18 mos.–K
- **KIDSPA AUSTIN**

- KidSpa offers drop-in childcare that is flexible and on-demand, with enriching learning experiences in a clean, safe, and fun environment.
- South, 512-301-5772
- North, 512-828-5772
- www.kidspaaustin.com
- Ages 18 mos.–12 yr.



LITTLE MUNCHKIN DAYCARE

- A privately-owned, Christian-based learning center maintaining a Four-Star Certification in the Texas Rising Star Program. TRS is an optional and voluntary accreditation program with compliance and assessments of quality monitored through Texas WorkSource-ChildCare Solutions.
- Little Munchkins is an ongoing participant in the Texas School Readiness Certification System which is administered by the Texas

- State Center for Early Childhood Development.
- Northwest Austin, 512-454-1877
- www.littlemuchkin.com
- Ages Infant–After-school

SNAPDRAGON PRESCHOOL

- Opening September 2020
- With a small community of students and a student-to-teacher ratio of 6:1, this school makes sure all its students have a close connection with their teachers.
- Childhood is a gift we only experience once.
- Northwest Austin, 512-346-2992
- South Austin, 512-967-1338
- www.spicewoodcountry.com
- Ages 2-5 yr.–Afterschool

SPICEWOOD COUNTRY SCHOOL

- Established in 1980, this school offers a farm-like atmosphere, with horses on the grounds and room to explore Bull Creek. Summer camp available.
- Northwest Austin, 512-346-2992
- www.spicewoodcountry.com
- Ages 2 yr.–After-school

STEPPING STONE SCHOOLS

- Founded in 1979, Stepping Stone Schools nurtures cognitive, physical, and social-emotional development. After school and summer camp programs for school-age children.
- 17 locations throughout Austin
- 512-459-0258
- www.steppingstoneschool.com
- Ages Infant–After-school

XPLOR PRESCHOOL

- XPLOR's learning curriculum prepares children for kindergarten and beyond by developing important academic, social, and emotional skills.
- Austin, Georgetown, Leander, Round Rock
- 877-322-2891
- www.xplorpreschool.com/austin
- Ages PreK–School Age

YMCA GREATER WILLIAMSON CO. CHILD CARE CENTER

- YMCA's well-balanced system creates values, respect for one another, and responsibility.
- Positive and stimulating activities help grow your child.
- Round Rock, 512-246-9622
- www.ymcagwc.org
- Ages 8 wks.–5 yr.



FAMILY MATTERS

BETTY RICHARDSON

Richardson, PhD, RN, CS, LPC, LMFT, is an Austin-based psychotherapist.

Is Your Family Ready for a Pet?

Q Our children are seven and nine years old. They've been asking us for a dog. How can we tell if our kids are ready to take on the responsibility of caring for a dog on their own?

A Your children are at an age when it's possible for them to help with the care of a pet. Children under six often need more supervision, as well as help with caring for pets. However, children and pets can bond at any age. Some experts advise that kids under six are too young to properly take care of pets. I think even a baby can benefit from having a dog or cat if the parents are willing to role model proper care and teach them how to work with animals. Most experts agree that pets like dogs, cats, birds, and other smaller animals are really the responsibility of the entire family, not just children. As the child gets older, she can take on more responsibility. For example, parents can supervise toddlers and preschoolers in picking up pet toys or helping with feeding.

Having a pet can help children develop empathy, compassion, and practical skills. Sometimes children even experience a reduction in stress. On the other hand, pets can also be expensive, so families should be prepared for a long-term commitment.

Here are some questions to ask to see if your family is ready for a new animal companion:

- **Responsibility:** Is your child willing to do assigned chores at home such as setting

the table or taking out the trash? If a child fusses about doing every chore and postpones doing them, it's an indicator he may not be ready for the large responsibility of caring for an animal. On the other hand, this may be fertile ground for teaching moments, skill development, and setting expectations.

- **Time:** You mentioned that your kids are interested in a dog. Does your family have time to commit to the care of a canine pal? Depending on the breed and age of the dog he may require frequent walks and other types of stimulating activities. Also, if your kids have a full schedule of classes, school, and other extracurricular commitments, you may want to consider what type of dog would best suit a busy family schedule.
- **Trial Run:** How does your child conduct herself around other people's pets? To prepare a child for the responsibility of caring for a pet, you could borrow a friend's dog and help your child learn about caring for animals firsthand. You can post a written schedule for water, feeding, walks, and playtime for your visiting pet. This may be a good template for your family's future companion.
- **Experience:** If you want to take the "trial run" a bit further, consider volunteering with your kids at a local animal shelter or fostering a dog or a cat. This will help all of you learn about animals' needs and help you figure out what kind of pet you want. Also, animal experts are available to help walk you through pet options in order

to make a good match. Remember, just like people, not every animal is the same. They all have unique personalities, abilities, and needs.

Before getting a dog, help your children understand safety issues such as how to approach animals respectfully and calmly. Children need to know not to touch a dog while it is eating or sleeping, as well as asking permission before petting another person's pet.

Finally, when choosing a pet, let your children help decide. Never surprise your kids with a pet on a special occasion. This includes Easter! Please resist the urge to surprise your kids with a bunny. One idea is to surprise the child with some pet food or a pet toy, then include your children in meeting animals before bringing one home. You might want to plan to bring the pet home during the weekend so everyone can help the newest member of the family adjust to a new space and new people.

For more information about family volunteer opportunities and fostering pets visit austintexas.gov/content/austin-animal-center; austinhumanesociety.org; austinpetsalive.org; or pawsshelter.org. You may also research independent pet rescue organizations in your area. Many rescue organizations are dedicated to specific breeds and types of animals. Some organizations include weerescue.org; austinpugrescue.org; goldribbonrescue.org; purrfectpalsrescue.org; and rabbitresource.org.

Happy searching!



SUMMER CAMP GUIDE



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SUMMER CAMPS

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ATX KIDS CLUB

ATX Kids Club is a local non-profit organization with the mission to inspire youth to fearlessly explore and become independent, self-confident individuals through year-round educational and health-minded field trip adventures. Brentwood Park, Mueller Park, Pease Park, Garrison Park 512-234-5437 www.atxkidsclub.org Ages 4-15

AUSTIN ECO BILINGUAL SCHOOL

Through summer camps, children learn to appreciate cultures from around the world, become internationally-minded, develop a sense of responsibility, and cultivate leadership skills. 8707 Mountain Crest Dr., Austin 2700 W. Anderson Ln., Austin 107 Ranch Rd. 620 S., Lakeway 512-299-5731, 512-299-5732,

512-466-2409
www.austinbilingualschool.com
Ages 2-11

AUSTIN FILM FESTIVAL

Austin Film Festival's Summer Film Camp provides campers with the venue, equipment, instruction, and team they need to create their very own short films. We offer weekly sessions in June and July. June 8 - July 31. The First Baptist Church of Austin 901 Trinity St., Austin 512-478-4795 www.austinfilmfestival.com Ages 9-18

AUSTIN GIRLS' CHOIR

Austin Girls' Choir offers two music day camps: June 8-12 for girls age 8-15, beginner to advanced; June 15-19 for advanced singers age 12-18. Camps run 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Lunch included. North Central Austin 512-453-0884 www.girlschoir.com Ages 8-16

AUSTIN NATURE AND SCIENCE CENTER

Nature enthusiasts can join the Austin Nature & Science Center to explore the natural world! Learn new skills in these hands-on camps. Zilker Park 512-974-3888

www.austintexas.gov/ansc
Ages 4-17

AUSTIN YACHT CLUB SUMMER CAMPS

Junior Sailing Camp Kids learn to sail small sailboats and develop sailing skills while exploring beautiful Lake Travis. Other activities include swimming in our pool and crafts. Ages 8-16 PB&J Summer Sailing Series Introduction for kids, designed to get comfortable on water and spark a lifelong interest in sailing. Ages 4-8 5906 Beacon Dr., Austin www.austinyachtclub.net/junior-sailing-camp-pbj-information-page/ 512-266-1336 Ages 4-16

BADGERDOG CREATIVE WRITING CAMP

Badgerdog Creative Writing Camps offer an immersive writing experience for youth. Badgerdog summer camp workshops are led by professional writers and explore the arts of poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. The Meridian School (Round Rock) Austin International School (Northwest Austin) Griffin School (Hyde Park) St. Andrew's Episcopal School (West Austin) Trinity Episcopal School (Westlake)



ASUNTOS FAMILIARES

BETTY RICHARDSON

Richardson, PhD, RN, CS, LPC, LMFT, es una psicoterapeuta situada en Austin.

¿Está su familia lista para una mascota?

P Nuestros hijos tienen siete y nueve años de edad. Nos han estado pidiendo un perro. ¿Cómo podemos saber si nuestros hijos están listos para asumir la responsabilidad de cuidar a un perro por su cuenta?

R Sus hijos están en una edad en la que es posible que ayuden con el cuidado de una mascota. Los niños menores de seis años a menudo necesitan más supervisión, así como ayuda con el cuidado de las mascotas. Sin embargo, los niños y las mascotas pueden establecer lazos en cualquier edad. Algunos expertos opinan que los niños menores de seis años son demasiado pequeños para cuidar debidamente a las mascotas. Creo que incluso un bebé puede beneficiarse de tener un perro o un gato si los padres están dispuestos a modelar el cuidado apropiado y enseñarles cómo trabajar con animales. La mayoría de los expertos están de acuerdo en que las mascotas como perros, gatos, pájaros y otros animales más pequeños son realmente responsabilidad de toda la familia, no solo de los niños. A medida que el niño crece, puede asumir más responsabilidad. Por ejemplo, los padres pueden supervisar a los niños pequeños y de edad preescolares para recoger los juguetes de la mascota o ayudar con la alimentación.

Tener una mascota puede ayudar a los niños a desarrollar empatía, compasión y

habilidades prácticas. A veces, los niños incluso experimentan una reducción en el estrés. Por otra parte, las mascotas también pueden ser caras, por lo que las familias deben estar preparadas para un compromiso a largo plazo.

Aquí están algunas preguntas para ver si su familia está lista para un nuevo animal de compañía:

- **Responsabilidad:** ¿Está su hijo dispuesto a hacer las tareas asignadas en casa, como poner la mesa o sacar la basura? Si un niño se molesta por hacer cada tarea que se le da y pospone hacerlas, es un indicador que puede no estar preparado para la gran responsabilidad de cuidar a un animal. Por otro lado, esto puede ser terreno fértil para los momentos de enseñanza, el desarrollo de habilidades y el establecimiento de expectativas.
- **Tiempo:** Usted mencionó que sus hijos están interesados en un perro. ¿Tiene su familia tiempo para comprometerse con el cuidado de un amigo canino? Dependiendo de la raza y la edad del perro, puede requerir sacarlo a caminar con frecuencia y otros tipos de actividades estimulantes. Además, si sus hijos tienen un horario completo de clases, escuela y otros compromisos extracurriculares, es posible que desee considerar qué tipo de perro se adaptaría mejor a un horario familiar ocupado.

▪ **Prueba:** ¿Cómo se comporta su hijo alrededor de las mascotas de otras personas? Para preparar a un niño para la responsabilidad de cuidar a una mascota, puede pedir prestado el perro de un amigo y ayudar a su hijo a aprender sobre el cuidado de los animales directamente por usted. Puede hacer un horario escrito para el agua, la alimentación, los paseos y el tiempo de juego para la mascota que está de visita. Este puede ser un buen modelo para el futuro compañero de su familia.

▪ **Experiencia:** Si desea llevar la "prueba" un poco más lejos, considere ser voluntario con sus hijos en un refugio de animales local o llevarse a casa un perro o un gato en adopción temporal. Esto les ayudará a todos a aprender sobre las necesidades de los animales y les ayudará a determinar qué tipo de mascota desean. Además, los expertos en animales están disponibles para ayudarlo a recorrer las opciones de mascotas para hacer una buena combinación. Recuerde, al igual que las personas, no todos los animales son iguales. Todos tienen personalidades, habilidades y necesidades únicas.

Finalmente, al elegir una mascota, deje que sus hijos ayuden a decidir. Nunca sorprenda a sus hijos con una mascota en una ocasión especial. ¡Esto incluye el día de Pascua! Resista el impulso de sorprender a sus hijos con un conejito. Una idea sería sorprender a los niños con comida para mascotas o un juguete para mascotas, luego incluya a sus hijos en la reunión de animales antes de traer uno a casa. Es posible que desee llevar a la mascota a casa durante el fin de semana para que todos puedan ayudar al nuevo miembro de la familia a adaptarse a un nuevo espacio y a nuevas personas.

¡Feliz búsqueda!

KIDZONE

Leaf Rubbings

This month we celebrate Earth Day!

What better way to celebrate the earth than to learn about native Texas trees? In this craft we will identify different trees native to Texas and learn how to create a leaf rubbing. You can create your own collection of leaves from various Texas plants or any leaves you choose.

Leaf rubbing instructions:

- Using any sheet of paper, simply place your leaf of choice on a hard, flat surface underneath the paper. The smoother the surface, the better the rubbing will be.
- Lay a crayon on its side on top of your paper and rub over the leaf leaving a pattern of the leaf on your paper.
- You can layer lots of leaves to create patterns or even spell out words.
- Another idea is to create one leaf per sheet and make a book of leaves that you have identified.



This also applies to flowers or most anything you see in nature. What a great reason to go out and explore your surroundings! A favorite park of ours near Terra Toys is the Beverly S. Sheffield Northwest District Park located at 7000 Ardath St. This park has gorgeous ponds and lots of plants and trees native to Texas.

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The Serving Center assists 1,200 households every month



The Round Rock Area Serving Center, a Texas non-profit corporation, also known as the Serving Center, carries out a community-wide mission of churches, other organizations and individuals serving human needs in the City of Round Rock and surrounding areas.



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- Keep Round Rock Warm
- Clothing & Furniture Vouchers
- Computers for Kids
- Community Gardens
- Computer Skills Training
- Financial Assistance
- The Volunteer Center

Treasures Charity Resale Shop & Boutique

Stores are open to the public, with clothing and furniture available to clients by voucher. All sales revenues support the food pantry and services.

Donations of clothing, books, furniture and small appliances are needed!
For furniture pickup, call (512) 244-2431

HOURS OF OPERATION

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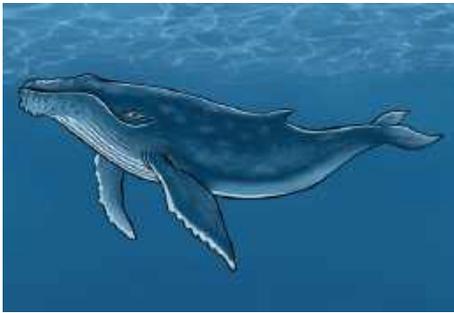
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JUST FOR GRINS

CATE BERRY

Cate Berry is a children's book author and mother of two based in Austin, TX.



Natural Tendencies

One of the great things about motherhood is giving in.

I gave into "Long Arm Parenting" when my kids were little. I'd make up games I could perform without leaving the couch. I'd scoot them back and forth in a laundry basket, risking tennis elbow, but it was worth it. We played "Golden Retriever," tossing my sock into the corner for my kids to fetch. These all worked well until my back turned into their bouncy house. Time for devising new entertainment.

I'm a huge movie head. I'll watch anything. But my kids rebelled. Dancing penguins were frightening, losing baby Nemo was unspeakable, and musicals were "too loud."

Sigh.

Then I got inspired. Nature shows! Luckily, we were lame and never cancelled cable. There was an entire nature channel. Snuggling with my little urchins, we started a 90-minute (90-minute!) show about whales.

Whales. Majestic and mysterious. Surely, symbolizing a new era of body positivity, I patted my feminist self on the back. I was already scheming a "whale week" binge-a-thon.

Everything was going swimmingly until the humpback whale popped out his 19-foot, well, you know. No doubt. He was male.

"Why does that whale have a white snake?" my youngest asked.

"It's his friend," my oldest answered. "Right, Mommy?"

I stalled, experiencing fantastic dry mouth. "Right. He's playing with his best friend."

I dug into the couch cushions for the remote. Whale games weren't far behind. But everyone knows remote controls are enchanted and disappear during a crisis. Sure enough, the documentary raised its stakes.

"As the female whale approaches," the narrator stated in a British accent, "the male readies himself for impact." A lusty female swam across our screen, as the "sea snake"— ready for action— followed nature.

I extended the longest arm in my repertoire and lunged for the manual "off" button.

Suddenly, the hot park, with its screaming, sweaty kids and lack of shade, seemed like a spa day.

Standing, I announced, "Let's go outside!"

"And hunt for snakes!" my oldest yelled.



It's time to cast your vote for *Austin Family Magazine's* Annual Readers' Poll Favorites!

If you have a favorite or are a business and want your customers to vote, share your information. A win is a great marketing tool.

Plus, everyone who votes is automatically entered into a drawing to WIN a 2 night stay at Gaylord Texan
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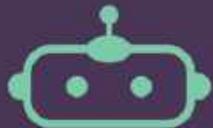
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