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2020 YOUNG WRITERS CONTEST

This year's topic: Describe your favorite day during the Covid-19 quarantine.

Students in fourth and fifth grades are invited to write 75 to 300-word essays on the topic for a chance to **WIN** some great prizes! In addition, both Winner and Runner-up will have their essay published in the December 2020 issue of Austin Family Magazine!

It's **FREE** to enter! Go to www.austinfamily.com for complete rules

1st Place, Fourth and Fifth Grades Receives:

- \$30 Gift Certificate from Book People
- \$50 Amazon Gift Card
- Winner's plaque presented at his/her school
- Essay published in December issue of Austin Family Magazine

1st Runner-up, Fourth and Fifth Grades Receives:

- Plaque presented at his/her school
- Essay published in December issue of Austin Family Magazine

Judges:



Carmen Oliver

Carmen is the author of a picture book series, founded the Booking Biz, teaches writing at The Writing Barn and The Highlights Foundation, and speaks at schools, conferences and festivals. See our website for more details.



Bethany Hegedus

Bethany is a children's picture book author, former educator, keynote speaker, workshop leader, and mentor on writing. She is founder and creative director of The Writing Barn and host of Courage to Create podcast. See our website for more details.



Contest Rules:

- Essays must be 75 to 300-words
- Contest date: August 14 to October 14, 2020
- Essays must be received by 5pm on October 14
- Writers must be in the fourth or fifth grade

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By Jack Kyser

The Personal History of David Copperfield

Read online at: www.austinfamily.com/films

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



Maya is a 2020 Cover Kid Winner who loves reading and writing short stories. Outfit furnished by Dragonsnaps and Kid-O-Shoes. Photography by Jordan Ashley Photography.

Fall Fun

This Fall Fun issue celebrates the changing of seasons and the excitement that comes with new activities, festive holidays and cooler weather. As the first energizing blasts of cool air hit, we look forward to Halloween decorations popping up in yards, the sounds of kids jumping into leaf piles and smells of home baked goodies. Lately, when so many familiar markers of time have shifted, we take comfort in the things we can count on.

Despite these days when so much has changed in the ways we connect, I am excited to join Austin Family magazine as editor. One gift of the past several months has been watching people come together with a renewed sense of community as we tackle problems big and small. The resourcefulness, innovation and adaptability of adults – and kids – has been amazing to watch. This issue celebrates that spirit as well.



EDITOR'S NOTE

ANNETTE LUCKSINGER

Lucksinger is a mom of two and author of the guidebook and app Exploring Austin with Kids.

So, this October, embrace the season as you continue to enjoy family togetherness. Craft creative costumes, watch spooky family movies or try your hand at Halloween-themed activities. Invite a furry friend into your family. Visit recently reopened museums. Hit the hike and bike trails. We have tips for all of these and more.

Happy fall, y'all!

Annette

austinfamily®

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Play it **product recalls** Safe

Government Recalls Candles, Plush Toys and Gym Balls



Pier 1 Imports is **recalling three-wick Halloween candles in the scents Scary Black Cherry and Death by Chocolate**. Pier 1 has received seven reports involving high flames with the three-wick Halloween candles. The flames can ignite

the surface of the wax, posing fire and burn hazards. These candles were sold at Pier 1 Imports stores nationwide and at pier1.com from June 2019 through October 2019 for between \$10 and \$17. Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled candles and carefully cut all three wicks as short as possible to prevent others from being able to use the candle. It is advised that consumers discard the product in their household trash.



Communicorp is **recalling the six-inch plush Aflac promotional Doctor Duck**. The buttons on the lab coat worn by the Doctor Duck contain levels of lead that exceed the federal lead content standard. Lead is toxic if ingested by young children and can cause adverse health issues. The plush animal was sold directly to Aflac employees and

licensed agents from January 2005 through July 2020 and distributed as a promotional giveaway item to customers. Communicorp is contacting Aflac employees and licensed agents who purchased the product directly. Consumers should immediately dispose of the recalled item.



Decathlon is **recalling Domyos Swiss balls, also referred to as Pilates balls or gymnastics gym balls**, with model numbers 8529175, 8529176 and 8529177. The recalled exercise balls can unexpectedly burst, causing the user to fall to the floor with the possibility

of injury. The recalled balls were sold in blue, bordeaux and gray. They measure 21.65 inches to 29.53 inches in diameter and weigh between 10.6 and 10.9 ounces. The balls were sold at Decathlon stores nationwide and online at decathlon.com from February 2019 through March 2020 for about \$20. Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled Swiss balls and contact Decathlon for a refund in the form of a store credit. Decathlon is contacting all known purchasers directly.

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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- Sarah F. (6yrs old)

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AROUND

Austin

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SaulPaul Releases New Album

Austin-based singer songwriter and rapper SaulPaul presents *Be the Change*, his third high-energy album for kids. These upbeat and playful new songs share messages of how children can "be the change," whether by being kind and caring, by being brave and speaking up or by living their truths. This diverse and collaborative collection blends hip-hop, folk, reggae, dance, pop, Latin rhythms and storytelling to get bodies moving!



SaulPaul's new album enlivens young listeners with upbeat messages and rhythms. Photo courtesy of Mayers Consulting.



Experience nature and art along stroller-friendly paths at Umlauf Sculpture Garden. Photo courtesy of Austin Museum Partnership.

Austin Museums Reopen

Several museums have recently reopened for in-person visits with new protocols in place to promote social distancing. Check online before visiting as many have reduced their open days and hours and require advanced reservations.

Quite a few outdoor museums are back in action, which make for great family destinations as we roll into fall! For a listing of museums now open, see www.austinfamily.com/museums-reopen.

Homeschool Programs From Austin Nature and Science Center

Registration is now open for Austin Nature and Science Center (ANSC) homeschool lessons for 4-17 year-olds.

Youth STEAM-focused programs for kids ages 4-12 instill an appreciation of the natural world and offer an opportunity to collaborate with peers. In *Science Experiment Club*, first to fifth graders explore, make observations and answer testable questions using the scientific method. The program concludes with a virtual ANSC science fair. The *Nature Ambassador Program* is an entirely virtual leadership program for current teenage homeschoolers. Participants partner with a staff member to help them design and implement a community service project geared towards environmental stewardship.

Class information, monthly topics and registration details can be found at www.bit.ly/2FOJK3s.



The Austin Nature and Science Center offers programming to expand youth's connection to the natural world.

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Marathon Kids Day

Austin Mayor Steve Adler has proclaimed Oct. 16, 2020, to be Marathon Kids Day in celebration of the 60,000 Austin ISD elementary and middle school students who will participate in the Marathon Day Kids program to stay active this school year. Austin-based nonprofit Marathon Kids is celebrating 25 years of partnering with teachers and district leaders to get kids moving during the school day – both in person and at home! With a fun, free program that is implemented districtwide, Marathon Kids joins AISD in supporting health and wellness. For more information on the free Marathon Kids program, visit www.marathonkids.org/connect.



Marathon Kids has created a new app to log run time so kids can run a marathon, one lap at a time, one day at a time. It all adds up! Photo courtesy of Marathon Kids.



Follow the Texas Teen Book Festival on social media for the full author lineup.

Texas Teen Book Festival + We Need Diverse Books Short Story Contest

The 2020 Virtual Texas Teen Book Festival will take place online on Oct. 31 and Nov. 1. The Festival is free and open to the public! Don't worry, you don't have to be a teen to attend – readers of all ages are welcome. The festival will feature writer workshops, workshops for educators and a wide range of genres and authors, including Elizabeth Acevedo, Tiffany D. Jackson, Nic Stone, Ibi Zoboi and so many more!

For a chance to attend an exclusive festival event and join BookPeople's Teen Press Corps bloggers, young writers are encouraged to enter the We Need Diverse Books Short Story Contest. Entries are due Oct. 2. Details can be found at www.texasteenbookfestival.org.

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Hologram Technology To Launch Classroom of the Future

The challenge of creating safe classrooms during the current pandemic has led to a creative solution: beaming a professor into the classroom as a hologram.

The University of Texas at Austin is testing a new 3D immersive video solution where the faculty member is streamed live as a high-resolution, full-body holographic image. The instructor is set up in a television studio in front of a green screen with high-end cameras, lights, monitors and a control room space where he can interact with both the physical classroom and the virtual classroom in real time. Students can ask questions and engage in class.

The goal is to keep faculty safe and, at the same time, enhance student learning.



New technology combines in-person, hybrid and online teaching to deliver an interactive distanced learning experience. Photo courtesy of McCombs School of Business.

BookSpring Delivers to Young Readers

BookSpring has launched a new program to have packages of gently used books and materials designed to enhance the motivation to read mailed directly to family's homes. Families who live in Central Texas and have children 12 and under are eligible to apply. Priority will go to those who qualify for food or housing assistance. Families can call 844-368-9651 to request books or access the online application at www.bookspring.org/en/direct.



BookSpring gets books in the hands of young readers through free home deliveries. Photo courtesy of BookSpring.

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Hike, Bike and Trike Austin: Best Trails for All Ages

BY ANNETTE LUCKSINGER



The nature walk at the Contemporary Austin at Laguna Gloria offers surprises around every corner!

If you're looking to safely venture beyond your backyard and soak up the cooler weather, try these places. These nature walks and hike and bike trails pack in a healthy dose of art, adventure and exercise – good for the whole family!

Laguna Gloria

3809 W. 35th St. |
www.thecontemporaryaustin.org

This nature walk combines all the best – art, imagination, beauty and nature – for a unique, outdoor museum experience. As you wander down paths of lush greenery that hug Lake Austin, art installations crop up in intriguing places: hanging from trees, bobbing in the waves, blending into the landscape or creating optical illusions. Take a photo of the exhibit map at the entrance and make your own scavenger hunt, or download the Laguna Gloria Kids Guide for an interactive experience. Or simply enjoy the stroll with surprises around every corner. Advanced reservations are required, with free entry on Thursday evenings.



A short walk up Lookout Trail leads to this view!

Lookout Point at Zilker Nature Preserve

2835 Rollingwood Dr.

An urban trail that quickly takes you into the trees, this footpath packs a lot of variety, from city overlooks to creek beds, in a fairly short distance. Begin your trek from the large picnic area on Rollingwood Drive, just west of Zilker Park. Look across the street for the Zilker Clubhouse sign and head up Arnulfo Alonso Way (formerly Zilker Clubhouse Road) for one-tenth of a mile. The second trail on your right will take you on a short jaunt to Lookout Point for a spectacular view of the cityscape. From here, several trails lead down into the Zilker Nature Preserve. Choose your own adventure to loop through meadowland, descend to

creeks at the base of cliff walls or continue on to the wooded area that abuts the Austin Nature and Science Center.



Hike and bike alongside giant cypress, under rock ledges or by Onion Creek.

McKinney Falls State Park

5808 McKinney Falls Pkwy. | www.tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/mckinney-falls

McKinney Falls State Park offers scenic spots to hike, bike and picnic. Our family favorite is the 2.8-mile Onion Creek Hike and Bike Trail. This unimproved paved trail is mostly flat and shady, with the exception of a couple of gradual inclines. The loop winds through forested sections of the park to the green, shaded picnic grounds above Onion Creek. Stop and take a break to play at Upper Falls where water cascades over giant rock slabs. For easiest

access, park at the Smith Visitor Center and look to its right for the trail entrance. For a short, stunning half-mile walk above the creek, hop on the Picnic Trail. Experienced hikers and mountain bikers might enjoy the nearby 3.1-mile Homestead Trail, accessible by crossing the creek at Lower Falls. Look for maps and trail descriptions on the park website. You'll want to plan ahead for this outing as day passes now require advance reservations.



Spider sculpture at Berkman Drive and Manor Road along the Mueller Trails.

Mueller Trails

1845 Simond Ave. or along Tom Miller St. | www.muelleraustin.com/thinking-green/parks

This community is so bike friendly that you can choose from bike lanes, crushed granite trails or paved pathways to take you all over the Mueller development. Older kids will enjoy how far they can go on trails unimpeded by cars, while younger riders will enjoy the variety of scenes. Depending on when you go and which direction you head, you might pass duck-filled ponds, waterfalls, playgrounds, a farmers' market, a fire station, a sensory garden or art pieces that include a dragon and a giant metal spider that you can bike beneath.



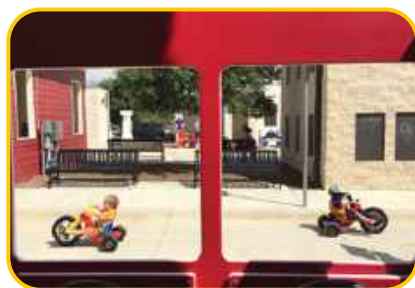
Jumps for all levels at Ninth Street BMX Park.

Ninth Street BMX Park

900 W. Ninth St. | www.9thstreetbmx.com

For BMX biking, this community-built park is worth checking out. Designed for a range of skill levels, beginners roll and bob along a series of small dirt mounds while advanced riders catch air and perform tricks on higher, built-up ramps. The welcoming vibe of the park attracts all ages. Older kids might want to

check out the nearby BMX and Skate Park at 12th Street and Shoal Creek Boulevard too.



Hot rodding at All Abilities Park in Round Rock.

Play for All Park and Brushy Creek Trail

151 North A. W. Grimes Blvd., Round Rock | bit.ly/33KrosJ

Load up the trikes, training wheels and big wheels for the younger set. A paradise for imaginative play, this park features a large playground accessible for all abilities adjacent to a kid-size speedway and recreated Round Rock town center. With pedal power, kids cruise down mini-streets lined with road signs and controlled by stoplights. Pop in the local library or Wag-a-Bag, visit a police and fire station, make adjustments at the mechanic or go through a car wash with real misters.

Bigger bikers can hop on the Brushy Creek East Trail that runs just below the park for 3 miles. Other kid-friendly access points on the more extensive Brushy Creek West Trail include Champion Park and Brushy Creek Lake Park.



Hop on the Veloway at Circle C.

Veloway

4900 LaCrosse Ave. | www.austintexas.gov/departments/veloway

What we love about this 3-mile paved loop in Circle C are the friendly bike culture, the hill country scenery and the wide, paved pathways. For a shorter ride, take the first shortcut to your right to make it a 1-mile adventure. This park is open to cyclists and skaters only. Be sure to follow posted trail etiquette and don't forget your (required) helmet!

Walnut Creek Trails

www.austintexas.gov/page/walnut-creek-trail-system



Entrance to the bike trail from Walnut Creek Park.

Northern Walnut Creek Trail

Access points at Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park, Gracywoods Neighborhood Park and Balcones District Park

A good choice for all ages and modes of transport, this 3.2-mile trail links three neighborhood parks. An added bonus, each park has a playground and green space, ideal for rest stops or snack breaks. The two-lane divided path makes for easy going by either bike or stroller as you wind along wooded Walnut Creek to cross bridges, dip below a wooden railroad bridge and wander past recreational areas. Hikers and mountain bikers who want to take things up a notch can hop onto one of the many branching dirt paths that create a network of trails throughout Walnut Creek Park.



Crossing bridges along the Southern Walnut Creek Trail.

Southern Walnut Creek Trail

Access points at Austin Tennis Center, East Communities YMCA and Govalle Park

This paved 7.3-mile trail extends along the edge of East Austin. You'll find a map at each trailhead and regularly posted mileage signs along the way. Little legs may want to start from Govalle Park for a shaded ride through lush landscape that dips under Highway 183 and continues along the Colorado River. The YMCA access point marks a good midway point to turn around. For those with endurance, travel across scenic bridges, pass Mabel Davis Park and prepare for a steady climb to City View at the trail's northern end.



THE Learning Curve

ALISON BOGLE

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

Celebrate Halloween With STEAM Activities

October brings crunchy leaves, pumpkin-flavored everything, and most importantly to kids ... HALLOWEEN! Check out these fun STEAM activities to get the whole family in the Halloween spirit.

1. ROTTING PUMPKIN

What happens to a pumpkin as it rots? This experiment teaches the scientific method: define the purpose, make a prediction, test your prediction and gather data, analyze the data, draw a conclusion and communicate the results. In this simple experiment, the scientific process happens naturally!

Supplies:

[Leftover jack-o-lantern](#)

[Tray or plate](#)

[Paper to create a homemade journal](#)

Process:

Place your jack-o-lantern on a tray or plate to prevent rot from getting on household surfaces. Next, make a journal to record your findings.

Begin by having your child predict what will happen to the pumpkin. Then, periodically inspect the jack-o-lantern for changes and record them in your journal. Encourage

your child to draw what he sees and to add some simple written observations.

What's the Science?

This activity introduces kids to the concept of decomposition – the process by which things are broken down into a simpler form of matter.

Extend the Learning

When the experiment is over, say goodbye to your now unrecognizable friend and have your child share what he learned. Was his prediction correct? What surprised him the most? Continuing the conversation invites even more learning!

2. EXPANDING GHOST

This fun experiment teaches about carbon dioxide with common household supplies. Kids love watching the ghost inflate right before their eyes.

Supplies:

[Empty water bottle](#)

[White balloon](#)

[Small funnel](#)

[1 tablespoon baking soda](#)

[1/2 cup vinegar](#)

[Permanent marker](#)

Process:

1. Using the permanent marker, draw a ghost face on the deflated balloon.
2. Pour the 1/2 cup of vinegar into the bottle.
3. Place the funnel into the open end of the deflated balloon and pour in the baking soda.
4. Secure the open end of the balloon onto the top of the bottle, being careful not to drop any baking soda into the bottle.
5. Hold the balloon upright, letting the baking soda fall into the bottle and mix with the vinegar.

What's the Science?

When vinegar and baking soda mix, they create carbon dioxide, which causes the balloon to inflate.

Extend the Learning

Experiment with different amounts of vinegar and baking soda to see the effects. If you add more of the ingredients, take the experiment outside and wear safety goggles as the balloon could explode.

3. HALLOWEEN SHOOTERS

This part-craft, part-experiment activity is

super easy to make and even more fun to play with!

Supplies:

Straws

Paper

Pens

Scissors

Tape

Process:

1. Cut a piece of paper – about 2 inches by 1 3/4 inches.
2. Wrap the paper around a straw, leaving about 1/2 inch of paper above the straw. Wrap the paper snugly, but not so tight that it won't be able to launch off of the straw.
3. Compress the paper at the end. Then fold it back onto the straw and tape it down.
4. Using another piece of paper, draw a small Halloween character.
5. Cut the character out and tape it onto the paper around the straw.
6. Blow into the end of the straw and watch your character fly!

What's the Science?

Halloween shooters introduce the concept of aerodynamics. Air blown into the narrow straw travels to the end where the force of the air takes the shooter with it.

Extend the Learning:

Introduce the concept of trajectory, or the angle at which your shooter is aimed. Does the trajectory change how far the shooter flies? You can also experiment with different size and shape characters.

4. FIRE SNAKE

What is more exciting than watching a pile of sugar and baking soda transform into a large, black snake right before your eyes?

Supplies:

Dry sand

Baking soda

Sugar

Small ceramic plate or bowl

Measuring spoons

Lighter fluid

Long lighter or matches

Bucket of water or hose

1. Fill a plate or bowl with sand.
2. Have an adult soak the sand in lighter fluid.
3. Mix 1 tablespoon baking soda with 4 tablespoons sugar.

4. Pile the mixture on top of the sand.
5. Use long matches or a lighter to ignite the lighter fluid.
6. Stand back and be patient. The reaction may take some time to start.
7. Once the flames have gone out, wait 10 minutes. After an adult checks the temperature, allow your child to feel the snake's texture.
8. Douse the snake and sand in water before throwing away.

What's the Science?

As the sugar and baking soda mixture burns, it creates gas bubbles. The bubbles become trapped, resulting in the black "snake" structure that rises out of the flames.

Extend the Learning

You can change this experiment by altering the ratio of the ingredients, or by substituting powdered sugar. You might also experiment with changing the shape of the pile.



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EDUCATION RESOURCE GUIDE



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Ages 8-18



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Round Rock

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Lifelines

BRENDA SCHOOLFIELD

Schoolfield is a freelance medical writer based in Austin, TX.

Fostering: A Furry Best Friend Without a Lifetime Commitment

October is “Adopt a Shelter Dog Month.” With more time at home, many families would like to adopt a dog but aren’t ready for a lifetime commitment. Fostering is a great way to test the waters to see if a dog – and what type of dog – is right for your family.

What Is “Fostering?”

“Fostering” means that you keep a rescue dog in your home until he is ready for adoption to a “forever” home. After being abandoned, lost, abused or surrendered by an owner, rescue dogs are often disoriented and confused. The shelter environment — rows of metal cages, hard concrete floors and a background of loud, incessant barking — can be a harrowing experience. A foster home gives the rescue dog an opportunity to recover from the stress of the shelter and begin to trust humans again.

What Does a Foster Family Do?

As a foster family, you will be responsible for providing your rescue dog a safe, clean and

caring environment. Fosters provide food, water, enrichment (such as toys or games) and exercise. You may need to transport the dog to veterinary appointments and meetings with potential adopters. Some rescue organizations have “matchmakers,” who communicate information about the dog’s personality and behavior to potential adopters. In other organizations the foster family takes that role. If the dog has medical needs or injuries, fosters give medicine as directed. Of course, one of the most important things you can do for your rescue dog is spend time with him. Go on walks in the neighborhood. Throw the ball in your backyard. Help him learn good dog behavior, such as waiting for a signal before he takes his food. Be consistent with commands and give lots and lots of praise.

Who Pays for Medical Care, Medicine, Food and Supplies?

The rescue organization provides medical care for injuries or medical conditions at intake and during the foster period. They



Fostering is a great way to test the waters to see if a dog – and what type of dog – is right for your family.”

also provide heartworm and flea prevention, as well as any needed medication. The foster family provides a leash, high-quality dog food, bowls, treats, bedding and toys. Sometimes the rescue organization or one of its volunteers will have a crate that the foster family can borrow.

What Does a Foster Family Need To Learn About Their Rescue Dog?

In many cases little or nothing is known about the rescue dog. An important job for the foster family is to spend time with the dog to gather information for a successful placement. Does the dog enjoy interacting with kids or does he go somewhere else when they enter the room? Is the dog afraid around strangers? Does the dog have separation or thunderstorm anxiety? Does the dog spend the days snoozing, or does he need a more active lifestyle? Does the dog need training? For example, does he walk nicely on a leash or pull? Does he know "sit" and "stay"? When you encounter another dog on a walk, does he wag or show signs of aggression? Do you notice any potential medical conditions, such as excessive licking or scratching? It's important to learn as much about your rescue dog as possible to help determine if a prospective adoptive family is a fit. For example, if a family is looking primarily for a dog to hang out with them on the sofa, an active dog who needs at least an hour of exercise a day and frequent ball-throwing sessions is not a good match.

What if We Want To Adopt Our Rescue Dog?

Many times fosters become "foster failures," which means they fall in love with their rescue dog and want to adopt it. Rescue organizations expect this to happen and have policies to support foster adoption. Most of the time, the foster has a specified length of time for deciding whether or not to adopt. After that, they must relinquish the rescue dog to an adopter who has been approved through the rescue organization's process.

What Is a Virtual Foster?

If your family isn't ready for a live-in furry companion, consider becoming a virtual foster. This program from Austin Pets Alive! gives dogs who reside at the shelter the benefits of advocacy that a foster home would offer. Volunteers learn about their dogs' behavioral and medical histories and how to market them on social media. As

champions for these dogs that have been housed in the shelter the longest, virtual fosters interact directly with potential adopters from an informed advocacy perspective. Contact Austin Pets Alive! for more information about this program at austinpetsalive.org/foster/virtual-foster.



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FAMILY MATTERS

BETTY RICHARDSON

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

Should My Child Be More Outgoing? 6 Tips for Making Friends

Q Our son Robin is 7 years old. He's an only child. Robin worries me because he doesn't have friends or seem interested in making friends with other children. Robin does play games with my husband and me. But I think he'd have a lot more fun if he had friends his age. What can my husband and I do to help him connect with other children?

A There are lots of reasons for a child not to have friends. Sometimes the child is an introvert who gets his energy from having alone time in contrast to extroverts who energize by being around others. Occasionally, parents and other adults in a child's life have not modeled the behavior for meeting people, making friends and maintaining those relationships. Without role models for making friends, a shy child might have no idea what to say or do to meet other children and to begin the social process of being and having a friend. Then there are children who fall on the autistic spectrum who may have mild enough cases to escape diagnosis but who are consequently less social. Another reason for not having same age friends is that some intelligent children prefer to interact with adults. Others prefer to play on the computer

and may not have time for friends, if allowed to spend a lot of their time online. One father I interviewed said he did not have friends growing up because he lived in an area where there were no other children his age and the opportunities to meet kids outside of his neighborhood were slim.

A good place to begin is to talk to Robin about how he is feeling and what he thinks he needs socially. Does he feel lonely, left out or thankful to get time alone? Then consider some of these suggestions to help meet his social needs:

1. If your child goes to school, ask the teacher for help. A teacher can identify a child who might do well interacting with your child and arrange for them to do a project together or suggest a play date.
2. Model social skills for your child, such as introducing yourself to someone and asking the person a question to start a conversation. Role play with your child how to say hello and to ask questions of another child like "Do you have a pet? What games do you like to play?"
3. Know, encourage and facilitate your child's interests. If possible, get him in a group to

share these interests, whether in person or virtually.

4. Find an opportunity when your child is able and open to talking with you. Have a discussion about what friendship means and what makes a good friend.
5. Talk to another parent about a supervised play date. Role play with your child about playing with another child.
6. Practice social skills with your child. This includes sharing, taking turns and understanding the concept of losing well or trying again to win at games. This is especially important for children with ADHD but for other children as well.

I know you have Robin's best interest at heart, but you can't decide how social Robin needs to be and shape him into that level of sociability. What you can do is assist him by trying some of the suggestions above to increase his sociability. Thank you for sharing this question that is probably on the minds of a lot of other parents too.



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Halloween Candy Bark

Ingredients

- 1 pound vanilla candy bark, candy melts or white chocolate
- Mini pretzel twists
- Chocolate sandwich cookies with orange filling
- Candy corn
- Assorted sprinkles
- Additional candies of your choice

Directions

1. Prepare a baking sheet by lining it with a silicone liner or parchment paper. Chop or break any larger candies, cookies, or pretzels and set aside.
2. Melt the vanilla candy bark (or white chocolate) as directed on the package. If heating in the microwave, use 50% power to prevent the candy bark from overheating. Pour about half of the melted chocolate onto the lined baking sheet, then spread about 1/4-inch thick.
3. Working quickly, add an assortment of pretzels, cookie pieces and candy corn (or other candies) in a single layer. Pour the remaining melted chocolate on top of the pretzels and cookies, then add additional toppings and sprinkles. Set aside and allow the chocolate to cool fully. You can place the entire baking sheet in the freezer for 10 minutes to speed up the process.
4. Once the chocolate is fully set and cool, break the candy bark into pieces. Store in an airtight container for up to a week.

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JUST FOR GRINS

CATE BERRY

Cate Berry is a children's book author and mother of two in Austin, Texas. She also teaches writing workshops for young people at cateberry.com.



Dressed To Kill

My mother hated Halloween.

We never understood why. It started in July when the costume catalogues arrived. Mom would tap the page of a benign Snow White or fireman, wary but hopeful. We would balk at her simple dreams.

My sister chose Mickey Mouse one year. But her Mickey had to be an Olympian. An Olympian figure skater. Mom tried holding her to "just Mickey" but relented in the end, hot-gluing a sequined toga for six hours until the first trick-or-treater arrived. That same year, I decided to be a clown. Guided by my vision, I evolved into "Clown on Fire!" Mom suffered slight burns loading dry ice into my fanny pack.

Once, my brother began as a normal Darth Vader. But in the final 24 hours, he upgraded to Darth Centaur, requesting life-sized goat legs under his robes. My mom did slay at papier mâché.

When my own son was born a few days before Halloween my mother suppressed a smile as we affectionately dubbed him "Halloween baby." The first seasons were fun. We snuggled him into a pumpkin cap as an infant. Paraded him as a stegosaurus the next year. It was only when he turned 4 that things changed.

"I want to be a monster!" So cute was the proclamation. We clapped as I sketched out a crude drawing. "More eyeballs," he demanded. "Where are the lights? I'll need an extra head," he said, grabbing my pencil.

A monster indeed.


But I am my mother's daughter. We deliver for Halloween. However, after the fifth Goodwill stop, I came up empty-handed in my search for automated appendages, not to mention my failure to procure a bloody Kraken stump. Yet, somehow — I pulled it off.

These days not much has changed. I hear them in the other room, sorting candy, planning their costumes for next year. Something about two-story stilts. Liquid rust. A bale of hay.


No doubt, they'll be dressed to kill.

If Halloween doesn't kill me.

First.



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