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TUNE IN



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

FEATURE



10 School's Out — Camp's In!



Carter is 9 years old and loves to play football with his siblings, cousins, and friends.

Photo taken by Jordan Ashley Photography.



View the magazine online

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.

November brings crisp air, golden leaves, and a welcome reminder to pause and give thanks. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national day of Thanksgiving, urging Americans to set aside the last Thursday in November to reflect with gratitude. Amidst the hardship of a divided nation, Lincoln recognized the importance of unity, thankfulness, and hope.

Today, Thanksgiving remains a time-honored tradition in the United States. It is more than turkey and football. It is about families gathering, neighbors lending hands, and communities taking stock of what truly matters. As we navigate 2025, a year filled with challenges, changes, and opportunities, the need for gratitude is as vital as ever.

This month's issue of *Austin Family* celebrates the spirit of Thanksgiving through stories of giving, features on local volunteer efforts, and ideas for creating meaningful family traditions. We invite you to embrace the season with open hearts and full tables.

Whether you're a parent, grandparent, educator, or caregiver, may this issue inspire you to reflect on your blessings, express appreciation, and nurture kindness in your home and community.

From our *Austin Family* to yours, thank you for allowing us to be a part of your lives.

Happy Thanksgiving.

austinfamily

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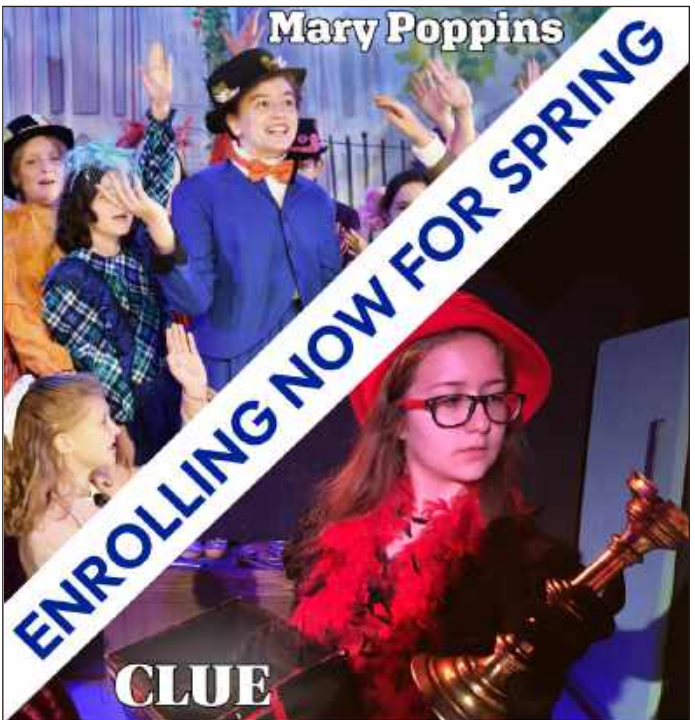
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Austin IN ACTION

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November Did You Know?

Election Day

Ballot received by November 4th.
Source: www.austintexas.gov

Daylight Savings Time

Went into effect in 1918
Source: www.loc.gov

1st Thanksgiving Proclamation

By George Washington in 1789
Source: www.archives.gov



Helping Kids Heal: Grief Support Takes Center Stage at FORE Kids ATX

Celebrity couples Sergio and Angela Garcia and Chris Harrison and Lauren Zima are joining forces for FORE Kids ATX, a two-day gala and golf fundraiser supporting grieving children in Texas.

Held Nov. 6–7 at Omni Barton Creek, the event will benefit Experience Camps, a nonprofit offering free grief programs for bereaved kids.

Harrison and Zima, new co-hosts, bring personal passion to the cause alongside longtime hosts, the Garcias. “We’re proud to help bring more grief resources to Texas families,” Zima said.

The gala, themed “A Night in Old Spain,” includes a cocktail reception, dinner, live music, and celebrity appearances. The golf tournament follows Friday, uniting athletes, celebrities, and community leaders.

Since its 2022 debut, FORE Kids ATX has raised over \$7 million for children’s organizations including Dell Children’s Medical Center, Foster Village, and the Center for Child Protection.

It's time to start enjoying life!

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*Do you need to reduce your
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Give Back Together: Thanksgiving Volunteering for Austin Families

This Thanksgiving, Operation Turkey invites Austin families to volunteer together in delivering meals and care to those in need across the city.

With events in northwest Austin, downtown, and south Austin, the volunteer-driven nonprofit offers flexible opportunities for families to get involved and teach children the values of compassion, teamwork, and gratitude.

Volunteer orientations, held both in-person and online, help families prepare and connect with site leaders. The effort begins Wednesday, Nov. 26, with the Turkey Tailgate, where volunteers cook turkeys, sort donations, and organize supplies. Families with smokers or Pitmasters are especially encouraged to participate.

The main event takes place Thanksgiving morning, when volunteers plate meals, pack supplies, and deliver them citywide. Children can decorate meal bags or carry light items, while older volunteers assist with kitchen prep, setup, or delivery.

By volunteering with Operation Turkey, Austin families can create lasting holiday memories while helping their neighbors in need. To sign up or learn more, visit www.OperationTurkey.com.



Books, Authors, and Family Fun at the 2025 Texas Book Festival

The Texas Book Festival celebrates its 30th anniversary with a weekend of literary events in downtown Austin, Nov. 8 and 9. Free and open to the public, the festival will feature more than 300 authors and over 200 events in and around the Texas State Capitol.

Founded in 1995 by Laura Bush and Mary Margaret Farabee, the festival has become one of the nation's largest literary gatherings. It continues to connect readers and authors, highlighting the power of storytelling to inspire and unite.

Programming includes children's story times, young adult panels, and interactive family activities. Events will take place at the Capitol, along 11th Street and Congress Avenue, and at venues such as the State Theatre and The Contemporary Austin Jones Center.

The festival's reach extends beyond the weekend. It donates books to Title I schools and funds Texas public libraries, contributing over \$3.6 million and more than 188,000 books since its founding.

From meeting favorite authors to discovering new reads, the Texas Book Festival offers something for all ages. For a full schedule and updates, visit texasbookfestival.org.



DPS Launches Nation's First Airborne Drone Detection System to Boost Safety in Austin

Parents in Austin can breathe a little easier knowing Texas is leading the way in public safety innovation. The Texas Department of Public Safety has become the first law enforcement agency in the U.S. to deploy Airborne Counter Unmanned Aircraft Systems, or ACUS, enhancing public safety with real-time drone detection.

Mounted on a DPS helicopter and operational since August, the system allows Tactical Flight Officers to detect, track, and locate unauthorized drones and their operators. It improves safety during disaster response and criminal patrols by alerting both air and ground teams to aerial threats.

The ACUS system offers precise geolocation of drone activity, giving pilots vital situational awareness without engaging the drones. DPS flight crews have received specialized training to interpret and operate the system effectively.

For Austin families attending events or enjoying outdoor spaces, the technology represents a major leap in public safety. As the first of its kind in the nation, the DPS initiative sets a new standard for law enforcement aviation and reflects Texas' commitment to protecting communities from evolving threats.

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The Proclamation of Thanksgiving by President Abraham Lincoln

October 3, 1863

The year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature that they cannot fail to penetrate and even soften the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God.

In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign states to invite and provoke their aggressions, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere, except in the theater of military conflict; while that theater has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the fields of peaceful industry to the national defense have not arrested the plow, the shuttle, or the ship; the ax has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than heretofore. Population has steadily increased, notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege, and the battlefield, and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.

No human counsel hath devised, nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged as with one heart and one voice by the whole American people. I do, therefore, invite my fellow-citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a Day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens. And I recommend to them that, while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings, they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty hand to heal the wounds of the nation, and to restore it, as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes, to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility, and union.

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Cough, Sniffle, Repeat?

Family Matters



DR. BETTY RICHARDSON

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



Q My children always seem to pass around illnesses during the fall season. It seems like one of them is always home from school due to illness. Do you have any ideas for having a healthy and happy 2025–2026 school year or jump-starting their immune systems for the school year?

A Children under age 6 and school-age children typically get between six and twelve illnesses each year, such as colds, respiratory infections, or stomach viruses. In comparison, teens and adults average four to six illnesses a year. These new germs help the immune system learn how to fight off infections.

You asked about “jump-starting” the immune system. While there’s no way to jump-start the immune system like a car battery, you can help reduce the spread of illness and support your children’s immune health in the following ways:

- 1. Teach good hygiene habits.** Instruct your children to cover their coughs and to cough or sneeze into their elbows. Encourage frequent handwashing, especially after coughing, sneezing, or touching their noses.
- 2. Maintain a balanced diet.** Offer meals that include fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins. Vitamin E, found in peanut butter, and vitamin C, found in fruit, help support the immune system. Foods such as chicken, salmon, tuna, bananas, green vegetables, and potatoes with skin provide vitamin B6. If your child is a picky eater, try blending vegetables into spaghetti sauce, meatloaf, or smoothies.
- 3. Disinfect frequently touched surfaces.** Clean doorknobs, light switches, and other commonly touched areas with a disinfectant cleaner.
- 4. Encourage hydration.** Keep healthy beverages visible in the

refrigerator or on the kitchen counter, and remind your children to drink throughout the day.

- 5. Reduce stress.** High stress levels can increase the risk of catching a cold or respiratory illness. Teach your children healthy ways to manage stress. Techniques might include naming three things they can see, three things they can hear, and three body parts they can feel or move. Another option is to practice slow breathing: inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth.

I hope these suggestions help reduce the number of illnesses your children experience this school year and lead to a happier, healthier household.

VISITAR www.austinfamily.com
¿Tos, moqueo, repetición?

School's Out – Camp's In!

Lifelines



CATHERINE MICHALK

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

Winter break is on the horizon. Alongside the fun parties and holiday events, there are plenty of days when kids will be out of school with nothing to do. Austin ISD and most area schools are closed for Thanksgiving from Nov. 24 to 28, and winter break runs from Dec. 22 to Jan. 2.

This year, instead of your kids interrupting every five minutes to tell you they're bored, sign them up for a winter break camp. There are so many options to choose from in Austin. Whether your child loves theater, being outside, STEM activities, or art, you are sure to find something to keep them engaged, learning, and having fun.

How to Choose a Camp

Before you book a winter break camp, what should you consider? Every family's priorities are different, but here's a quick guide to help you think through your options.

- **How old are your kids?**

Different camps cater to different age groups. Some follow well-known routines like snack time and nap time, while others focus on full-day enrichment activities. If you have younger children, or kids who need more structure, look for a camp that provides it.

- **Do you need a camp for multiple children?**

If you have more than one child, decide whether you want them to attend the same camp or explore separate camps based on their individual interests. Some camps offer sibling discounts, helping you save by enrolling all your kids at the same location.

- **What are your kids interested in?**

A one- or two-week camp isn't a long time to learn a brand-new skill. Unlike the dreaded "summer slide," it's unlikely your child will fall behind academically over winter break. While enrichment is great, try to make sure it's something they're genuinely excited about. If your child enjoys math, a math-focused camp with games and puzzles might be perfect. But if they dread it, forcing them into one could lead to holiday-season grumbling.

- **What is your budget?**

This is a big one, especially with rising costs in recent years. Be sure to factor in the total cost, including fees for field trips, after care, transportation, meals, and snacks. A half-day camp might seem affordable, but if you need to hire a sitter for the rest of the afternoon, the price may exceed that of a full-day option.

- **What are the camp's policies?**

Always review a camp's policies thoroughly, especially when it comes to illness and refunds. Winter is full of cold and flu concerns. Know what happens if your child gets sick or your plans change. Do you get a full or partial refund? Are there deadlines for cancellations? Decide ahead of time which policies are deal-breakers.

- **What is the adult-to-child ratio?**

Texas law requires different adult-to-child ratios depending on the age of the children, but it's still important to choose a camp where you feel comfortable with the level of supervision. The ratio may vary depending on the activities offered. High-risk activities like rock climbing or horseback riding require more supervision than painting or coding.

- **Where are your kid's friends going?**

You're probably not the only parent looking for a winter camp. Ask other parents for recommendations. A trusted referral is a great starting point, especially if you're new to camps. Plus, if your child attends with a friend, they're more likely to enjoy the experience. Bonus: you may be able to carpool and save on gas.



- **Where is the camp located?**

As Austin grows, so do its traffic problems. Everyone has a different tolerance for time in the car, so consider location carefully. No one wants to sit in traffic for an hour just to pick up their child from camp. Less time commuting means more time to enjoy the holidays with your family.

Picking the Best Camp in Austin

Now that you have an idea of what to look for in a winter camp, let's explore what Austin has to offer. No matter what part of town you're in, there's something for everyone. While this isn't an exhaustive list, it's a great place to start your search.

STEM

If your child is into robotics, coding, or building, get their minds churning at a STEM-focused camp like **Idea Lab** or **iCode**. Campers can learn how things work, design and build new inventions, and practice solving real-world problems.

Performing Arts

Is your child dreaming of Broadway or becoming the next ACL performer? Enroll them in a camp that supports their passion for the arts. Great options include **Kids Acting Studio**, **Fantastic Magic Camp**, and **Hello Dancer**.

Arts and Crafts

For creative kids who are always making something, arts and crafts camps are a winter break favorite. From painting to sewing, these hands-on programs are perfect for young artists. Check out **Cordovan Art School**, **The Art Garage**, and **Figment Creative Lab**.

Sports

If your child needs to burn off energy, a sports camp is a great fit. Whether it's soccer, gymnastics, or ice skating, find a camp that helps them improve their skills and stay active. Local favorites include **SoccerZone**, **Jump Gymnastics**, and **Austin Ninja Warrior**. For variety, look into camps offered by **The YMCA** or **West Austin Youth Association (WAYA)**.

Nature and Outdoors

Austin's mild winter weather makes outdoor camps a great option. The **Austin Nature and Science Center** offers camps for ages 5 to 10, with discounts for city residents. If you're looking for a more traditional outdoor experience, check out **Camp Moody** (YMCA) in Buda or **Kidventure** near Lakeway for activities like archery, climbing, and ropes courses.

Winter break doesn't have to mean endless screen time or cries of boredom. With so many enriching camps around Austin, your child can explore new interests, build friendships, and enjoy their time off school, while you get a little breathing room too.



Need-Based and Discounted Camps in Austin

Winter camps can be pricey, but there are options that support a range of budgets. Here are a few resources to consider:

- **Austin Parks and Recreation Department**
Offers low-cost winter camps with sliding-scale fees for residents.
- **YMCA of Austin**
Financial assistance available for qualifying families. Winter day camps offered at several locations.
- **Boys & Girls Clubs of the Austin Area**
Affordable programs with enrichment and recreation activities. Membership required.
- **Some private camps offer early registration or sibling discounts.**
Ask about promotions before booking.

Bonus: Follow your favorite camps on social media for flash discounts or referral deals.

Winter Camp Prep Checklist: What to Pack

Make sure your child is ready for a great day at camp with these essentials:

- A labeled water bottle
- Nut-free lunch and snacks (if not provided)
- Weather-appropriate clothing (layers are best)
- Closed-toe shoes for outdoor or active play
- Any required medications (with instructions)
- A backpack to keep belongings organized
- Art smock or old T-shirt for messy activities
- A positive attitude and a curious spirit!

Tip: Double-check with the camp for specific gear or clothing requirements. Some specialty camps may request items like dance shoes, yoga mats, or science kits.

Holiday Camps and Family Activities

CAMPS FOR KIDS

Camp Doublecreek DC Adventures December 29-31 Pflugerville Location

www.campdoublecreek.com/dcadventures

DC Adventures features one of the best high ropes experiences in Texas. Make lasting memories and lifelong friends. Voted Best Day Camp by *Austin Family* readers since 1993.

Camp Doublecreek DC Riding December 29-31 Spicewood Springs Rd. Location

www.campdoublecreek.com/dchorseback

Horseback riding lessons, ground lessons (grooming, saddling, and horse care), gaga ball, archery, camp games, and crafts.

Camp Jump South **Camp Jump North** **Camp Jump Domain** **Camp Jump Hutto**, now open November

www.jumpgymnastics.com

We are open when school is closed. Jump Gymnastics voted Most Fun Camp. If you're looking for a day camp when school is out or winter camps around the holidays, we got you covered.

Country Home Learning Northwest **Country Home Learning Southwest** November

www.countryhomelearningcenter.com

Providing many enrichment opportunities unavailable to the students at the public schools. Our children spend fun-filled days on the move participating in activities that stimulate their creativity and spur their imagination.

Fantastic Magic Camp - Winter Camp November 25-27

www.magiccamp.com

In addition to the magic, juggling, and puppets, campers will learn new games, create skits, dress-up for our wacky theme days, watch, and learn from some of the best variety entertainers in Austin.

Idea Lab Holiday Camps November 4, 24-26, December 22, 23, 29-31, January 2, 5 www.idealabkids.com/location/austin

kidsActing Camps

November 4, 14 Jan 5, 19

www.kidsactingstudio.com

When school's out, we are in. We will sing-a-long to great hits from your child's favorite movies, such as *Frozen*, *Encanto*, *Descendants*, *Moana*, *Jungle Book*, and more. Sign up now for spring and save.

Mad Science Holiday Camps November

www.austin.madscience.com

Our interactive, engaging programs allow kids to explore the different fields of science in an interesting and entertaining way. You could be inspiring the next Einstein or Marie Curie.

Newk's Christmas Colorado Ski Camp December 27 to Jan 3

www.newktennis.com/outback-adventures

All ages welcome. A week of skiing, snowboarding, sledding, and lots of winter fun.

Outback Thanksgiving and Christmas Tennis Camp November 22-25, December 26-31

www.newktennis.com/tennis-camps/junior-camps

On the courts, the tennis is intense and the coaching is highly motivational. Off the courts, it is a true camp experience with fun activities.

Stepping Stone Schools Mind in Motion Winter Camp 2025

www.steppingstoneschool.com

Stepping Stone School's Diamond Club™ hosts Mind in Motion, a camp with games, field trips, and service projects that build character, encourage creativity, and engage children mentally, physically, and socially.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Disney's Tim Burton's Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail Now - November 30

A wonderland of moonlit magic awaits, as Austin is one of only two cities in the country selected to host Disney Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail, an innovative walk-through experience at the LBJ Wildflower Center.

Family Fun Day at DC Adventures November 8

www.campdoublecreek.com/dcadventures

Experience our rock wall and challenge course, play gaga ball, cornhole, ring toss, playscape, pickleball, volleyball, and more. Bring the entire family and friends.

Junior League Christmas Affair - A Golden Ticket November 20-23

www.jlaustin.org/a-christmas-affair

The kick-off shopping event of the season with 200 vendors from across the country. This year the kids will enjoy Twinkle Under the Golden Stars, Shimmer and Shine Brunch, Glitter Glow Party, Rise and Sparkle, and more. Proceeds benefit Coats for Kids, Food in Tummies, Kids in Cool Shoes, and other community resources.

Big & Bright: Hill Country Holiday November 28-30, December 5-7 www.hsbresort.com/christmas

Revel in a big and bright holiday season in the heart of the Texas Hill Country. From our dazzling Winter Wonderland tree lighting to the brand-new Jingle Bell Express Breakfast, the whimsical Charlie Brown Christmas Breakfast, and Christmas on the Lawn with live performances by Voca Libre, the magic of the season shines at Horseshoe Bay Resort.

Dave and Busters

www.daveandbusters.com

Enjoy holiday games on big screen by reserving a table or have fun in the arcade enjoyed by kids young and old.

A great place to plan a holiday gathering. Check out their specials, and season passes.

Mozart's 2025 Lake Austin Festival of Lights November 22 - January 3

www.mozartcoffee.com/pages/festival-of-lights

This year themed "Heaven and Nature Sing" is complete with flyboard battle from "The Nutcracker," plus a limited run Broadway style Christmas concert. Come see the extensive remodeling of this Austin tradition to include a Santa tower, Christmas village, twinkling lights, floating light experiences, and immersive light tunnel enjoyed by land or water.

35th Annual ThunderCloud Subs Turkey Trot

November 27

www.thundercloud.com/event-info

What better way could you start your Thanksgiving Day than with a 5K run, Stepping Stone School Kids K, and a virtual running/walk event? Proceeds benefit Caritas of Austin.

Cameron Park Zoo Festival of lights

November 28 to December 30

www.cameronparkzoo.com

Just a short drive up IH35 to experience the spirit of the holidays at the zoo, featuring millions of Christmas lights, photo opportunities, and Santa. You will create unforgettable memories, as well as help fund vital conservation, habitat preservation, and emergency support efforts that advance our mission to protect animals and their homes.

Peppermint Parkway

November-December

www.peppermintparkway.com

A winter wonderland experience with millions of lights, whimsical characters, and holiday cheer.

Pins and Wheels at Playland

www.playlandskatecenter.net

A fantastic entertainment venue since the 80's featuring skating, bowling, large arcade, karaoke, axe throwing, as well as good food. Schedule your holiday party or bring those holiday guests for some fun.

Austin Trail of Lights

December 10-23

www.trailoflights.org

This iconic event where Zilker Park is turned into a holiday celebration of lights, festive activities, food, and holiday magic for all ages. Seven days of free general admission, and free shuttle service available.

9 Habits That Lead to Scholarships

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.



When you hear the phrase “college application process,” you probably picture high schoolers scrambling to collect recommendation letters, write essays, and hit submit before deadlines. But the journey to winning scholarships begins long before high school and sometimes as early as preschool. It starts with intentionally building habits, skills, values, and experiences that will one day support a strong scholarship application.

As parents, we play a key role in shaping our children’s academic potential, mindset, and motivation. So where do we begin?

1. Spark a Love of Learning

Scholarship committees often favor applicants who are curious and passionate, not just those with straight A’s. Children who develop a love of learning early are more likely to pursue meaningful experiences, honors, and achievements.

You can help by asking open-ended questions and celebrating thinking and effort, not just correct answers. Expose your child to a variety of experiences

and model a love of learning yourself by reading, exploring, and staying curious.

2. Build Strong Character

Scholarship programs often look for students who demonstrate resilience, integrity, and perseverance. These traits help students succeed in college and contribute to their communities, and they must be nurtured over time.

Support your child’s character development by assigning age-appropriate responsibilities and encouraging them to finish what they start. Talk about values like honesty and kindness, and model them in your own actions. Let your child experience failure and guide them through it. Learning to course-correct instead of giving up is a life skill with lasting impact.

3. Help Them Discover Their Passion

Starting clubs or volunteer work in high school can be too late to show meaningful involvement. Long-term participation demonstrates commitment and provides time for leadership growth. Scholarship reviewers often prefer students who

show deep, sustained involvement in a few activities rather than brief participation in many.

Encourage your child to try a range of activities and pay attention to what excites them. Once they find something they enjoy, support their continued involvement, whether it’s in community service, faith-based programs, or extracurricular clubs.

4. Prioritize Writing and Communication

Essays, interviews, and personal statements are a central part of many scholarship applications. Strong communication skills, especially writing, often set applicants apart.

Encourage writing at home by supporting journaling, thank you notes, and storytelling. Read books with rich language and help your child express opinions clearly and respectfully. These small habits build confidence and skill over time.

5. Foster a Growth Mindset

A growth mindset, the belief that abilities can be developed through

effort, is one of the most valuable attitudes a child can have. It helps them persist through challenges and learn from mistakes.

You can encourage this mindset by praising effort instead of talent. Say, "You worked really hard on that," instead of, "You're so smart." Share your own failures and what you've learned from them, and teach your child to say, "I can't do it...yet," to reinforce the idea that learning is a process.

6. Teach Financial Awareness

Even young children can begin to understand the basics of money, saving, and value. By middle school, introduce the cost of college and the role scholarships play, without creating anxiety. When students understand why scholarships matter, they're more likely to pursue them seriously.

Use everyday experiences to teach earning, saving, and budgeting. If your family is saving for college, involve your child in simple, age-appropriate conversations about your goals.

7. Encourage Leadership

Leadership isn't limited to holding a title. It includes taking initiative, solving problems, and inspiring others. Many scholarships ask for evidence of leadership, which can be cultivated from a young age.

Support your child in planning small initiatives, like a food drive or a neighborhood cleanup. Ask questions that help them reflect on their influence: "How did you help someone today?" or "What difference did that make?"

8. Make Service a Habit

Community service is a cornerstone of many scholarship applications. Reviewers look for heartfelt, consistent service that aligns with a student's values. Children who grow up viewing service as a regular part of life are more likely to continue that mindset.

Volunteer as a family and explore different organizations together. Once your child finds a cause that matters to them, encourage deeper involvement and support their ideas for leading their

own projects. Remind them that service can also happen in everyday life by mentoring a friend, helping a neighbor, or caring for others.

9. Help Them Find Their Story

Scholarships aren't just awarded to students who "check every box." Reviewers are drawn to compelling, authentic stories. Children should grow up understanding who they are,

what they value, and how they want to contribute to the world.

You can help by having conversations that go beyond surface-level experiences. Ask reflective questions like, "What did you learn from that?" or "Why does that matter to you?" These discussions help children connect their experiences to a larger sense of purpose.



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Binge Books; Not Screens

Lifelines

TRACIE SEED

Seed, an Austinite, has won numerous awards for writing, art, and design. She's the happiest while writing, sewing, painting, or spending time with family.



When November, the harbinger of the holidays, arrives, many families shift their focus to traditions, shopping, and, of course, food. Another big focus: “What are we going to do during the school vacation?”

It’s nice to have a break from early morning routines and homework, but parents may wonder how to keep their children’s minds active—away from constant gaming, scrolling through social media, or binge-watching Netflix.

Reading is one of the healthiest habits children and teens can develop. It’s both fun and enriching, feeding the imagination, sparking curiosity, expanding vocabulary, and boosting emotional and social skills. Here are some tips to help kids discover the joy of reading and stay mentally engaged during the holiday break.

Discover Your Child’s Favorite Style and Genre

Just as children have different personalities, they also have different reading styles. Some enjoy turning a

page. Others embrace the swipe of a screen, downloading books from an app. Some prefer to listen to audiobooks brought to life by professional narrators. Understanding these preferences helps foster a healthy relationship with reading.

Discovering a favorite genre is another key factor. Some children love adventures and devour fantasy series, dreaming of dragons and quests. Others gravitate toward humor, silly poems, or joke books. Some enjoy stories about kids like themselves navigating real-life challenges. If your child loves drawing, encourage them to explore art books or comics. If they are into sports, biographies of athletes might spark their interest.

When kids feel ownership over their reading choices, they are more engaged and more likely to stick with it.

Enjoy a Book Club

Book clubs aren’t just for adults. Choose a family-friendly book and set aside time to read together. It could be a

chapter before bed or a Friday night “pizza and read-aloud” tradition. With older kids, sharing thoughts around the dinner table can turn reading into a bonding experience.

Austin offers several literary opportunities for young readers. Austin Allies–Kids’ Book Club invites students in grades 3–8 to meet at BookPeople for lively book discussions and volunteer activities that support local nonprofits. The Austin Public Library also hosts a range of youth and tween book clubs, including graphic novel discussions, homeschool meetups, and interactive author and illustrator events, both online and in person.

For families who prefer to stay home, Austin-based Literati offers a subscription service that delivers age-appropriate books for children from newborns through age 12, helping foster a love of reading right at home.

Change the Scenery

A change of scenery can make reading feel like an adventure. Grab your shoes

and a library card. Visiting a different library branch in the Austin metro area can feel like a mini field trip. Many locations also offer special holiday programs, story hours, or themed book displays.

Looking for a true reading adventure? Don't miss the Texas Book Festival, set for Nov. 8–9. Held each fall in downtown Austin at the Texas State Capitol, the festival draws more than 250 authors and 40,000 attendees for author panels, signings, cooking demonstrations, children's activities, food trucks, and vendor exhibits.

If your child prefers the comforts of home, try creating a cozy reading environment. Make s'mores around a backyard fire pit, build a blanket fort, or bundle up with cocoa and a good book.

“Reading isn't just for school—it's for joy, comfort, and connection.”

Make Reading Part of Holiday Traditions

Incorporating reading into seasonal rituals can create lasting memories. During Thanksgiving, kids can read cookie and pie recipes aloud while helping in the kitchen. Choosing a classic holiday story to read by the fire can become a cherished family tradition.

Even family board games like Bananagrams, Apples to Apples, Scrabble, or Boggle offer screen-free fun while building vocabulary and reading skills.

These small rituals reinforce that reading isn't just for school. It's also for joy, connection, and comfort. When children associate books with warmth and family togetherness, they're more likely to carry positive feelings about reading into adulthood.

A Healthy Connection

Reading is often seen as an academic skill, but it also supports mental wellness and emotional intelligence. It can lower stress, improve focus, and enhance memory. It also provides children with valuable downtime.

Reading helps children develop empathy by allowing them to see the world through the eyes of others. It also builds resilience as they watch characters overcome challenges.

By encouraging kids to explore different reading styles, create family traditions around books, and discover their own reading personalities, we're preparing them not just for school—but for life. Healthy habits develop early when supported, and fostering a love of reading is a gift that nourishes the mind for years to come.

The advertisement features a central image of a young girl in a red and black plaid shirt and a Santa hat, smiling as she places a small gift on the head of a young boy wearing a grey hat and a white shirt with a bow tie. Above them, the text reads "TRADE and SAVE FOR THE HOLIDAYS" in a playful, colorful font. Below the image is the "Kid to Kid" logo in a blue and white bubbly font. At the bottom, a red banner contains the promotion: "SAVE \$5 WHEN YOU SPEND \$50".

TRADE and SAVE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Kid to Kid

SAVE \$5 WHEN YOU SPEND \$50

*Valid until 12/31/25 only at Kid to Kid in Austin, TX. Must spend \$50 pre tax. One coupon per day per household. See store for details.

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KIDZONE

Kitchen Chemistry: Butter Believe It



WHAT YOU NEED:

- Bowl
- Cold water
- Jar with a lid
- Heavy whipping cream

WHAT YOU DO

Step 1: Fill the jar halfway with whipping cream and close the lid. Let the cream sit at room temperature for about three hours.

Step 2: Make sure the lid is tightly closed. Shake the jar vigorously until a solid yellow ball forms and separates from the liquid. This should take about five to 10 minutes.

Step 3: Pour the contents of the jar into a bowl. Keep the solid ball and discard the leftover liquid.

Step 4: Fill the bowl with cold water and rinse the butter. Press the butter between your hands and knead it a few times to remove the liquid.

Step 5: Repeat step 4 two more times.

Step 6: Make sure all the liquid has been removed from the butter. You can now enjoy your homemade butter or store it in the refrigerator in a sealed container.

WHAT'S GOING ON

A colloid is a mixture in which tiny particles of one substance are scattered throughout another. Cream is a colloid made mostly of fat particles dispersed in water. The percentage listed on your cream carton refers to the amount of fat in the liquid.

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Single Day - \$85 Ages: 3-10

2026 School Closure Camps

*Hutto Dates May Vary

★ October 13 th & 20 th	★ February 16 th & 17 th
★ Voting Day November 4 th	★ Spring Break March 16 th - 19 th
★ November 24 th & 25 th	★ March 31 st
★ December 29 th , 30 th & 31 st	★ April 6 th
★ January 2 nd , 5 th & 19 th	

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Anderson
 2117 W Anderson Ln.
 north-austin@jumppgymnastics.com

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

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

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

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

HOURS OF OPERATION

Mon - Fri 10am to 4pm • Sat 9am to 1pm • Sat Donations 8am to 4pm
 1099 E. Main Street • Round Rock, TX 78664 • (512) 244-2431



November 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

Texas Pumpkin Fest. 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Join us on a journey through our family-fun pumpkin patch and enter a Halloween playland that's more fun than petrifying. Texas Pumpkin Fest, 8760 FM 2243. www.texaspumpkinfest.com.

Indian Springs Ranch Pumpkin Patch. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Family-friendly exotic ranch. Indian Springs Ranch, 403 Elm View Way. \$20. www.indianspringsranchatx.com.

Uhland Fall Fest. 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. The second annual Uhland Fall Fest is set to take place Sept. 27 through Nov. 2400 Cotton Gin Rd. \$15 - \$35. www.uhlandfallfest.com.

Cricut Crafts. 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Celebrate every month with Cricut inspired crafts. Yarborough Branch, 2200 Hancock Dr. FREE. www.library.austintexas.gov.

23rd Annual Travis Heights Art Trail. 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. The longest-running artist/studio tour in Austin. A grassroots art show created by and for the artists of Travis Heights. Travis Heights Neighborhood, 1403 Kenwood Ave. FREE. www.travisheightsarttrail.org.

Spicewood Springs Branch 40th Birthday Party. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Join us as we mark the library's 40th birthday with a day full of fun and community spirit. Spicewood Springs Branch, 8637 Spicewood Springs Rd. FREE. www.library.austintexas.gov.

Austin Celtic Festival. 12 p.m. Austin's festival of everything Celtic livens up our Sprinkle Corner village, with the International Highland Games. Jourdan-Bachman Pioneer Farms, 10621 Pioneer Farms Dr. www.pioneerfarms.org.

Moana Live-To-Film Concert. 6 p.m. A full-length screening of the movie accompanied by live performances of a unique on-stage musical ensemble of Hollywood studio musicians, Polynesian rhythm masters and vocalists, celebrating the music, and songs from the award-winning, animated film. Long Center, 701 W. Riverside Dr. \$33 - \$84. www.thelongcenter.org.

The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail. 7:30 p.m. A wonderland of moonlit magic awaits, as Austin is one of only two cities in the country selected to host this event. LBJ Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave. \$27 - \$67. www.texasperformingarts.org.

Sun 2

Día de los Huesos. 1 to 5 p.m. Join Texas Science & Natural History Museum for "Day of the Bones" and explore the wonders of skulls and skeletons, get creative with hands-on art activities, a scavenger hunt, festive face painting, and a ballet folklórico performance. Texas Science & Natural History Museum, 2400 Trinity St. \$0 - \$10. www.sciencemuseum.utexas.edu.

CONTINUED: **23rd Annual Travis Heights Art Trail**, see Sat 1; **Austin Celtic Festival**, see Sat 1; **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **Uhland Fall Fest**, see Sat 1.

Mon 3

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1.

Tue 4

Tech Explorers: Beebot Robots. 4 to 6 p.m. Get hands-on with technology. Little Walnut Creek Branch, 835 W. Rundberg Ln. FREE. www.library.austintexas.gov.

Austin Girls' Choir Placement Auditions. 4 to 6 p.m. It's not too late to get in on the fun. Episcopal Church of the Resurrection, 2200 Justin Ln. \$25. www.girlschoir.com.

World Ballet Company: Cinderella. 7 p.m. Experience the magic of Cinderella live on stage. Bass Concert Hall, 2350 Robert Dedman Dr. \$46.80 - \$142.80. www.texasperformingarts.org.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1.

Wed 5

Clayton Farmers Market. 2 to 6 p.m. Every Wednesday. Clayton Towers: Clayton Farmers Market, 1106 Clayton Ln. FREE. www.theclaytonfarmersmarket.com.

Teen Zine Club. 6 to 7:30 p.m. Join our teen volunteers for a bi-weekly club for anyone interested in zines (self-published magazines) and book arts. Central Library, 710 W. César Chávez St. Demonstration Area. FREE. www.library.austintexas.gov.

Music on Main: Fall 2025. 7 to 9 p.m. We're excited to share weekly Wednesday nights of live music spanning across all genres with you. The Prete Plaza, 221 E. Main St. FREE. www.roundrocktexas.gov.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1.

Thu 6

Preschool Imagination Station: Construction Zone. 10 to 10:45 a.m. and 11 to 11:45 a.m. Designed for young learners, Imagination Station encourages learning through play. Hampton Branch at Oak Hill, 5125 Convict Hill Rd. FREE. www.library.austintexas.gov.

Baby Sensory Play Day. 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. Join us for play that engages your baby's five senses. For ages 0-12 months. Para edades de 0 a 12 meses. Southeast Branch, 5803 Nuckols Crossing Rd. FREE. www.library.austintexas.gov.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1.

Fri 7

Little Godzilla Toddler Time. 10 to 10:45 a.m. and 12:30 to 1:15 p.m. Bring your little monsters to read and play as giants in our tiny city. Recommended for walking babies and toddlers 10-24 months. Costumes optional. Yarborough Branch, 2200 Hancock Dr. FREE. www.library.austintexas.gov.

Preschool Imagination Station: Dino Dig. 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Southeast Branch, 5803 Nuckols Crossing Rd. FREE. www.library.austintexas.gov.

Jurassic World: Rebirth (2025) - Community Cinema. 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Grab chairs and a blanket, bring family and friends, and enjoy a special screening. Community First Village, 9301 Hog Eye Rd. FREE. www.mlf.org.

KUTX Rock the Park Concert Series.

6:45 to 9 p.m. KUTX Rock the Park returns to Mueller Lake Park this fall with family-friendly concerts featuring The Tiarras, Tribe Mafia, Tele Novella, and more. Mueller Lake Park, 4550 Mueller Blvd. FREE. www.kut.org.

A Charlie Brown Christmas. 7 to 8 p.m. The beloved holiday classic comes to life on stage. Zach Theater, 1421 W. Riverside Dr. \$31. www.zach.org.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1.

Sat 8

U.S. Open Netball Championships®. 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Leading up to this event Netball America® will be creating job, education, school, youth, coach, and athlete opportunities for the local community. Round Rock Multipurpose Complex, 2400 Chisholm Trail Rd. FREE. www.usopennetball.com.

Holiday Bazaar Arts and Crafts Show. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Round Rock's Clay Madsen Recreation Center invites you to the 21st Annual Rockin' Around the Holidays Bazaar from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Clay Madsen Recreation Center, 1600 Gattis School Rd. www.roundrocktexas.gov.

Scouturday Speedfest. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Race into Scouting – and Race into Fun. Circuit of the Americas, 9201 Circuit of the Americas Blvd. FREE. www.capitolareascouting.org.

Hoops in the Park. 10 a.m. A fun and engaging basketball experience designed for kids in 1st through 5th grades. Young athletes will spend the morning enjoying outdoor play, learning new skills, building teamwork, and sportsmanship. Garrison District Park, 6001 Menchaca Rd. www.austinparks.org/events.

Festival of Good 2025: Pawsitively Good Fall Fun. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Come celebrate the rich bounty of the Texas fall harvest alongside four-legged

friends and community collaborators. Goodnight Ranch Amenity Lawn, 5601 Baythorne Dr. FREE. www.liveatgoodnight.com.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **Austin Celtic Festival**, see Sat 1; **A Charlie Brown Christmas**, see Fri 7.

Sun 9

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **Austin Celtic Festival**, see Sat 1; **A Charlie Brown Christmas**, see Fri 7; **U.S. Open Netball Championships®**, see Sat 8.

Mon 10

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1.

Tue 11

Veterans Day

Veterans Day Parade. 9:30 to 11 a.m. Come celebrate our veterans. Congress Ave., FREE. www.austintexas.gov.

Austin Pow Wow. 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. The family-friendly event features hundreds of dancers from different tribes and regions, and over a hundred food vendors, artists, and craftsmen. Travis County Expo Center, 7300 Decker Ln. \$10 – \$15. www.austinpowwow.net.

Veterans Day Celebration. 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Join us for the Annual Veterans Day Celebration. Flag Plaza at Yonders Point Old Settlers Park, 3300 E. Palm Valley Rd. www.roundrocktexas.gov.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1.

Wed 12

Sprouts. 10 to 11 a.m. Tailored for children ages three to five years, Sprouts is a celebration of nature play, led by trained guides. Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave. www.wildflower.org.

Early Childhood Music and Movement. 10:30 a.m. Join Westbank Library for a demo of an early childhood

music class with Armstrong Community Music School. Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. www.westbanklibrary.com.

Little Builders. 2:45 to 3:45 p.m. For our littlest engineers: a variety of blocks, building toys, and trains. Limited to ages 1-5. Yarborough Branch, 2200 Hancock Dr. FREE. www.library.austintexas.gov.

Kids Crafternoon: Sew Much Fun.

3 to 4:30 p.m. Join us for a fun sewing craft. Learn to hand sew a felt friend. Aprende con nosotros a coser a mano un campañero de fieltro. Twin Oaks Branch, 1800 S. Fifth St. FREE. www.library.austintexas.gov.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **Music on Main**, see Wed 5; **Clayton Farmers Market**, see Wed 5.

Thu 13

Baby Sensory Play Day. 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Join us for an hour of hands-on fun for babies. Building, music, sensory exploration, and play; we have something for every baby. Yarborough Branch, 2200 Hancock Dr. FREE. www.library.austintexas.gov.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1.

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FRI 14

Panda Fest. 10 a.m. One of the biggest outdoor Asian food festivals in the U.S. with experiential activities, tastings, and market fairs that showcase vibrant food. Republic Square, 422 Guadalupe St. \$17.28 - \$32.16. www.pandafests.com.

Blue Genie Art Bazaar. 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. An Austin holiday institution, the bazaar returns for its 25th annual holiday market. Blue Genie Art Bazaar, 6100 Airport Blvd. FREE. www.bluegenieartbazaar.com.

Preschool Imagination Station. 10:15 to 11:15 a.m. Designed for young learners, Imagination Station encourages learning through play. Twin Oaks Branch, 1800 S. Fifth St. FREE. www.library.austintexas.gov.

Wicked (2024) - Community Cinema. 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Grab chairs and a blanket, bring family and friends, and enjoy a special screening. Community First Village, 9301 Hog Eye Rd. FREE. www.mlf.org.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1.

Sat 15

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **A Charlie Brown Christmas**, see Fri 7; **Blue Genie Art Bazaar**, see Fri 14; **Panda Fest**, see Fri 14.

Sun 16

Tio Toto Live. 10 to 11 a.m. Get ready to sing, dance, and co-create songs in the heart of East Austin. Cherrywood Coffeehouse, 400 E. 38th 1/2 St. FREE. www.tiototo.com.

Building Exploration. 1 to 3 p.m. We'll have building materials for you to stack, create, and construct. What will you build? Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. www.westbanklibrary.com.

The Nutcracker with Metamorphosis Dance. 4 to 5 p.m. Metamorphosis Dance presents excerpts from The Nutcracker, presented by the City of Lakeway Arts Committee. Activity Center, 105 Cross Creek. www.lakeway-tx.gov.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **A Charlie Brown Christmas**, see Fri 7; **Blue Genie Art Bazaar**, see Fri 14; **Panda Fest**, see Fri 14.

Mon 17

Science Monday. 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Come for an hour of STEAM stations or science design challenges. Create, build, solve, and learn more about the natural world around us. Hampton Branch at Oak Hill, 5125 Convict Hill Rd. FREE. www.library.austintexas.gov.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **Blue Genie Art Bazaar**, see Fri 14.

Tue 18

All Ages Storytime with Armstrong Community Music School. 10:30 a.m. Join Westbank Library for a demo of an early childhood music class. Laura Bush Community Library, 9411 Bee Cave Rd. www.westbanklibrary.com.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **Blue Genie Art Bazaar**, see Fri 14.

Wed 19

Homeschool Days: The Water Cycle and Our Aquifer. 10 to 11:30 a.m. Is your homeschool learner ready to become an ecologist? Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave. www.wildflower.org.

Kids Board Game-o-rama. 3 to 4:30 p.m. Come hang out for an afternoon of board game fun. Twin Oaks Branch, 1800 S. Fifth St. FREE. www.library.austintexas.gov.

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Lights, Camera, Action! Movie Night at Hampton Library. 5 to 7:30 p.m. Get ready for monthly movie nights. Snacks and refreshments will be provided. Hampton Branch at Oak Hill, 5125 Convict Hill Rd. FREE. www.library.austintexas.gov.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **Music on Main**, see Wed 5; **Clayton Farmers Market**, see Wed 5; **Teen Zine Club**, see Wed 5; **Blue Genie Art Bazaar**, see Fri 14.

Thu 20

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **Blue Genie Art Bazaar**, see Fri 14.

Fri 21

Preschool Imagination Station. 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Designed for young learners and encourages learning through play. Milwood Branch, 12500 Amherst Dr. FREE. www.library.austintexas.gov.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **Blue Genie Art Bazaar**, see Fri 14.

Sat 22

Turkey Trails – Austin. 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Join us for the annual Turkey Trails 5k/10k. A fun, Thanksgiving-themed event for the whole family. East Metro Park, 9080 Burlinson Manor Rd. \$17 – \$42. www.runsignup.com/Race/TX.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **A Charlie Brown Christmas**, see Fri 7; **Blue Genie Art Bazaar**, see Fri 14.

Sun 23

H-E-B Free Fourth Sunday. 1 to 5 p.m. Enjoy FREE museum admission, during H-E-B Free Fourth Sunday, held the fourth Sunday of every month. Texas Science & Natural History Museum, 2400 Trinity St. FREE. www.sciencemuseum.utexas.edu.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **A Charlie Brown Christmas**, see Fri 7; **Blue Genie Art Bazaar**, see Fri 14.

Mon 24

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **Blue Genie Art Bazaar**, see Fri 14.

Tue 25

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **Blue Genie Art Bazaar**, see Fri 14.

Wed 26

Sprouts. 10 to 11 a.m. Tailored for children ages three to five years, Sprouts is a celebration of nature play, led by trained guides. Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Ave. www.wildflower.org.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **Clayton Farmers Market**, see Wed 5; **Blue Genie Art Bazaar**, see Fri 14.

Thu 27

THANKSGIVING

Circle C Turkey Trot. 7 to 10 a.m. Circle C Community Center, 817 La Crosse Ave. www.austintexas.gov.

Thundercloud Subs Turkey Trot. 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Auditorium Shores, 900 W. Riverside Dr. www.austintexas.gov.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **Blue Genie Art Bazaar**, see Fri 14.

Fri 28

Lights on the Lake. 5 p.m. Stroll through hundreds of trees, lights synchronized to holiday music, snow globe experience, photo with Santa, lighted boat rides, and more. Volente Beach, 16107 FM 2769. \$10 – \$15. www.volentebeach.com.

Georgetown Annual Lighting of the Square. 5:30 p.m. Georgetown kicks off the holiday season with their annual lighting of the square event, “The Most Beautiful Town Square in Texas.” Georgetown Historic Town Square, 103 W. 7th St. FREE. www.visit.georgetown.org.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **Blue Genie Art Bazaar**, see Fri 14; **A Charlie Brown Christmas**, see Fri 7.

Sat 29

Board Game Free Play: Holiday Edition. 12 to 4 p.m. Come unwind and have some fun. Join us for an afternoon of board games, a cozy hot chocolate bar, and snacks. Windsor Park Branch, 5833 Westminster Dr. FREE. www.library.austintexas.gov.

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **A Charlie Brown Christmas**, see Fri 7; **Blue Genie Art Bazaar**, see Fri 14; **Lights on the Lake**, see Fri 29.

Sun 30

CONTINUED: **The Nightmare Before Christmas Light Trail**, see Sat 1; **Blue Genie Art Bazaar**, see Fri 14; **Lights on the Lake**, see Fri 29; **A Charlie Brown Christmas**, see Fri 7.

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Readers' Poll Favorites 2025

An Interview with Tiffany Hammond autistic author of two sons with autism



Tiffany Hammond with sons, Aidan, 18 and Josiah, 16

AF: Tell us about your family.

My little four-person unit (six, if you count the dog and cat, Charlie and Pretzel) is probably the closest, most unserious group of people you've ever met. Because of my husband's job, we've moved all over Texas. Both of my sons are autistic. Aidan is 18 and doesn't speak, but he communicates volumes without words. Josiah is 16. He speaks, but situationally.

AF: How do you find the balance between your personal life, life as a mom, and life as a professional?

Remember: boundaries matter, my family matters, and I matter. I'm more intentional about not losing myself. I set alarms and write notes that remind me, "You matter."

AF: What's one misconception people often have about autism, and what would you want everyone to understand instead?

People wrongly assume that because Aidan doesn't speak, he can't hear or understand. Others expect Josiah to be a savant and believe that because he talks, he doesn't face real challenges. The spectrum doesn't mean "mild to severe." Autistic individuals have different strengths and needs that vary depending on the day, environment, or supports.

AF: Your debut children's book, *A Day With No Words*, became a No. 1 *New York Times* bestseller. How do you feel about its glowing reception?

I used to share about our "No Talk Days" online — that was our family's name for them — and one of those

posts was the first time I ever went viral. Suddenly, publishing house editors and agents were in my inbox, telling me I should be a children's book author.

My goal was just to sell some copies to people who weren't family or friends. I never imagined it would land on the *New York Times* bestseller list.

AF: If you could advise your younger self, what would you say?

You don't have to have all the answers or be perfect. Lean on your husband; let him carry some of the weight. You are your child's first impression of the world, so act like it. Show them love, patience, and resilience, even when you feel like you're falling apart. Give yourself the same grace you so freely give others.

AF: What are some fun or meaningful things your family enjoys doing together?

We cook and sit down to enjoy what we've made together. On themed movie nights, we go all out with snacks, decorations, and pillow forts.

AF: Tell us about any projects.

My second picture book, *How Do You Spell Belong?*, is set to release in winter 2027 with Bloomsbury Publishing.



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