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TUNE IN



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



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Editor's Note



CELESTE DIANNE WADE

Wade is a writer, public speaker, and a popular health coach in Austin. The eldest of seven children, she loves travel adventures with family.

Spring break is just around the corner. Springtime in the Austin hill country has always been one of my favorite seasons. The bluebonnets and wildflowers lining the highways make me happy. The flowers remind me to schedule the annual family bluebonnet photo. The pictures are evidence that the kids and fur babies are growing up.

There's never a shortage of fun things to do in Austin, but sometimes it's nice to create a special plan. This month's feature article highlights ways to make spring break memorable for kids 8 years and under. Discover new ideas for planning a great adventure in and around the Austin area.

Don't forget to utilize our summer camp guide as you make your summer family plans. Check out our social media pages on Instagram @ATXFamily and Facebook @Austin Family Magazine for parenting inspiration throughout the month.

Catch our media correspondent, Alison Bogle, on Thursday mornings, on FOX 7 Austin discussing all the great content you can find inside the pages of *Austin Family magazine*.

2025

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Austin IN ACTION

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March Must Do's

March 5th – 6th

Amplify Austin Day

Source: www.ilivehereigivehere.org

March 7th – 15th

South by Southwest (SXSW)

Source: www.sxsw.com

March 14th – 29th

Rodeo Austin

Source: www.rodeoaustin.com

Zoocade Opens in Austin, First Holographic Zoo in the United States

Zoocade, the first-of-its-kind technology and experience in the United States, is now open in Austin. Technology meets entertainment as families step inside an environment where animals are brought to life through 3D glasses and holographic technology, named one of TIME Magazine's 2023 Inventions of the Year.

Previously only available in Australia, China, and Canada, Austinites can experience the future of entertainment and holograms right in their backyard with America's first holographic zoo. Zoocade provides lifelike animal encounters, unique holographic photos, adventure rooms, and an arcade.

In the 60-foot+ holographic tunnel, visitors are surrounded by continuously changing animal-themed content. Smaller groups can step inside 200-square-foot holographic rooms for an up-close and personal experience with the animals. During spring break, March 10th-21st, kids and families will have additional access with special hours from 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.



We're Looking for a Few Good Kids ... To Brag On!

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editor2003@austinfamily.com



Amplify Austin Day

I Live Here I Give Here To Host 13th Annual Amplify Austin Day On March 5-6

I Live Here I Give Here is inviting Central Texans to participate in this year's **Amplify Austin Day**, a community-wide giving event on March 5-6. The event will kick off at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, March 5, and conclude at 6 p.m. on Thursday, March 6. Residents across the seven-

county Central Texas region are encouraged to make donations to support over 700 local nonprofit organizations during these 24 hours. **I Live Here I Give Here** will have over 106 new nonprofits participating. This year's goal is to raise \$10 million across all counties.

Amplify Austin Day aims to increase giving in Central Texas for hundreds of nonprofits by providing easily accessible giving opportunities via the online Amplify ATX platform. Donors can search for nonprofit organizations by keyword, location, and category across seven Central Texas counties: Travis, Hays, Williamson, Burnet, Bastrop, Caldwell, and Blanco. Participating nonprofits serve 19 cause categories, including children, families, animals, the environment, and the arts. **I Live Here I Give Here** has also added disability services as a category for the first time, with 27 nonprofits participating.

H-E-B Surprises Central Texas Educators as Finalists for 2025 Excellence in Education Awards

H-E-B announced that 10 Central Texas educators have been named finalists for the 2025 H-E-B Excellence in Education Awards, which awards cash prizes to educators who go the extra mile to serve their students and their communities. Teachers, counselors, and principals received the news from H-E-B representatives during surprise visits to their schools.

Teachers were presented with a \$1,000 check for themselves and a \$1,000 check for their school; counselors were presented with a \$1,000 check for themselves and a \$1,500 check for their school; and principals received a \$1,000 check for themselves and a \$2,500 check for their school. H-E-B recognized 10 Central Texas finalists, awarding \$28,000 to educators and schools.

Thousands of state-certified public school educators currently working in Texas were nominated across multiple categories:

- Teacher -
- School Counselor -
- Principal -
- Early Childhood -
- School Board -
- School District -

The Central Texas finalists are:

- **Sara Allen**, Cullen Elementary School, Hays CISD, Rising Star Elementary
- **Candace Barnes**, Sunfield Elementary School, Hays CISD, School Counselor Elementary
- **Monica Collins**, Pearson Ranch Middle School, Round Rock ISD, Principal Secondary
- **Carol Fernandez**, Maria Hernandez Elementary School, San Marcos CISD, Lifetime Achievement Elementary
- **Wendell Norris Marquez**, Lively Middle School, Austin ISD, Leadership Secondary
- **Vicki Rowe**, Taylor High School, Taylor ISD, Lifetime Achievement Secondary
- **Dr. Amy Sharp**, River Place Elementary School, Leander ISD, Principal Elementary
- **Karen Terry**, Bertha Sadler Means Young Women's Leadership Academy, Austin ISD, School Counselor Secondary
- **Gloria Ramirez Vega**, Pflugerville Elementary School, Pflugerville ISD, Leadership Elementary
- **Kylee Zapalac**, La Grange High School, La Grange ISD, Rising Star Secondary

The complete list of statewide finalists will be announced later this spring. The winners for the 2025 H-E-B Excellence in Education Awards will be announced at a ceremony at the Hilton Austin on Sunday, May 4, 2025, where \$480,000 will be awarded.

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How Important is Creativity in Children?

Lifelines

SANDI SCHWARTZ

Schwartz is an award-winning author, freelance journalist, and mother of two.



How much time do your children spend dabbling in the arts? Creativity is the ability to think in unusual, divergent ways. It does not only refer to artistic and musical expression; it is also essential for science, math, and social/emotional intelligence. Creativity develops many positive characteristics and helps children lead happy, successful lives. Unfortunately, creativity is becoming somewhat endangered in this generation because technology and busy schedules are taking priority over the arts. We can guide our children's growth and success by incorporating creativity into their daily routines.

Benefits of Creativity

When children grow up with opportunities to be creative, they can develop key skills that will help them succeed throughout their lives.

Develop Problem-Solving Skills

The arts help children learn to use innovative thinking while making decisions and solving problems. Many experts find that creativity rewires the brain to think 'outside of the box,'

an essential skill for all aspects of life. When children are creative, they tap into intuition, imagination, and playfulness, which help to solve complex problems. Without even realizing it, children working on creative projects are organically challenged to solve problems such as what colors to use, how to make a line, and what size to make something. Researchers from Michigan State University have found a strong correlation between childhood engagement in the creative arts and measurable success later in life. Children exposed to arts and crafts are more likely to create unique inventions worthy of patents, start a company, or publish provocative papers on science and technology.

Express Emotions

Creativity provides an outlet for children to express and cope with their emotions. Art offers a way to communicate ideas, feelings, and solutions without speaking or writing. Children with the ability to express emotions in this way can better manage challenges and issues like anger, anxiety, and depression.

Improve Concentration

Creativity helps children learn to concentrate and focus more effectively on the task at hand, which is important for studying and working in the future. Artists can become so absorbed in their project that they reach a state of flow or the sense of being completely engaged in an activity to the point of being in a near-meditative state.

Persevere and Work Hard

Creativity helps children build patience and perseverance as they develop new skills and face frustration and setbacks. Art allows them to try different approaches until they are satisfied with their creation. Perseverance is a vital skill for adapting to changes and developing new skills in an increasingly competitive world.

Achieve Academic Awards

According to a Stanford University study, children who participate in arts-based programs are more successful academically. Some of their achievements included being more likely to win an academic award such as the

honor roll, to receive a community service award, and to participate in a math or science fair. These students also scored higher on the SAT.

Adopt a More Flexible and Worldly View

When children are exposed to the arts, they experience multiple cultures and ideas that they are not familiar with. This helps them learn to think with an open mind and realize that there are various points of view. A study at the University of Kansas found that during a visit to an art museum, students displayed higher levels of social tolerance, exhibited more empathy, and developed an interest in art and cultural institutions.

5. Invite your children to cook or bake with you in the kitchen.
6. Include fun arts and crafts projects during playdates and birthday parties.
7. Allow for plenty of artistic free play in your home, such as singing, dancing, puppet shows, and reading books aloud with expression.
8. Point out interesting art around you during your daily routine—while shopping, at parks, traveling, at friends' houses, and even at the doctor's office.

Talk to your children about what they observe.

9. Study famous artists and their works by getting books at the library or watching videos. Challenge your children to do their version of the famous artwork.
10. Play games that involve creativity, like Pictionary (drawing) and charades (drama), or make up your own game like a songwriting or a poetry contest.

We can guide our children's growth and their success by incorporating creativity into their daily routines.'

Build Confidence

Children encouraged to think creatively tend to have higher self-esteem and confidence. One reason is that children learn to feel pride in their original work. Also, many types of art forms, like drama and dance, require individuals to build new skills to perform in front of an audience.

How To Raise More Creative Children

Creativity can be learned. It is not necessarily a natural talent that we are born with. There is so much that we can do to expose our children to opportunities for creativity so they can develop these skills.

Here are 10 ideas to get your children excited about being creative:

1. Sign them up for art, music, drama, or dance classes.
2. Go to creative performances, such as concerts, theater, ballet, and art festivals.
3. Keep a bin of art supplies in the house and ask them to use their imagination to create.
4. Use art to teach science, math, reading, and other subjects.

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Spring Break with Kids Under 8

CATHERINE MICHALK

Michalk is a native Austinite, writer, and mom of three. You can follow her family's adventures at www.catherinemichalk.com

Spring break is a great time to be in Austin with little kids. There is nothing quite like being a tourist in your hometown, and mid-March has plenty of fun activities for young children. Best of all, you can count on beautiful weather this time of year. If you're used to traveling over spring break, we encourage you to stick around and explore Austin. Check out our round-up of the best places to take your kids ages eight and under around Austin this spring break.



Rodeo Austin

There is so much to do at Rodeo Austin you and your kids won't want to leave! The fairgrounds and carnival offer fun rides, games, food, and drinks. Stroll through the show barn to see the livestock on display. See some breeds you've never heard of. There are plenty of competitions to watch (both amateur and professional) from livestock and

horse riding to art, public speaking, and robotics. If you have an adventurous kid between 5 and 7, they can sign up for the Mutton Bustin' competition, where kids try to hold on to a sheep as it runs around the arena for eight seconds. Go to the Rodeo Austin website to see all the activities, buy tickets and carnival wristbands, and sign up for the competitions.

Dino Days at Zilker Botanical Garden

If you have a budding paleontologist, you'll want to visit the Zilker Botanical Garden during Dino Days this spring. Explore the garden and learn about plants that were around during the age of the dinosaurs. Paleontologists will be on hand to teach kids about fossils found in Texas and the creatures who used to roam our area. Several activities teach kids about dinosaurs—a dig pit, fossil making, and a scavenger hunt. Register through their website to participate in a Prehistoric Planter workshop and take home a prehistoric landscape! Dino Days is scheduled for 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. on weekends between February 22 – March 22. In addition to the regularly scheduled activities, closing day (March 22) will include a Dino Days Parade and performance led by local musical group Big Wy's Brass Band.



Hike, Swim, and Picnic at Emma Long Park

Needing outdoor time this spring break but don't want to compete with the downtown crowds at Zilker Park and Lady Bird Lake? Emma Long Park is located on the shores of Lake Austin, just far enough away from the hustle and bustle of downtown to be a relaxing and nature-filled day. Your family can hike Turkey Creek Trail, an out-and-back trail that takes around an hour before entering the park proper. Once in the park, you can hike, swim, and play in the sand by Lake Austin. Bring a picnic and be prepared to stay for the day. Plan to enjoy outdoor activities like kites, soccer, and frisbees. You can bring a volleyball and use one of the sand courts.

Additionally, you can rent a campsite or RV site at Emma Long Park.

Reserve one in advance as they sell out quickly. Emma Long Park and Turkey Creek Trail are off-leash dog areas; bring your pup along on this adventure.



Visit A Children's Museum

Visiting a children's museum is always a win with kids under eight, and now Austin has two children's museum locations to choose from. The Thinkery's well-loved Mueller location gives kids access to play-based STEAM activities, including a water room, light exhibit, and painting area. After the museum, if your kid still has the energy to burn, you can head across the street to Mueller Lake Park to play and run. The newest location, The Thinkery Del Valle, offers several STEAM-focused learning areas where kids can explore cause-and-effect, renewable energy, and imaginative nature play. The Del Valle location is free to Del Valle residents and has a suggested donation of \$8 per ticket for non-residents. The museum recommends reserving your ticket in advance as that is the only way to guarantee a spot on the day you want to go.

Take a Day Trip

One of the great things about Austin is the abundance of activities that are a short drive away. Pack a lunch and some snacks and head out for a day trip to one of these kid-friendly spots:

- The San Antonio Zoo and the DoSeum (Children's Museum) are a quick drive south of Austin.

You can easily spend the whole day at one of these spots. However, if your kids are past the napping phase, you can visit both in one day with a stop for lunch in between.

- The Sherwood Forest Faire in McDade, TX, about 30 minutes east of town, offers a trip to another era. Check out live music, stage performances, the Joust, and kid-friendly carnival rides. The Faire is open Saturdays and Sundays, March 1 – April 20, plus Friday, March 21, so make sure you leave time during your spring break to visit. Don't forget to wear your fairy wings!
- Waco may be best known for Baylor University and the Magnolia Silos, but there are several kid-friendly spots worth the drive. The Cameron Park Zoo is a favorite with kids of all ages, especially the otter exhibit that lets you slide through a clear tube while otters swim around you. The Mayborn Museum has a whole floor of kid-friendly exhibits, including a bubble room, light and sound space, and a pioneer dress-up room. Finally, if your kid is into fossils, you'll want to check out the Waco Mammoth National Monument. Learn about the Ice Age and see mammoth bones in their dig site.



Pick Fruit and Play at a Local Farm

What better way to celebrate the start of spring than by picking fresh, ripe strawberries? There are several just a short drive from a short drive from Austin. Jenschke Orchard in Fredericksburg offers pick-your-own strawberries February–May. Other treats like peach preserves are available in the country store. The Orchard is next to Leroy's Tex Mex, a popular, convenient Fredericksburg restaurant for lunch or dinner. Sweet Berry Farm in Marble Falls has pick-your-own strawberries, strawberry treats, and fun activities like goat feeding, pony rides, and sand art to keep you busy after picking fruit. North Austin residents don't have to go too far for their strawberries. Georgetown's Sweet Eats Farm also offers pick-your-own strawberries and fun activities like a petting zoo, jump pad, and horse rides. If you visit in March, you will have the opportunity to participate in baby animal bottle feeding. Check out the website for bottle feeding times. March is a great time to pick strawberries, but we recommend checking each farm's website before making the trip. Depending on the winter weather, Austin strawberries may need longer to ripen before picking.



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ART CAMPS OF CORDOVAN ART SCHOOL	5-16 yrs	www.cordovanartschool.com	512-275-4040	NW/SW/CP/GT/RR-2
BADGERDOG CREATIVE WRITING CAMPS	9-18 yrs	www.austinlibrary.org/creative-writing-camps	512-542-0076	C
BRANDY PERRYMAN SHOOTING CAMP	8-17 yrs	www.bperrymanshootingcamp.com	830-625-9105	N/C/S/W-2/SW/CP/GT/RR-2
CAMP CHAMPIONS	6-17 yrs	www.campchampions.com	830-598-2571	Marble Falls, TX
CAMP DOUBLECREEK	4-14 yrs	www.campdoublecreek.com	512-255-3661	PF
CAMP HEART O' THE HILLS FOR GIRLS	6-16 yrs	www.hohcamp.com	830-238-4650	Hunt, TX
CAMP STEWART FOR BOYS	6-16 yrs	www.campstewart.com	830-238-4670	Hunt, TX
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CODING WITH KIDS	5-18 yrs	www.codingwithkids.com		N/SW/On/RR-4
COUNTRY HOME LEARNING CENTER	5-13 yrs	www.countryhomelearningcenter.com	512-288-8220	N/S
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JUMP! GYMNASTICS	3-10 yrs	www.jumpgymnastics.com	512-593-6226	N/C/S
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UT RADIO TV FILM	6-18 yrs	www.rtf.utexas.edu	512-471-6617	C

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REDEEMER SUMMER CAMPS	4-8 yrs	www.redeemerschool.net	512-451-6478	N
SPICEWOOD COUNTRY CAMP	3 ½-10 ½ yrs	www.spicewoodcountry.com	512-346-2992	NW
STEPPING STONE SCHOOLS	5-11 yrs	www.steppingstoneschool.com	512-459-0258	18 locations
SYNERGY DANCE	3-18 yrs	www.synergydancestudio.com	512-327-4130	W
TEX-ARTS	5-18 yrs	www.tex-arts.org	512-852-9079	LT

OVERNIGHT CAMPS

CAMP CHAMPIONS	6-17 yrs	www.campchampions.com	830-598-2571	Marble Falls, TX
CAMP HEART O' THE HILLS FOR GIRLS	6-16 yrs	www.hohcamp.com	830-238-4650	Hunt, TX
CAMP STEWART FOR BOYS	6-16 yrs	www.campstewart.com	830-238-4670	Hunt, TX
NEWK'S OUTBACK ADVENTURE CAMP	8-17 yrs	www.newktennis.com	830-625-9105	New Braunfels, TX
SUGAR & SPICE RANCH CAMP	5 & up	www.texashorsecamps.com	830-460-8487	Bandera, TX
SKYDOME PINHOLE PHOTOGRAPHY CAMP	Family Camp	www.skydome-education.org		BR

ACADEMIC CAMPS

BADGERDOG CREATIVE WRITING CAMPS	9-18 yrs	www.austinlibrary.org/creative-writing-camps	512-542-0076	C
CARPE DIEM SUMMER CAMP	5-12 yrs	www.carpediempreschool.com	512-229-0373	CP
CLUB SCIKIDZ	4-15 yrs	www.austin.clubscikidz.com	512-401-9369	C/S
CODING WITH KIDS	5-18 yrs	www.codingwithkids.com		N/SW/On/RR-4
COUNTRY HOME LEARNING CENTER	5-13 yrs	www.countryhomelearningcenter.com	512-288-8220	N/S
ENDEAVOR SUMMER CAMP	5-10 yrs	www.endeavormontessori.com	512-572-0400	PF
FANTASTIC MAGIC CAMP	5-12 yrs	www.magiccamp.com	512-988-3045	C
IDEA LAB	5-13 yrs	www.austin.idealabkids.com	512-710-9654	N/C
MAD SCIENCE SUMMER CAMPS	4-12 yrs	www.madscience.org	512-892-1143	Multiple
PARAGON PREP SUMMER CAMP	3-8th	www.paragonprep.org	512-459-5040	N
REDEEMER SUMMER CAMPS	4-8 yrs	www.redeemerschool.net	512-451-6478	N
SKYDOME PINHOLE PHOTOGRAPHY CAMP	Family Camp	www.skydome-education.org		BR
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STEPPING STONE SCHOOLS	5-11 yrs	www.steppingstoneschool.com	512-459-0258	17 locations
TEXAS SCIENCE & NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM	All	www.sciencemuseum.utexas.edu		C

ART CAMPS

ARMSTRONG COMMUNITY MUSIC SCHOOL	3-10 yrs	www.acmsaustin.org	512-474-2331	W
ART CAMPS OF CORDOVAN ART SCHOOL	5-16 yrs	www.cordovanartschool.com	512-275-4040	NW/SW/CP/GT/RR-2
DANCE DISCOVERY	3-18 yrs	www.dancediscovery.com	512-419-7611	C, RR
FANTASTIC MAGIC CAMP	5-12 yrs	www.magiccamp.com	512-988-3045	C
KIDSACTING SUMMER CAMPS	4-18 yrs	www.kidsactingstudio.com	512-836-5437	16 Locations
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UT RADIO TV FILM	6-18 yrs	www.rtf.utexas.edu	512-471-6617	C

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CAMP SWITCH WILLO	6-13 yrs	www.switchwillo.com	512-920-0554	N
JUMP! GYMNASTICS	3-10 yrs	www.jump-austin.com	512-705-9659	S/C
MASTER GOHRING TAI CHI AND KUNG FU	4-18 yrs	www.mastergohring.com	512-879-7553	C
NEWK'S OUTBACK ADVENTURE CAMP	8-17 yrs	www.newktennis.com	830-625-9105	New Braunfels, TX
NITRO SWIM	Inf-Adult	www.nitroswim.com	512-259-7999	NW/LT
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SPICEWOOD COUNTRY CAMP	3 ½-10 ½ yrs	www.spicewoodcountry.com	512-346-2992	NW
STEPPING STONE SCHOOLS	5-11 yrs	www.steppingstoneschool.com	512-459-0258	17 locations

TRADITIONAL CAMPS

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CAMP DOUBLECREEK	4-14 yrs	www.campdoublecreek.com	512-255-3661	PF
CAMP HEART O' THE HILLS FOR GIRLS	6-16 yrs	www.hohcamp.com	830-238-4650	Hunt, TX
CAMP STEWART FOR BOYS	6-16 yrs	www.campstewart.com	830-238-4670	Hunt, TX

LOCATIONS
N, C, S, E, W, NW, SW
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GT for Georgetown

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 July 14-18 American Girl Doll
 July 28-1 Moana's Luau

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Shhh, Don't Tell Them They're Learning

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.



Want to know the fastest way to clear a room? Tell your child you are going to sit down together and learn something! Children generally feel like they spend enough time learning at school and want their time at home to be less about lessons and more about fun. So, what do you do if you want to keep the learning going? Bring on the fun! When you make the experience exciting, your child won't even realize that he's also absorbing valuable information.

Try these fun activities to make memories with your child while helping him gain knowledge at the same time:

1. Cooking challenge. Let your child pick out a recipe that appeals to him and then get messy in the kitchen together! Baking is full of math such as fractions, time, and measurement, plus the science of temperatures and chemical reactions. The best part? You get to eat the results.

2. Get building. Break out the Legos and challenge each other to building

contests. Your child will be flexing his spatial awareness, creativity, and engineering skills without even realizing it.

3. Take a walk. Head outside to explore the natural world around you. You can collect rocks, leaves, and other items to research and learn more at home. Talk to him about things you are observing to help him tune into and create awareness of the environment and how to be a good steward of nature.

4. Get crafty. Your recycling bin is a treasure trove of creative possibilities! See what unexpected things you and your child can make with the supplies you already have at home. Or, if your child wants to learn a specific skill, such as knitting or oil painting, take a trip to the local craft store to stock up on supplies. Crafting offers a great opportunity to develop fine motor skills and it can also help with attention and focus, as well as with learning about colors, shapes, patterns, and more.

5. Board, not bored. Board games like Monopoly or Catan foster strategic thinking, reading, and math skills. Break out games like Battleship to practice strategy and math plotting skills. Even simple games like Candy Land help children work on counting, turn-taking, and good sportsmanship.

6. Make music. Bring on the instruments or turn household items into music makers to learn about rhythm and beats while making melodies together. You can also teach your child to read music and help him learn about time signatures, pitch, fractions, and more.

7. Puzzle it out. Puzzles are great for cognitive development! Teach your child to do Sudoku or crosswords and challenge each other to complete a puzzle. Jigsaw puzzles get your child thinking while developing fine motor and problem-solving skills, spatial awareness, and patience. Introduce your child to a variety of puzzle types to find the one that he likes best.

8. Get dirty. Gardening teaches children about biology, ecology, and the responsibility of caring for living things. While your child is digging and planting, he's also learning about the lifecycle of plants – not to mention patience as he waits for those tiny seeds to sprout and grow.

9. Tell stories. There is so much to be learned from the richness of storytelling! Take turns telling each other stories or collaborate by taking turns to create a single story together. Your child will broaden his imagination, deepen his understanding of vocabulary, and strengthen his knowledge of story structure. Have your child put pencil to paper to create a short story or comic and now he will be practicing his fine motor skills and reinforcing his understanding of the directionality of writing.

10. Be scientific. Have fun with experiments like creating slime, erupting a volcano, or making rainbow milk. Use a search engine to read more about "easy science experiments to do at home" and you'll find no shortage of fun activities to try! You'll have a blast together, but your child will learn scientific concepts like chemical reactions, cause-and-effect, states of matter, and more.

11. Teach others. If your child is into technology, help him create a YouTube channel or podcast where he can teach others about something he is interested in. Not only will he learn more about his preferred subject as he sources information to share with others, but he'll also improve his public speaking skills, writing abilities, and technical prowess, as well.

12. Bring history to life. Take history out of the textbooks by making it something your child can see and touch. Ask your child to dress up as a historical figure and act out a historical event. Or, have him take an old shoebox and turn it into a diorama of a pivotal event in the past. You can even encourage your child to build a model of a historical building or artifact such

as a Karankawa wigwam or a piece of Egyptian pottery.

Learning shouldn't be limited to the classroom or a textbook! With the right approach, your home can become just as important a place of learning.

By keeping it lighthearted and playful, your child will be developing important life skills without even realizing it and you'll be making memories together that can only deepen your bond.



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Pretend Play: Why It's Good for Kids

Family Matters



DR. BETTY RICHARDSON

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



Q Can you tell my husband and me exactly what imaginative play is? Are there benefits of this type of play? If so, what is our role as parents, to encourage imaginative play for our 4-year-old daughter Kara?

A Imaginative play also called pretend play or make-believe play involves kids acting out scenarios. It can be done alone or with others. Examples include pretending to cook or have a tea party, taking care of dolls, as if they were babies, playing doctor, talking on a toy phone, playing soldiers or dinosaurs, and many more pretend scenarios. One child I know pretends her dolls are her sisters and she takes

good care of them. Some older children engage in imaginative play with puppets.

Most adults can remember engaging in imaginative play. Some had paper dolls or toy soldiers. My mother helped me to make furniture out of paper for the paper dolls and to make paper dolls instead of buying them. Some people had plastic furniture for their paper dolls and purchased books of paper doll cutouts.

One benefit is helping kids learn to manage their emotions. Other benefits include encouraging kids to feel more confident and independent.

Practicing social skills and life skills are other benefits. It helps children develop language skills.

Parents can encourage imaginative play by providing props such as toy cooking utensils, toy kitchen furniture, baby dolls, doll clothing, doll baby carriage, toy cars, soldiers, Legos, and clothing for dress up such as an old fur coat, jewelry, and hats.

Have fun playing with your daughter, enjoy the special moments for your daughter's imaginative play, and observe her creativity along the way. Children grow up so fast; enjoy them at every age.

VISITAR www.austinfamily.com
Juego de simulación: por qué es bueno para los niños

March 2025 calendar

Go to www.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.

Sat 1

Sports Capital of Texas Motorcycle

Rodeo. 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Round Rock Police Department, in partnership with the Texas Municipal Police Association and the Round Rock Express, will be hosting its second event. Dell Diamond, 3400 E. Palm Valley Blvd. www.roundrocktexas.gov.

Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! The Musical. 11 a.m. When a bus driver takes an unexpected break, chaos ensues as a feisty pigeon takes the wheel. ZACH Theatre, 202 S. Lamar. \$16 - \$38. www.tickets.zachtheatre.org.

Tangle of Tigers. 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. What would you do if you saw a bunch of tigers get their stripes tangled together? Try to help? Point and laugh? Head for the hills? Austin Scottish Rite Theater, 207 W. 18th St. \$17 - \$24. www.scottishtheater.org.

Family Fun Day. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Horse interactions, hayride, s'mores, face painting, horse crafts, and scavenger hunt. DC Riding, 3311 Kelly Ln. \$5 - \$10. www.campdoublecreek.com.

Asian American Resource Center 3rd

Annual Makers Market. 1 to 4 p.m. The spring makers market is a curated lineup of over 20 local AAPI creatives and makers, organizations, and cottage bakers. Asian American Resource Center, 8401 Cameron Rd. www.austintexas.gov.

Over There 1918: WWI Living History Event. 1 to 2:30 p.m. Join the Texas Military Forces Museum as we explore the realities experienced by the 36th Infantry Division of the Texas National Guard. Texas Military Forces Museum, 3038 W. 35th St. www.texasmilitaryforcesmuseum.org.

Sun 2

Campfire. 11 to 11:35 a.m. Come gather around our indoor campfire and experience interactive songs and dances

in a new work for 0 to 5-year-olds and their caregivers. ZACH Theatre, 202 S. Lamar. \$12. www.tickets.zachtheatre.org.

CONTINUED: Tangle of Tigers, see Sat 1.

Tue 4

Canta y Baila Storytime with Special Guest Heartsong Music.

10:30 a.m. A uniquely designed program that provides a culturally rich experience, where children acquire Spanish language skills through music and movement. Laura Bush Community Library, 9411 Bee Cave Rd. www.westbanklibrary.com.

Mardi Gras at La Verde Park. 6 p.m. Join us for a green, purple, and gold celebration. Enjoy music, King Cake, food and drink vendors. Beads and masks will be available while supplies last. La Verde Park, 3901 Burnham. www.cityofkyle.com

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Endeavor Montessori Pflugerville
Location: 18817 N. Heatherwilde Blvd – Building 2, Pflugerville, TX 78660
Phone: (512) 572-0400

Wed 5

All Ages Storytime with Special Guest Heartsong Music. 10:30 a.m. is celebrating 18 years of bringing Austin families Music Together®, an internationally recognized early childhood music and movement program. Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. www.westbanklibrary.com.

Thu 6

Art for Teens: Macrame. 4 to 5:30 p.m. Teens and tweens, come get crafty after school at Westbank. Each month we will

have a new project, and all materials will be provided. Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. www.westbanklibrary.com.

Venardos Circus Presents "Far Beyond." 7 p.m. What do you do when the dream comes true? You take it on the road and share it with the world. Barton Creek Square, 2901 S. Capital of Texas Hwy. \$16.95 - \$59.95. www.venardoscircus.com.

Fri 7

Cowboy Breakfast. 6 to 8 a.m. Bring the family out for a cowboy breakfast

to celebrate Rodeo Austin 2025. Palmer Events Center, 900 Barton Springs Rd. FREE. www.rodeoaustin.com.

Dougherty Arts Center - Art in Cahoots Caregiver & Child Activity. 10 to 11 a.m. A Pop-Up Arts Experience for Caregiver & Child. Dougherty Arts Center, 1110 Barton Springs Rd. www.austintexas.gov.

Sat 8

CONTINUED: Tangle of Tigers, see Sat 1.

Sun 9

CONTINUED: Tangle of Tigers, see Sat 1; Campfire, see Sun 2.

Tue 11

Teen AniManga Club. 6 to 7:30 p.m. Read, watch, and discuss anime and manga with Teen Volunteers Simran, Omar, and other fans. Enjoy Japanese snacks and chat about upcoming series. Austin Central Library, 710 W. César Chávez St. Demonstration Area, 1st Fl. FREE. www.library.austintexas.gov.

Wed 12

Little Sprouts. 10 to 11 a.m. Tailored for children ages 3 to 5, Little Sprouts is a celebration of nature play, led by trained guides. Each program features a nature theme, sensory activity, story, and nature walk. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave. Free with admission. www.wildflower.org.

Fri 14

Spring Fling Dance. 6 to 8 p.m. Join us for fun, themed dances for individuals with disabilities. Come dance the night away and socialize with friends. Rabb House, 151 N. A.W. Grimes Blvd. www.roundrocktexas.gov.

Sat 15

Open House Camp Stewart and Camp Heart O' Hills. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For a day of fun, come explore the Ragsdale Family's overnight boys' and girls' camps. 612 FM 1340, Hunt. www.campstewart.com and www.hohcamp.com.

Musician Staci Gray. 10:30 a.m. A "Big Bubble Be Bop" concert with local musician Staci Gray. Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. www.westbanklibrary.com.

Austin Taiko. 1 p.m. During the drum performance, Austin Taiko will perform original, made-for-Austin set pieces as well as traditional Japanese compositions. Laura Bush Community Library, 9411 Bee Cave Rd. www.westbanklibrary.com.

Sun 16

CONTINUED: Campfire, see Sun 2.

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Tue 18

Juggling Show with Jason & Matt

Tardy. 1 p.m. Come enjoy high-energy juggling and off-the-cuff comedy by professional jugglers Jason and Matt Tardy. Laura Bush Community Library, 9411 Bee Cave Rd. www.westbanklibrary.com.

Wed 19

Touch a Truck - Ambulance with

Republic EMS. 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Outside this week's Preschool Play, you'll be able to touch, explore, and climb inside a real Republic EMS ambulance. Laura Bush Community Library, 9411 Bee Cave Rd. www.westbanklibrary.com.

Thu 20

STEAM Lab. 10 a.m. Discover how science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics have powered Texas history. Bob Bullock State History Museum, 1800 Congress Ave. \$9 - \$11. www.thestoryoftexas.com.

"Texas Springtime" with Lucas

Miller, The Singing Zoologist. 1:30 p.m. Calling all animal lovers, Texas' own "singing zoologist," Lucas Miller, will be celebrating spring. Laura Bush Community Library, 9411 Bee Cave Rd. www.westbanklibrary.com.

Fri 21

Mad Science Fun Center: Spin Art. 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Watch your artwork come to life with centrifugal force in our spin art machine. Laura Bush Community Library, 9411 Bee Cave Rd. www.westbanklibrary.com.

Sat 22

Alpaca Visit with Texas Party

Animals. 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Let's celebrate spring with an alpaca meet and greet. Laura Bush Community Library, 9411 Bee Cave Rd. www.westbanklibrary.com.

Austin Allies Kids' Book Club. 1 to

2 p.m. Calling all 3rd-8th graders. Join us for a free, 1-hour book club discussion designed for middle grade readers. BookPeople, 603 N. Lamar Blvd. FREE. www.austinallies.org.

Sun 23

CONTINUED: Campfire, see Sun 2.

Wed 26

CONTINUED: Canta y Baila Storytime with Special Guest Heartsong Music, see Tue 4; Little Sprouts, see Wed 12.

Fri 28

Transformers One (2024) - Community

Cinema. 7 to 10 p.m. Grab chairs and a blanket, bring family and friends, and enjoy the film screening. Community First! Village, 9301 Hog Eye Rd. FREE. www.mlf.org.

Sat 29

Gran Prix Junior Tennis Tournament.

8 a.m. to 6 p.m. The Tennis Tour is comprised of eight open tournaments for young tennis players ready to try competitive play. Onion Creek Country Club, 2510 Onion Creek Pkwy. \$40 - \$60. www.austintennis.org.

Mason Heritage Day. 10 a.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. Williamson Museum, 716 S. Austin Ave. www.leandertx.gov.

Reimers Observatory 10th Anniversary

Star Party. 7:30 to 10 p.m. The public is invited to discover the wonders of the night sky through powerful telescopes, stargaze in the pristine beauty of a natural setting. Travis County's Reimers Ranch Park, 10001 Bureson Rd. FREE. www.traviscountyparksfoundation.org.

Sun 30

CONTINUED: Campfire, see Sun 2.

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KIDZONE

Make a St. Patrick's Day Bouquet



Kids can transform 2D paper into beautiful 3D flowers, exploring creativity and engineering techniques to craft petals, leaves, and stems. Explore folding, cutting, and gluing techniques to make these flowers three-

dimensional. Make them extra fun by adding patterns and textures to petals and leaves, then create a fun St. Patrick's Day bouquet by adding various shades of green flowers, or even some super lucky four-leaf clovers.

Materials Needed:

- Scissors – Great for cutting and shaping paper.
- Textured scissors – Add decorative, playful edges.
- Colorful Paper – Mix it up with colors, textures, or patterns.
- Newsprint
- Hot Glue Tools
- Hot Glue – To hold your masterpiece together.
- Straws – To hold your masterpiece together.

Step One: Choose your colors and cut

Choose colors and shades of paper, then start cutting different sizes and shapes of leaves and petals. For lucky four-leaf clovers – cut four hearts; one heart is one leaf.

Step Two: Bend, Shape, and Arrange

Transform those flat pieces of paper into dynamic shapes! Bend and shape the leaves and petals and arrange the pieces side to side or on top of one another to add depth and make your flowers three-dimensional. Get creative and play around with different textures, shapes, and ways of bending the paper and attach the straws.

Step Three: Glue all pieces together

Once you have an idea of how you want your flowers and clovers to look, glue the pieces together to fully form your 3D plant masterpiece!

Step Four: Build out your bouquet

Want to go even bigger and better for your St. Patrick's Day celebration? Add all of your flowers and four-leaf clovers together to create your very own bouquet.

Creating a St. Patrick's Day bouquet is a simple project kids of all ages can enjoy. Plus, it's a craft for any time of the year. Happy crafting!

Thinkery, a nonprofit and Austin's children's museum, brings joy to learning through play-based, STEAM exploration for children so they cultivate a lifelong love of learning and thrive. Learn more at thinkeryaustin.org.

An Interview with Amanda Salinas



Austin Family Magazine Interview with Amanda Salinas

Austin is bursting with people doing exciting work, and that includes moms who work hard to raise their kids. Every other month, Austin Family features a short interview with an Austin mom doing the extraordinary work of parenting.

Austin, meet Amanda Salinas.

AF: Tell our Austin Family readers a little bit about yourself and your family.

For the past 11 years, I've anchored the morning news at FOX 7 Austin. This year, I launched our station's Spanish language digital newscast FOX 7 Español, which I produce and anchor. I'm originally from the border;

my mom is from Laredo, Texas and my dad is from Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. I grew up and was educated in both countries and, to this day, I still travel frequently to Mexico. My husband and I are parents to two great kids, ages 20 and 19. Both are in college now so I'm learning how to be an "empty nester."

AF: Who has been a role model for you as a mom and why?

My mother is my main role model, and she instilled in me a strong work ethic. There are also a handful of teachers who influenced me greatly as I was growing up and I consider them role models, as well.

AF: What are a few good things about raising kids in Austin?

Community is the best thing about raising kids in Austin. Also on our list: access to world-class festivals/events, amazing outdoor/nature spaces, museums and historical markers, plus great food.

AF: What is some of the best parenting advice you've received?

"Little kids, little problems. Big kids, big problems."

AF: If you had known then what you know now, what would you have worried about less as a parent?

I would have worried less about keeping my children on a schedule and would have focused instead on staying in the moment.

AF: What's one of the biggest challenges of parenting you didn't expect?

I didn't expect that patience would be such a part of parenting. As parents, we are challenged to accept that struggle and difficulty are part of life.

AF: What do you love these days about being a mom?

I love the relationship that I have with my children at this different stage of life, especially the relationship I have with my 20-year-old daughter. She trusts me, she calls me, she listens to me, and I listen to her. It's everything I could have asked for and more.

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