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FILM REVIEW

By Jack Kyser

Matilda

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FILM REVIEW
JACK KYSER



Reed, a 2023 AFM Cover Kid Winner loves basketball and football. Photo taken by Jordan Ashley Photography, Cedar Park.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

JESS ARCHER

Archer is a writer, a mom of two kids and a wife. She is the author of the memoir, "Finding Home with the Beatles, Bob Dylan and Billy Graham."

March always feels to me like a big calendar shift. The winter has rolled over and a new season has emerged. After all, it's around late March that our beloved bluebonnet flowers bloom in central Texas, and that makes it feel like spring has finally arrived.

Spring in Texas also means outdoor sports. In February, parents sign their kids up for soccer and Little League and various other recreational activities, and in March it's time to watch and cheer them on from the sidelines. Some of my favorite moments as a mom have come from simply cheering on my kids in their athletic dreams. With that in mind, our feature article this month is all about some factors that parents should consider before their child agrees to a high-commitment sport. Our family therapist, Dr. Betty Richardson also gives some sound advice for parents who want to mindfully help their kids learn good sportsmanship.

Take time to also read Brenda Schoolfield's article on PANDAS disorder. Parents will want to be aware of this relatively new health condition. Also of interest, our education writer, Alison Bogle explains the ins and outs of a classical education, a schooling approach that is becoming very popular in Austin.

Take time to check out our calendar of events and our camp guide this month. There is so much to do and experience in Austin in the coming months. May your spring be joyful with possibilities.

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Austin IN ACTION

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St. Patrick's Day By the Numbers

The world's first St. Patrick's Day parade occurred on March 17, 1762, in New York City, featuring Irish soldiers who served in the English military.

Facts obtained through The US census bureau

Heart-Felt Giving

Here's some good news from the heart of Texas: Redeemer Lutheran School in Austin raised \$35,300 for the Kids Heart Challenge benefitting the American Heart Association. This is the second year in a row that Redeemer has raised such an enormous sum, placing them 7th in Texas for the highest donation to the American Heart Association.

Because of their generous fundraising, the American Heart Association will provide Redeemer School with a "gift-back" in the form of gift certificates and

cash totaling \$3,500. This money will allow the school to purchase equipment for their physical education program in order to help keep their students heart-healthy!



Photo credit: Redeemer Lutheran School
Four Redeemer students who each raised over \$1,000 for the American Heart Association.

Sparking a Love for STEAM

Houston native, Adam Gockley, is set to open another location with IDEA Lab® Kids, the education-based franchise with an emphasis on a cutting-edge STEM plus Arts (STEAM) curriculum. IDEA Lab earned "Austin's Best After School Program" and has seen continued overflow enrollment even during COVID-19.

As more families look for ways to accelerate their children's learning post-COVID-19, the expansion of IDEA Lab Kids has proved to be an invaluable source of educational support to children without additional strain on the parents. Gockley has been amazed by the progress that he has witnessed in his students, particularly in subjects that he would have previously deemed to be challenging and less interesting for

students.

"It's incredible to see the kids enjoying topics that I always disliked when I was in school," said Gockley. "Our curriculum really allows students to have those 'ah-ha!' moments, and you can see them finally grasp concepts in real time that they have been struggling with."

The newest IDEA Lab will be located at 13642 North Highway 183, which is expected to open this summer, 2023.

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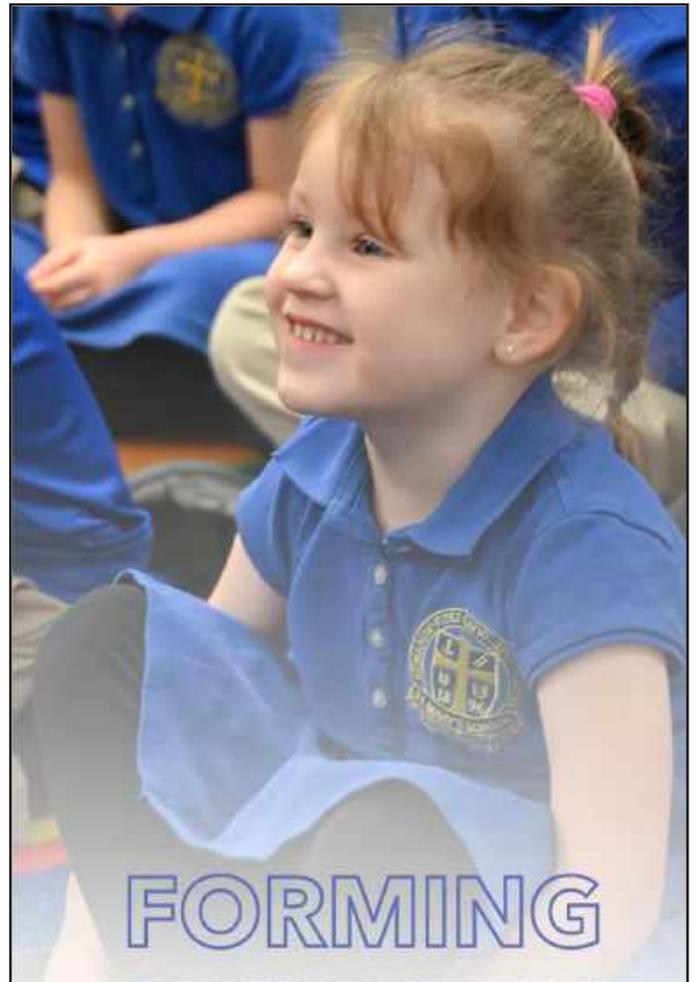
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High-Commitment Sports: 3 Things to Consider

JESS ARCHER

Archer is a writer, a mom of two kids and a wife. She is the author of the memoir, "Finding Home with the Beatles, Bob Dylan and Billy Graham."

When it comes to kids' sports, every parent wants to hear the coach say, "Your child has real potential." With that simple praise of talent, visions of college scholarships and big-league contracts suddenly dance on the horizon. Before long parents are planning their summers around a child's competitive sport, hemorrhaging time and money in ways they never imagined.

So what should a parent consider before diving headlong into the next level of competitive youth sports? Here are three key factors that should guide parents in that all-consuming quest to give our kids distinction in sports.

Whose Big Dream Is It?

Now and again every parent lives vicariously through their child. We can't help it. You remember that glorious basketball season in 10th grade when you shot the winning basket in the final tournament, and you want to relive the glory a little bit through your child's sport. Watching your son or daughter excel at a sport is a powerful feeling for parents. After all, playing a competitive sport at a high level can develop many positive character traits that carry into adulthood. Moreover, with the rising cost of college tuition, it's understandable that many parents want to push their kids into a sport with the hope of them earning scholarship money one day. But Education Data reports that, on average, athletic scholarships are offered to less than 2% of high school

graduating athletes. So it behooves parents to ask themselves: Who is driving the athletic ambition in the family, and what is the end goal? If we're not careful, a parent can become a dominating, negative "coach" who focuses too hard on athletics. It can be difficult to do, but parents have to revisit the important question of whose dream it is to play competitive sports.

By all means, help your child stay committed to a sport during the on-season (encourage his or her attendance at mandatory practices and games), but at its conclusion, revisit the important questions. Am I wanting this sport for my child more than she is? If the answer is yes, then it may be time for a break-up. You don't want to be that mom or dad on the sidelines furiously yelling at your disenchanted child to work harder on the field. It's awkward and painful

for everyone. Instead, sit down with your son or daughter and gently ask, "Do you want to continue playing this sport?" Your child will be grateful that you asked. After all, deep down most kids don't want to disappoint their parents. Give your son or daughter the opportunity to be honest with you.

Our kids are growing and changing fast—physically and emotionally—and what suits them one year may not be true next season, despite natural talent. As their loving guardians, we have to be willing to adjust our expectations.



Consider the Family Schedule

If your son or daughter wants to continue in a high-commitment sport, it's vital to consider the whole family's schedule. Practice twice a week, (if not more) games on weekends and clinics in between can be a pace that will make your head spin. But this kind of weekday + weekend commitment to a sport has become normal in American families. It's no wonder kids want to quit in the middle of a season; they get burned out on the pace. The sport becomes a grind and is no longer fun. There's school, jobs, social time, chores and so much more when they leave the playing field.

The harried pace of highly competitive sports causes strain on the family unit. Gone are sit-down meals together (there's just no time between school and sports practice). Also, it's not uncommon for a sports team to consume a whole weekend. Sundays used to be a day when American families tended to take things slower. But don't expect a relaxed Sunday morning if your child plays a high-commitment sport. Teams often hold practices and games on Sunday mornings, leaving the family with little or no time to rest.

And if there are other siblings in the family with their own activities and commitments, it's nearly impossible for a family to stay emotionally connected. It's vital to truly consider whether commitment to a sport works for the whole family.

Money, Money, Money

When the regular season ends, many youth sports offer summer club leagues that travel in and out of state for tournaments. These teams are geared to kids who want to take their commitment up a level. But when the coach offers your son or daughter a spot on the summer traveling team, remember to pause and carefully consider your family budget. According to www.marriagekidsandmoney.com it's not uncommon for club teams to require initial dues at over \$2,000 and that's just the start. In Texas, club baseball is very expensive. Athletics writer, Tasha Vanden Heuvel, reports that one child in travel baseball can cost parents up to \$4,000 a year. Team dues, hotels, food and gear add up fast. www.collegerealitycheck.com.

Summer break is when people plan family reunions and memorable vacations. Does traveling with a sports team eight weekends out of summer break allow your family to spend time and money for special trips? It takes a lot of paychecks to save money for special vacations. One family reports having to use their entire vacation budget to pay for their daughter's summer cheerleading competition held in Disney World. But only one of the parents and the competing daughter could attend. Ask yourself before you say yes whether

extending a sports commitment to summer break is worth all that money.

If your child loves to play a sport and wants to take the commitment up a notch, be excited, but by all means, look into it. Before you jump in, consider these factors: Who is driving the athletic dream? Does the next level of commitment suit your family's schedule? And lastly, how much money are you willing to pay into that sport? Consider wisely and let a sense of balance guide your family.

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Classical Education, Do You Have Questions?

THE LEARNING CURVE

ALISON BOGLE

Bogle is a writer living in Austin with her husband and three children. A former fourth grade teacher, she now enjoys writing about children and education. You can also catch her talking about articles from Austin Family magazine each Thursday morning on FOX 7 Austin.

Classical Education

I'll admit my ignorance. When charged with writing about "classical education" as an alternative to traditional public schooling, I drew a blank. My first guess was that a classical education might have something to do with studying the classics, or maybe an emphasis on classical music?

My first guess was closest, but still way off. A classical education is heavily oriented towards the liberal arts, and its students do study important works of literature, but it is much more than that. A classical education seeks to teach students in a very intentional way, based on their age and progression of understanding. In addition, it often

requires students to study Greek or Latin, may include musical study, and places a heavy emphasis on the development of values and character. The model ultimately seeks to develop students into both scholars and active citizens.

Classical curriculum is being taught in many homeschools, small learning pods, private schools and religious schools. Some public charter schools have also adopted aspects of classical learning. Typically found in urban areas, the goal of many classical charter schools is to give students from disadvantaged groups a stronger Western educational foundation and encourage higher college attendance rates.

The Trivium

Today's classical schools typically still assign conventional grade levels like their public school counterparts, but they follow a very different schedule of learning progression called the Trivium. The Trivium is a language-intensive, three-part approach to learning, comprised of grammar, logic and rhetoric.

Grammar, the first stage, does not refer to the rules of language, but rather to the

earliest stages of a student's education—what would typically be known as kindergarten through 4th or 5th grade. The goal of the grammar stage is to build a solid foundation of knowledge upon which to build subsequent stages. Young children are wired to delight in finding patterns and acquiring information. The grammar stage seeks to capitalize on that natural inclination by providing opportunities for learning through reciting and repeating information. Students focus more on memorizing facts rather than developing original ideas. They are expected to understand phonics and sentence structure and to develop their lexicon. They memorize basic facts of history such as information about wars, leaders and various movements. In math, they are expected to be proficient in their facts and to know the steps for solving a variety of math problems.

Logic, the second stage, teaches students how to analyze information and begin to craft arguments to express original ideas. This stage typically corresponds to 6th through 8th grade. During this stage, students learn how to evaluate history and literature, to

explain various facts; in other words, the “why” behind what they learned during the grammar stage. For example, they might consider why a certain war started, rather than just memorizing the facts surrounding the war. They begin to read more challenging literature, studying works like Shakespeare and classic novels, such as *Moby Dick*.

In the rhetoric stage, corresponding with 9th through 12th grade, students learn how to apply the reasoning tools they learned in the logic stage to the facts they learned in the grammar stage and begin to construct arguments, both oral and written. Teachers of this stage help students sharpen their critical thinking skills with the goal of challenging ideas and information through written expression, projects, presentations and debate. The aim is to teach students the practice of seeking the truth, during their time as students, but also as they move into their adult lives.

Character Development

Classical education seeks to grow students academically but also in character and values, such as accountability and self-discipline. As a result, most models include some form of ethics or character-building study. In faith-based schools, religion classes typically serve as the basis for character and value development. In a non-religious school setting, character development is usually woven into the curriculum and can also be addressed through civics classes.

Switching to Classical Education

As a former public school education teacher, I was initially resistant to the idea of classical education as opposed to current educational practices. However, in learning more about the model, I can see a variety of positive aspects to the approach. But, what about families whose children have spent years in the public school system? Would it be too disruptive to switch their children to a classical education model? I learned that, generally, it can be somewhat easier (although challenging for the parent) to transition to a classical homeschool practice rather than a formal school setting. In the homeschool setting you can work to meet your child where he or she is and can pace the progression of the curriculum according to individual

needs. If you want to switch your child to a classical school setting, it’s important to meet with the school to determine the best entry point. Some schools prefer that a student enter at certain grades, while others will recommend a start before the logic phase of the Trivium. You may also have to do some study outside of school to bring your child

up-to-speed. In fact, if the classical school you are interested in offers a summer school program, it can be a great way to have your child experience a less formal beginning to the model. Ultimately, all proponents of classical education say that, in the end, it’s really never too late to start.



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| MAD SCIENCE | 4-12 | www.austin.madscience.org | 512-892-1143 | Multiple locations |
| PARAGON PREP SUMMER CAMP | 3 yrs-8th | www.paragonprep.org | 512-459-5040 | N |
| STEPPING STONE SCHOOLS | 5-11 | www.steppingstoneschool.com | 512-459-0258 | 17 locations |

TECHNOLOGY

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|------|----------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| CODING WITH KIDS | 5-18 | www.codingwithkids.com | | S, C, N, CP, RR, L, DP, BC |
| IDEA LAB | 5-13 | www.austin.idealabkids.com | 512-710-9654 | C |



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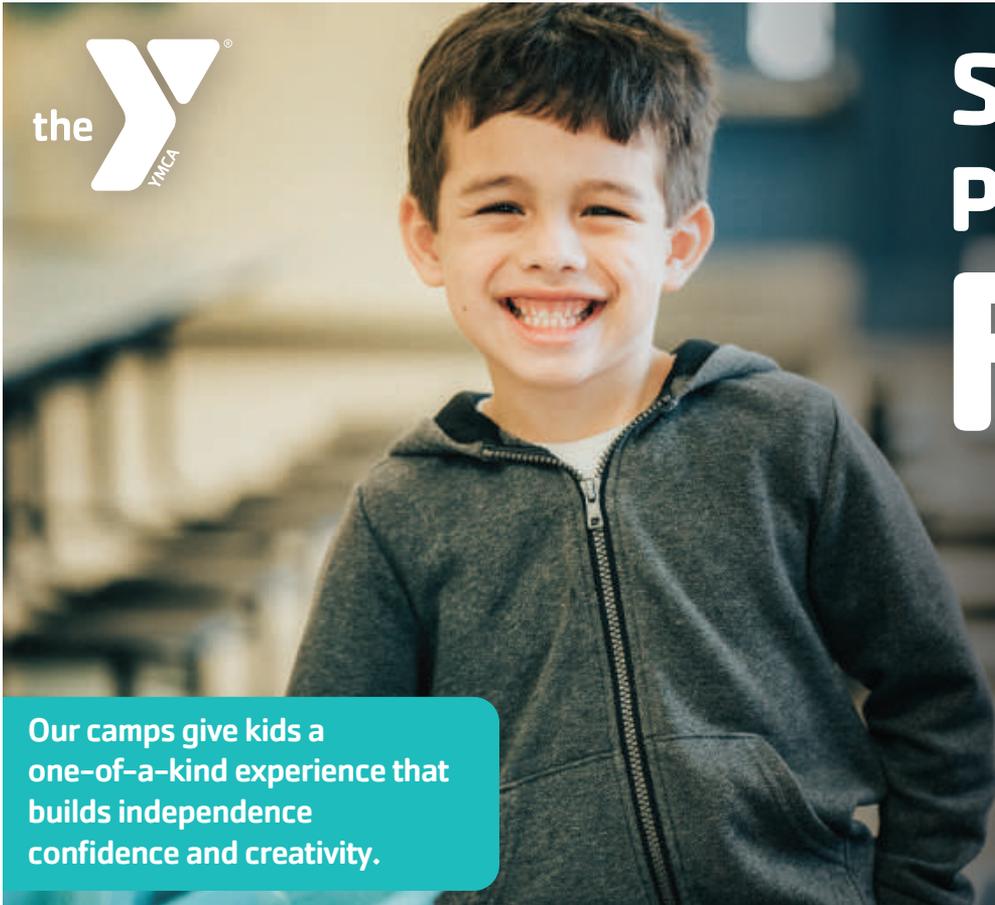
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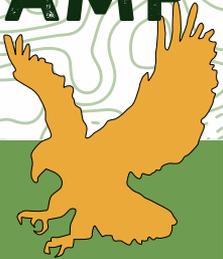


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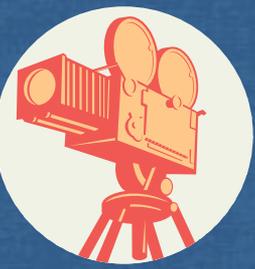


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WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PANDAS DISORDER

LIFELINES

BRENDA SCHOOLFIELD

Brenda Schoolfield is a medical writer and editor who lives in Austin. Sugar, her cocker spaniel and sometimes a rescue foster dog or two keep her company while she writes.



What if your child suddenly developed obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), tics, severe anxiety and hyperactivity? These symptoms could be associated with an autoimmune disorder called PANDAS.

What Is PANDAS?

PANDAS stands for pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric disorder associated with Streptococcus. Let's look at what that means:

- **Pediatric.** PANDAS occurs in children ages three to about thirteen years old. It is rarely seen in teens.
- **Autoimmune.** An autoimmune condition is one where your immune system attacks your body by mistake.
- **Neuropsychiatric.** This is a medical umbrella term that includes disorders involving both the nervous system and the mind.
- **Disorder.** A disorder is a medical condition when the mind or body isn't functioning normally.
- **Associated with.** This term is used in medicine to relate a condition or outcome to another factor;

sometimes the relationship is unclear.

- **Streptococcus.** PANDAS is thought to be triggered by a Streptococcus (Strep) infection. Strep throat or scarlet fever are infections caused by these bacteria.

What Are the Symptoms?

Symptoms of PANDAS appear quite suddenly following a Strep infection. Your child might wake up happy and well-adjusted then by evening have obsessions, compulsions and tics. Some children with PANDAS have severe separation anxiety and don't want to be away from their parents. Others suddenly become moody, irritable and have trouble sleeping.

What Causes PANDAS?

Pandas has been associated with Strep infection. When a child gets a Strep infection, the body produces antibodies to fight the invading bacteria. Children develop PANDAS when the immune response goes awry. The antibodies somehow get misdirected and end up reacting with the part of the brain that

is involved in controlling movement and behavior. This is what causes neuropsychiatric symptoms like OCD and tics.

How Do I Know if My Child Has PANDAS?

If you suspect that your child has PANDAS, choose a medical provider carefully. One survey reports that it took an average of three years and visits to twelve medical providers for a child to get a diagnosis of PANDAS or its broader diagnostic category. Look for providers trained in PANDAS, which may include allergists, rheumatologists or infectious disease specialists.

There are no lab tests to diagnose PANDAS. Providers must evaluate clinical symptoms. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, some diagnostic criteria are

- Presence of OCD, tics or both
- Neurological abnormalities that the child can't control, such as hyperactivity or jerky movements
- Positive test for Strep infection or history of Strep infection

- Abrupt symptoms—they appear “out of the blue” or existing conditions get worse very quickly

How is PANDAS Treated?

PANDAS can be devastating for both the child and the parents. Parents need support and education to manage their child’s behavioral issues and to find effective treatment.

Treatment should be individualized to your child’s symptoms and behavioral needs. Medicines may include antibiotics to fight underlying Strep infection. Anti-inflammatories may be prescribed to calm the immune system. Antidepressants for management of OCD or depression may be dangerous for children with PANDAS so should be used with caution. More extreme treatments are available for children whose symptoms are so severe that they can’t function.

Behavioral therapy for the child can help with OCD fears, anxiety, depression and other behavioral challenges. Individual therapy for the parents and family therapy can make a big difference in everyone’s quality of life. (See the sidebar Resources for Parents to learn how to build a support system.)

SYMPTOMS ASSOCIATED WITH PANDAS

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) lists the following symptoms that children with PANDAS can experience (in addition to OCD or tic disorder):

- Mood changes, such as being irritable, sad or responding inappropriately
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Separation anxiety
- Trouble going to sleep or sleeping through the night
- Bed wetting at night or frequent trips to the bathroom during the day
- Changes in motor skills
- Joint pain

Source: National Institute of Mental Health. PANDAS—Questions and Answers. www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/pandas

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

The PANDAS Physicians Network

www.pandasppn.org/aap/ website includes a practitioner directory to help you find a trained provider.

Texas Pediatric Acute-Onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome Advisory Council

(2021 Report on PANS and PANDAS in Texas) www.hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/laws-regulations/reports-presentations/2021/pansac-report-sept-2021.pdf

Psychology Center of Austin website.

Pediatric Autoimmune Encephalopathies webpage www.psychologycenterofaustin.com/pandas-and-pans.html provides counseling treatment recommendations as well as links to books, websites, PANDA friendly providers, psychiatrists, and therapists.

Facebook Support Groups
Austin PANDAS/PANS

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March 2023 calendar

Go to austinfamily.com for expanded listings.

Check our calendar online which is updated daily. Any family-friendly events can be posted at www.austinfamily.com and will be made live once approved. Certain restrictions apply.

WED 1

LITTLE SPROUTS. 10 – 11 a.m. Tailored for children ages 3 to 5 years old, Little Sprouts is a celebration of nature play, led by trained guides. Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave. www.wildflower.org.

THU 2

FAMILY NIGHT. 6 – 6:45 p.m. Come for a fun-filled family night at the library. We'll have various activities such as crafts, special guests and more. Pflugerville Public Library, 1008 W. Pfluger St. www.library.pflugervilletx.gov.

FRI 3

COWBOY BREAKFAST. 6 – 8 a.m. The Cowboy Breakfast is a free Texas-sized breakfast held at the Long Center for the Performing Arts. Long Center, 701 W Riverside Dr. FREE. www.rodeoaustin.com. 512-474-5664

SAT 4

BABY BLOOMERS. 8 – 10 a.m. Baby Bloomers is a special program during which the museum is open exclusively for visitors ages 0–3 years and their families. Thinkery, 1830 Simond Avenue. www.thinkeryaustin.org.

IT'S MY PARK DAY. 9 a.m. – 12 p.m. Join Austin Parks Foundation and Austin Parks and Recreation to have the best It's My Park Day yet! Arts crafts, education and more. Austin Parks locations throughout Austin. FREE. www.austinparks.org.

PIPI LONGSTOCKING. 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Pippi Longstocking is a scrappy 9-year-old little girl who asks a lot of questions and always puts bullies in their place. Austin Scottish Rite Theater, 207 W 18th St. \$15 – \$20. www.scottishritetheater.org.

SUN 5

KIDS MAKERS' MARKET. 2 – 5 p.m. Join us for our monthly Kids Maker's Market. The Hive, 10542 Menchaca Rd. www.hiveaustin.com.

COMMUNITY HOURS. 3 – 5 p.m. Thinkery opens our doors for children and families to explore our exhibits. Admission by Donation. Thinkery, 1830 Simond Ave. www.thinkeryaustin.org.

MON 6

FAMILY NIGHT. 6 – 6:45 p.m. Come for a fun-filled family night at the library. We will schedule different activities such as crafts, special guests, and more. Pflugerville Public Library, 1008 W. Pfluger St. www.library.pflugervilletx.gov.

CONTINUED: Baby Boomers same as Sat 4, See Sat 4. Family Night, see Thu 2

TUE 7

KITTY CAFE. 4:30 – 5:30 p.m. Come socialize with adoptable felines from Pflugerville Animal Welfare Services (PAWS) and enjoy a cup of cocoa or coffee. Pflugerville Public Library, 1008 W. Pfluger St. www.library.pflugervilletx.gov.

CONTINUED: Community Hours, see Sun 5.

WED 8

MARIO KART 8 TOURNAMENT (All ages). 6 – 8 p.m. Join us for a friendly, recreational competition of Mario Kart 8. We'll play in the Game Room of the Rec. Center on the big screen. Pflugerville Recreation Center, 400 Immanuel Rd. www.parks.pflugervilletx.gov.

CONTINUED: Little Sprouts, see Wed 1;

FRI 10

PARENTS NIGHT OUT AT SOUTHWEST. 6 p.m. Have a great evening out while the kids have a blast. Southwest Family Y, www.austinyymca.org.

SAT 11

BATTLEGROUND 1863 CIVIL WAR LIVING HISTORY EVENT. 1 p.m. The Texas Military Forces Museum will explore the weapons



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and tactics of the American Civil War with a special program – Battleground 1863- at Camp Texas Military Forces Museum, 2200 West 35th St. www.texasmilitaryforcesmuseum.org.

PARENTS NIGHT OUT. 5:30 – 9:30 p.m. Have a great evening out while the kids have a blast. Springs Family Y, www.austinyymca.org.

CONTINUED: Baby Bloomers, see Sat 4; Pipi Longstocking, see Sat 4.

SUN 12

CONTINUED: Pipi Longstocking, see Sat 4; Kids Makers' Market, see Sun 5; Community Hours see Sun 5; Battleground 1863 Civil War Living History Event, see Sat 11.

MON 13

MAD SCIENCE AT THE LIBRARY. 3 – 4 p.m. and 4:30 – 5:30 p.m. Join us for the wacky fun of Mad Science at Round Rock Public Library. Round Rock Public Library, 200 E. Liberty Ave. www.roundrocktexas.gov.

CONTINUED: Baby Bloomers, see Mon 6; Family Night, see Mon 6.

TUE 14

TEEN REPTILE SHOW. 1 p.m. Watch a live reptile show just for teens. Registration required. For tweens and teens. www.cityofkyle.com.

CONTINUED: Community Hours, see Sun 5.

WED 15

CONTINUED: Little Sprouts, see Wed 1.

FRI 17

GAME ON! AT THE LIBRARY. 2 – 4 p.m. Attention Spring Breakers! All ages. Visit Round Rock Public Library for some special gaming fun. Round Rock Public Library, 216 E Main St. www.roundrocktexas.gov.

SAT 18

CONTINUED: Baby Bloomers, see Sat 4.

SUN 19

CONTINUED: Community Hours, see Sun 5; Kids Makers' Market, see Sun 4.

MON 20

CONTINUED: Baby Bloomers, see Mon 6; Family Night, see Mon 6.

TUE 21

CONTINUED: Community Hours, see Sun 5.

WED 22

MUSIC ON MAIN (Spring 2023). 7 – 9 p.m. Music on Main returns for the Spring 2023 season, when we'll present a roster of diverse genres of music, rock-n-roll, Tejano, country, boogie and more. Main Street Plaza, 221 East Main St. www.roundrocktexas.gov.

CONTINUED: Little Sprouts, see Wed 1.

SAT 25

MASON HERITAGE DAYS. 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Take a step back in time at Leander's Mason Homestead. Enjoy food and fun while learning about the fascinating history of the region. Leander Public Library, 1011 S. Bagdad. www.leandertx.gov.

MARCH FAMILY CAMPOUT. 2 p.m. – 10 a.m. Join us for a spring night under the stars camping at YMCA Camp Moody. We provide the tents, meals and s'mores

around the campfire. YMCA Camp Moody, 1220 Old San Antonio Rd., Buda. www.austinyymca.org.

CONTINUED: Baby Bloomers, see Sat 5

SUN 26

CONTINUED: Community Hours, see Sun 5; Kids Makers' Market, see Sun 4.

MON 27

CONTINUED: Baby Bloomers, see Sat 4; Family Night, see Mon 6.

TUE 28

CONTINUED: Community Hours, see Sun 5.

WED 29

ONSITE: BACKYARD STORYTIME. 10:30 a.m. Join us for Backyard Storytime at Laura's Library. This program develops early literacy

skills through story sharing and songs. All ages welcome. Laura Bush Community Library, 9411 Bee Cave Rd. www.westbanklibrary.com.

CONTINUED: Little Sprouts, see Wed 1.

THU 30

ONSITE: BACKYARD STORYTIME.

10:30 a.m. Join us for Backyard Storytime at Westbank Library. This program develops early literacy skills through story sharing and songs. All ages welcome. Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. www.westbanklibrary.com.

FRI 31

Round Rock Express vs Albuquerque.

7:05 p.m. Dell Diamond, 3400 E Palm Valley Blvd. www.milb.com.

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SMART SCREEN TIME

DR. BENJAMIN KRAMER

Kramer, PhD, is the director of education for Austin PBS.

Learn to Love Debugging

If I ever go back to classroom teaching, I'm going to fully embrace making mistakes as the absolute best learning opportunities – moments for celebration, not discouragement. The scientific community has long regarded error analysis as the foundation for scientific advancement, but outside of that world we seem to want to get things right the first time and if we don't, we see a situation that calls for corrective action.

Here's an example of the value of error analysis – when youth are first presented with the task of adding two fractions, they instinctively add the numerator and denominator. In the United States, we usually want to undo this instinct through modeling and demonstration of the correct way to add fractions. But from another approach, the Japanese national mathematics curriculum leans into that instinctive first step, and takes kids through a series of activities that help bring them to their own conclusion – that adding the numerator and denominator simply does not work! At that point of recognition, teachers can then lay out a new view of fractions and how they can be combined.

PBS KIDS has a new show for children ages 2–6 called *Work It Out Wombats!* that tells stories using computational thinking, the skills employed in computer programming and other creative endeavors. Central to computational thinking is the ability to debug, or fix, inevitable errors. The three wombat siblings look for challenges

or encounter problems in their daily adventures, then determine steps to reach their goals. They are passionate, but they don't always know the best way forward. By using computational thinking, they have a powerful toolkit for self-expression, for building projects and for getting out of messes.

The next time I know I've made a mistake, and my kids are present, I'm going to try a new approach. Rather than being negative, I'm going to gleefully state, "Aha! I've messed up! Now what can I learn from this?" My kids are teenagers, so they'll groan, but maybe they'll pick up on this notion that we all need some debugging, so we might as well have fun with it.

Reminder: This is the last month for submissions to our K-5 Writers Contest! Go to www.austinpbs.org/writers for details! All stories get published in eBook form!

PBS KIDS Austin PBS

WRITERS CONTEST

2023

We're looking for amazing stories, written and illustrated by kids in Kindergarten–5th grade. We'll publish all stories on our website, every kid will get a certificate, and some will get prizes!

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Austin Then *and* Now

BRITTANY WILLIAMS

Brittany is a writer and realtor in Austin where she loves exploring the city's green spaces with her husband, son and daughter.

The Thinkery

Then



Austin Children's Museum from 1987-1997

Before it ever had a permanent home, the Austin Children's Museum lived out of a station wagon. That's right, it was a mobile museum created by a group of parents and educators who wanted to offer broader cultural experiences to the kids of Austin. These successful station wagon

exhibits visited libraries, schools, parks and even malls.

But by 1987, the museum needed a permanent home, which they found in a 5,000 sqft building on West Fifth Street. Outgrowing that space within a decade, the museum later relocated to a 12,500 sqft. building on Colorado Street. Many Austinites remember its bright, lime-green exterior! Inside, a colorful interior greeted visitors, and kids were free to explore numerous exhibits. It was a hit, but before long, the museum needed yet more space in which to expand creativity and grow. Ultimately, The Children's Museum raised \$18 million to build the 40,000 sqft red structure in Mueller that we know today.

Now



Photo credit for both photos: The Thinkery

Admission is about the price of a movie ticket, but the Thinkery values accessibility to all, so they created the Open Door Initiative, which provides free and discounted admissions to those who need the assistance.

Enjoy specialized hours and programs including Baby Bloomers, which is an early bird program for the tiny visitors (under age three) and their families. Little Thinkers Preschool is STEAM-focused for kids ages three and four. STEAM weeks change themes regularly, providing gallery drop-in activities. The size and noise level of the Thinkery can be overwhelming for some, so they offer quieter, less crowded times during their Sensory Friendly Hours. Finally, C.R.E.A.T.E. (Collaboration to Realize Equity and Teach Engineering) is their notable afterschool program. Visit their website for more information on camps, membership perks, birthday parties, etc. You'll want to make a day of it, so pack a lunch and enjoy a picnic out front by Mueller Lake.

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