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Washington FAMILY

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PARENTING
FOR THE DMV.

**DIRECTORIES : DISABILITY
RESOURCES & MEDICAL**

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**WOODBIDGE'S
TINA BYER & SON**

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2025

Best for Families
winners

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On the cover: Tina Byer & son.
Photography: Stefan Agregado/
Stefanaphoto.com



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CONGRATS, BEST FOR FAMILIES WINNERS!



Lindsay C. VanAsdalan

LINDSAY VANASDALAN

Editor

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Please include your name, address and phone number.

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A FAVORITE coffee shop. A dentist that made your child feel at ease. A beloved family home team. Like recommendations from friends, you know that the businesses, services, restaurants, camps, educational providers and more listed as our 2025 Best for Families winners were picked by readers just like you.

While we all have different experiences, there's a good chance a reason someone else thought something was great might apply to you, too. Explore what local families saw as the places and faces worthy of a shout-out this year. You just might find a new favorite.



This month, we celebrate Disability Pride Month, recognizing the advances in accessibility and awareness over the years that have opened up doors for children and family members with disabilities and changed the conversation to celebrate their unique traits as a point of pride.

For families of children with disabilities, we have a breakdown of what to look for in local special education schools, what to know about a new autistic main character on Maryland Public Television and a directory that provides easy access to a variety of disability resources. Look out for events in your community celebrating Disability Pride that provide opportunities for families to connect with and learn about people who are different from them.

A summer of fun continues in July with Independence Day celebrations, ideas for participating in the tradition of "Christmas in July" as a family, fun and affordable ways to entertain your child in the DMV and ways your kid can ditch the screens and entertain themselves right in their own backyard — literally!

Summer can also be a time for a little more reckless play and unexpected injuries. Find a quick rundown of when to visit an urgent care, primary doctor or the ER in this issue, plus a directory of medical resources.

Most of all, keep up that summer reading and enjoy the sunshine before school starts again! ■

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FEATURE



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HAPPY DISABILITY PRIDE MONTH!

In July, we celebrate the history and culture of people with disabilities, including the passage of the Americans With Disabilities Act July 26, 1990, and the unique strengths and achievements that have come from this community.

Here's what we're celebrating this month in the DMV:

FOR OUR MONTGOMERY COUNTY FAMILIES, Maryland's chapter of The Arc is celebrating an important milestone:

THE ARC MARYLAND 65TH ANNIVERSARY: Looking back on decades of change, including inclusive education and access to general curriculum in public schools in the 2000s and virtual support, advocacy and connection amid COVID-19 from 2020 to today:

"Now more than ever, this is a moment to reflect on our legacy and recommit to the work that lies ahead to ensure full inclusion and equity for all," says Ande Kolp, executive director of The Arc Maryland, in a 2025 news release. "Particularly in a year when we had to fight so hard for the funding to support our work, it is so important to celebrate milestones and to be reminded of why the work we do is so important to so many."

The Arc national organization shared more information about Disability Pride Month in its "Why and How to Celebrate Disability Pride Month" blog post in May, including where to celebrate in various states. Stay tuned on dclibrary.org for 2025 updates on Disability Pride programming.

AT D.C.'S NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, stop by the G Street lobby from noon to 1 p.m. July 19 and July 31 for Portrait Signs, a Deaf-led tour in American Sign Language (ASL) of portraiture, history and biography, free with registration. Even if you do not have a family member who uses ASL, it's a good opportunity to go over some signs with your child before the tour and familiarize them with another way of communicating.

Also at the gallery this July, explore more programming for families:

TEEN FUTURES WEEK, SESSION II

A four-day camp for teens to creatively envision their futures in 2025 and beyond through art, interactive activities, discussions and connecting with peers who have similar interests; free and open to rising juniors and seniors with registration; 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. July 21-24

PORTRAIT GALLERY KIDS

Art viewing, hands-on activities, music and story time with educators every Monday from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and a special story time from DC Public Library the second Monday of the month; free with no registration required



Special Olympics DC camps are just one way to celebrate Disability Pride this month.

COURTESY OF SPECIAL OLYMPICS DC

PORTRAIT GALLERY READING RHYTHMS

Bring any book you want and read silently, breaking for one-on-one and group discussions about books and art; adult program free with registration from 5:15 p.m. to 7 p.m. July 24

SPECIAL OLYMPICS DC is offering a free, five-week summer camp for children with intellectual disabilities focused on sport development, youth leadership and wellness, with limited spots for local youth ages 8 to 13. The first week of camp began this week (from June 30 through July 4) and continues through Aug. 1. Find more information on specialolympicsdc.org.

SUMMER COLLEGE PREP IN D.C.

Summer allows teens in high school to get a head start on their education before the fall. Whether it's extra courses for enrichment or prep for college applications, there are lots of options in the nation's capital.

Collegvine.com lists a variety of interest-specific programs in Washington, D.C. that either give students college credit or early experience in a college-level course, such as a summer drama institute at Catholic University of America from July 7 through July 25 that focuses on skills in the arts and preparing students for college auditions.

These programs mostly range from no cost to about \$6,000, with some programs adding to that for room and board: blog.collegvine.com/14-summer-programs-in-dc-for-high-schoolers.

For families who are prepared to pay a higher tuition, there are some programs that are completely dedicated to college application prep like Command Education's in-person College Application Booster Camp, from Aug. 18 to Aug. 22, which allows students to work with Ivy League grads one-on-one to help them stand out on college applications, focusing on tools such as LinkedIn, professional headshots and talks from high-level speakers from D.C. Interested families can complete an intake form: commandeducation.com/contact-us.

Georgetown University has a similar program (though the application period is already closed for this year), which focuses on SAT and ACT prep and college admissions. ■

— LINDSAY C. VANASDALAN

BEST FOR FAMILIES WINNERS!

Thank you, readers, for participating in our annual Best for Families poll. We've counted your ballots, and we're pleased to unveil the results of your votes. Browse the following pages to learn about the businesses, people and places you voted as the best for children and families in the DMV. Congratulations to all of our 2025 winners and thank you to everyone who took time to nominate and vote for them this year!



EATING OUT

BEST FOOD TRUCK

District Taco

Runner Up: Corned Beef King

BEST LOCAL BAKERY

Heidelberg Pastry Shoppe

Runner Up: Paris Baguette

BEST LOCAL BREWERY

Lone Oak Brewing Co.

Runner Up: Mayan
Monkey Brewing Co.

BEST LOCAL BURGER

Good Studd Eatery

Runner Up: Elevation Burger

BEST LOCAL CUP OF COFFEE

Tatte Bakery & Café

Runner Up: Northside Social

BEST LOCAL ICE CREAM/ FROZEN YOGURT SHOP

Sarah's Handmade Ice Cream

Runner Up: The Dairy Godmother

BEST LOCAL OUTDOOR/ PATIO DINING

Guapo's Restaurant

Runner Up: Caddies on Cordell

BEST LOCAL PIZZA

Pupatella

Runner Up: The Italian Store

BEST LOCAL RESTAURANT TO FEED A FAMILY OF FOUR?

Clyde's

Runner Up: La Gula Mexicana

BEST LOCAL RESTAURANT WITH A KID'S NIGHT/SPECIAL

Silver Diner

Runner Up: Summer House

BEST LOCAL RESTAURANT WITH ENTERTAINMENT OR DIVERSIONS

Mayan Monkey Brewing Co.

Runner Up: Westover
Market and Beer Garden

BEST LOCAL ROMANTIC RESTAURANT

Old Angler's Inn

Runner Up: Fleming's Prime
Steakhouse & Wine Bar

BEST LOCAL SPORTS BAR

Quincy's Bar & Grille

Runner Up: Westover
Market and Beer Garden

BEST LOCAL WINERY

Rocklands Farm Winery

Runner Up: Windridge Vineyards

EDUCATION and ENRICHMENT

BEST ACADEMIC/ ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

Acting for Young People

Runner Up: The
Sycamore School

BEST AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

Acting for Young
People

Runner Up: The
Siena School

BEST CHILDREN'S COOKING CLASSES

TINY CHEFS

BEST ARTS PROGRAM

Acting for Young People

Runner Up: Tiny Dancers

BEST BALLET CLASS

Tiny Dancers

Runner Up: Maryland Youth Ballet

BEST BASEBALL CAMP

Ignite Baseball

Runner Up: Doug Remer Sports

BEST CAMP - DAY

Acting for Young People

Runner Up: Tiny Dancers

BEST CAMP - OVERNIGHT

Brainy Ridge

Runner Up: BYM Camps

BEST CAMP - SPECIAL NEEDS

Brainy Ridge

Runner Up: Summer at Siena

BEST CHARTER SCHOOL

Butler Montessori School

Runner Up: Green Acres School

BEST CHILD CARE/ DAY CARE CENTER

Green Acres Camp

Runner Up: B'nai Israel

Schilit Nursery School

BEST CHILDREN'S COOKING CLASSES

Tiny Chefs

Runner Up: Cookology
Cooking School

BEST CHILDREN'S THEATER OR DRAMA INSTRUCTION

Acting for Young People

Runner Up: Tiny Dancers

BEST COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Montgomery College

Runner Up: Northern Virginia
Community College

BEST CONTINUING EDUCATION

With Understanding

Comes Calm, LLC

Runner Up: Montgomery College

BEST DANCE STUDIO

Tiny Dancers

Runner Up: BalletNova
Center for Dance

BEST DAY CAMP FOR PRESCHOOLERS

Tiny Dancers

Runner Up: Butler Camp



MONKEY BUSINESS/
ADOBESTOCK



BEST LOCAL CUP OF COFFEE

TATTE
BAKERY &
CAFÉ

PNG GLANCE/ADOBESTOCK

IANA/ADOBESTOCK

BEST BASEBALL CAMP

IGNITE
BASEBALL

BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

Seneca Academy

Runner Up: CommuniKids
Language Immersion Preschool

BEST GYMNASTICS CENTER

Dominique Dawes

Gymnastics Academy
Runner Up: Silver Stars Gymnastics

BEST INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

The Sycamore School

Runner Up: The Siena School

BEST MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Butler Montessori School

Runner Up: The Bethesda Montessori School

BEST OUTDOOR ENRICHMENT CAMP OR PROGRAM

Butler Montessori School

Runner Up: The Bethesda Montessori School

BEST PERFORMANCE ART PROGRAM

Acting for Young People

Runner Up: Tiny Dancers

BEST PLACE FOR KIDS TO PLAY

National Children's Museum

Runner Up: Montgomery Parks

BEST PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

Butler Montessori School

Runner Up: Seneca Academy

BEST PRIVATE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

St. Mark Catholic School

Runner Up: Butler Montessori School

BEST PRIVATE HIGH SCHOOL

Bishop O'Connell High School

Runner Up: The Sycamore School

BEST PRIVATE SCHOOL (OVERALL)

The Sycamore School

Runner Up: Butler Montessori School

BEST PRIVATE SCHOOL: BOYS

Blue Ridge School

Runner Up: Gonzaga College High School



BEST SPECIAL NEEDS CAMP
BRAINY RIDGE

AI STUDIO/ADOBESTOCK

BEST PRIVATE SCHOOL: COED

The Sycamore School

Runner Up: Butler Montessori School

BEST PRIVATE SCHOOL: GIRLS

Georgetown Visitation

Preparatory School
Runner Up: Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart

BEST PUBLIC SCHOOL - ELEMENTARY

Wyngate Elementary School

Runner Up: Centreville Elementary School

BEST PUBLIC SCHOOL - HIGH SCHOOL

Walt Whitman High School

Runner Up: George C. Marshall High School

BEST SAT/ACT TEST PREP TUTORING

Educational Connections

Runner Up: Siena Tutors

BEST SCHOOL BREAK PROGRAM

Tiny Dancers

Runner Up: Congressional School

BEST SPECIAL NEEDS CAMP

Brainy Ridge

Runner Up: The Siena School

BEST SPECIAL NEEDS PROGRAMMING

The Siena School

Runner Up: Brainy Ridge Inc.

BEST SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOL

The Siena School

Runner Up: Oakwood School

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BEST SPORTS AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM
Arlington Soccer Association
 Runner Up: Arlington Triathlon Club

BEST SPORTS CAMP
Top Rank Soccer Academy
 Runner Up: Marymount Sports Camps

BEST STEM CAMP
Congressional School
 Runner Up: ID Tech

BEST STEM PROGRAM
Congressional School
 Runner Up: Dyslexic Edge

BEST SUMMER PROGRAM
Acting for Young People
 Runner Up: Brainy Ridge Inc.

BEST SWIM INSTRUCTOR
Thomas Stern - British Swim School
 Runner Up: Coach Rene, British Swim School

BEST SWIM SCHOOL
British Swim School - Rockville and Germantown
 Runner Up: Goldfish Swim School

BEST TUTORING PROGRAM
Educational Connections
 Runner Up: The Siena School

BEST UNIVERSITY
George Mason University
 Runner Up: Georgetown University

BEST VISUAL ARTS PROGRAM
Mason Community Arts Academy
 Runner Up: Museum of Contemporary Art Arlington

BEST YOUTH SPORTS LEAGUE
Top Rank Soccer Academy
 Runner Up: i9 Sports

BEST EYE DOCTOR (OPTOMETRIST) & PRACTICE NAME
MYEYEDR.

KARELNOPPE/
 ADOBESTOCK

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

BEST ALLERGY OR ASTHMA DOCTOR & PRACTICE NAME
Schreiber Allergy
 Runner Up: DMV Allergy and Asthma Center



MICHAEL/ADOBESTOCK



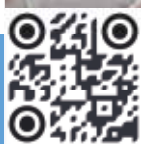




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BEST DENTIST & PRACTICE NAME
DR. GUANGLIN LI & ROCKVILLE DENTAL CENTER

BEST DERMATOLOGIST & PRACTICE NAME
Skin & Laser Dermatology Center
 Runner Up: Braun Dermatology & Skin Cancer Center

BEST HOSPITAL
Holy Cross Hospital
 Runner Up: Shady Grove Adventist Hospital

BEST MIDWIFE
Katie Shannon, Chesapeake Midwifery
 Runner Up: Rachel Simpson, Simmonds, Martin & Helmbrecht of Advantia (SMH)

BEST OB/GYN & PRACTICE NAME
Capital Women's Care
 Runner Up: Dr. Ashok Rangnath, Capital Women's Care

BEST ER FOR KIDS
Children's National Hospital
 Runner Up: Holy Cross Hospital

BEST EYE DOCTOR (OPTOMETRIST) & PRACTICE NAME
MyEyeDr.
 Runner Up: A Brighter Image

BEST FAMILY DOCTOR & PRACTICE NAME
Kenwood Pediatrics
 Runner Up: Kaiser Permanente

BEST ORTHODONTIST & PRACTICE NAME
Dr. Hani Thariani, TBraces Orthodontics
 Runner Up: Ivy City Pediatric Dentistry and Orthodontics

BEST FAMILY THERAPIST/ PSYCHIATRIST & PRACTICE NAME
Cohn Counseling
 Runner Up: Lindsay Tiell Psychotherapy

BEST PEDIATRIC HOSPITAL
Children's National Hospital
 Runner Up: Inova L.J. Murphy Children's Hospital

BEST FERTILITY CLINIC
Shady Grove Fertility
 Runner Up: Washington Fertility Center

BEST PEDIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS
Expressive Therapy Center
 Runner Up: The Ross Center

BEST CHILDREN'S DENTISTRY
MVP Smiles
 Runner Up: Children's Choice Pediatric Dentistry & Orthodontics

BEST CHILDREN'S YOGA CLASSES
Talk Yoga
 Runner Up: Breathing Space

BEST DANCE PROGRAM
Studio of Ballet Arts
 Runner Up: Destiny Dance

BEST CHILDREN'S THERAPIST/ PSYCHIATRIST & PRACTICE NAME
Cohn Counseling
 Runner Up: Washington Family Psychiatry

BEST DENTIST & PRACTICE NAME
Dr. Guanglin Li, Rockville Dental Center
 Runner Up: Dr. Ranju Bhasin, DDS & Lifetime Smiles

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OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPIST &
PRACTICE NAME**

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Runner Up: The Point
Occupational Therapy

**BEST PEDIATRIC
ORTHOPEDIC
PRACTICE**

Asher Goldrosen, OTR/L
Moco Movement Center
Runner Up: Pediatric
Specialists of Virginia

**BEST PEDIATRIC
VISION CARE**

My Vision First
Runner Up: Eye Doctors
of Washington

**BEST PEDIATRICIAN
& PRACTICE NAME**

Kenwood Pediatrics
Runner Up: Dr Jeremy Fishelberg,
Potomac Pediatrics

**BEST PHYSICAL
THERAPIST &
PRACTICE NAME**

MOCO Movement Center
Runner Up: Shawn Leis,
Little Feet Therapy

**BEST PLACE TO
DELIVER YOUR BABY**

Sibley Memorial Hospital
Runner Up: Holy Cross Hospital

BEST URGENT CARE
**Patient First Primary
and Urgent Care**

Runner Up: Medstar Health

**BEST WEIGHT LOSS
PROGRAM OR DOCTOR**

Rivas Medical Weight Loss
Runner Up: Weight
Loss and Vitality

**BEST YOGA/
PILATES STUDIO**

Opus Yoga
Runner Up: Solidcore
(Wildwood)

LIVING

**BEST CHURCH/
PLACE OF WORSHIP**

**St. Athanasius Lutheran
Church (Vienna)**
Runner Up: Washington
National Cathedral

**BEST KID'S BIRTHDAY
PARTY PROGRAM**

Montgomery Parks
Runner Up: Sportrock
Climbing Centers

**BEST LOCAL
GETAWAY/RESORT**

**Delaware Beach (Note:
Multiple beaches/resorts
available in DE)**
Runner Up: Tides Inn

**BEST LOCAL NEWS
PERSONALITY**

Doug Kammerer
Runner Up: Matthew
Cappucci

**BEST LOCAL
PROFESSIONAL
ATHLETE**

Alexander Ovechkin
Runner Up: Katie Ledecky

**BEST
PET
GROOMER**
BARK IN
STYLE



PIXEL-SHOT/ADOBESTOCK

**BEST MINOR LEAGUE
SPORT EXPERIENCE**

Chesapeake Baysox
Runner Up: Washington Spirit

BEST PARK/PLAY AREA

Clemyjontri Park
Runner Up: Rock Creek Park

**BEST PARTY
DESTINATION**

Urban Pirates
Runner Up: Flight Adventure Park

**BEST PLACE FOR
A TEAM PARTY**

Topgolf
Runner Up: Pinstripes

**BEST PLACE FOR
FAMILY FUN**

Beat the Bomb - DC
Runner Up: Aspen Hill Club

**BEST PROFESSIONAL
SPORTING EVENT
FOR FAMILIES**

Washington Nationals
Runner Up: Washington Capitals

BEST PUBLIC SPACE

Rio Lakefront
Runner Up: Old Town Alexandria

SERVICES

BEST CATERER
Ridgewells Catering

Runner Up: Occassions Caterers

BEST DAY SPA
Blu Water Day Spa

Bethesda Salt Cave

BEST EVENT PLANNER

Jamie Kramer Events
Runner Up: Confetti Events

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FRIENDLY GYM**

Aspen Hill Club
Runner Up: LifeTime Fitness

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COLORIST**

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Runner Up: The Shop/
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RIDGEWELLS CATERING

BEST HAIR SALON FOR CHILDREN

Sharkey's Cuts for Kids
Runner Up: Cartoon Cuts

BEST HEATING & AIR CONDITIONING COMPANY

Eli's Heating & Air Conditioning
Runner Up: GAC Services

BEST LOCAL FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHER

John Armato, Armato Photography
Runner Up: Capitol Hill Portraits

BEST MANI/PEDI

Avalon Nails Hair Lashes
Runner Up: Totally Polished

BEST MARTIAL ARTS INSTRUCTION

Beltway Martial Arts
Runner Up: Kicks Karate

BEST MECHANIC

Airpark Auto Pros
Runner Up: Satellite Motors

BEST MUSIC INSTRUCTION

International School of Music
Runner Up: Mason Community Arts Academy

BEST NANNY/ BABYSITTING SERVICES

District Sitter
Runner Up: Nannies in the City

BEST OVERALL GYM OR HEALTH CLUB

Aspen Hill Club
Runner Up: LifeTime Fitness

BEST PARTY VENUE

BlackRock Center for the Arts
Runner Up: The St. James

BEST PERSONAL ORGANIZER

Contained Chaos
Runner Up: Creating Space DC

BEST PET GROOMER

Bark In Style
Runner Up: DC Petropolis

BEST PET TRAINER

The Polite Dog
Runner Up: Pawz for Health

BEST PLUMBER

Bob Springer
Runner Up: District Capital Services



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Runner Up: Monique Craft

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Runner Up: Remodel
Washington DC

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Kentlands Veterinary Hospital,
Dr. Christina Stotz
Runner Up: Banfield Pet Hospital

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Reunions
Runner Up: Diamant
Gifts & Accessories

BEST GROCERY STORE

Trader Joe's
Runner Up: Giant Food

BEST HEALTH FOOD STORE

Whole Foods
Runner Up: MOM's
Organic Market

BEST LOCAL CHILDREN'S FURNITURE STORE

Belfort Furniture
Runner Up: CapitalKidz

BEST LOCAL SHOPPING CENTER OR MALL

Westfield Montgomery
Runner Up: Tysons Corner Center

BEST LOCAL TOY STORE

Child's Play Toys & Books
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THINGS TO DO

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BEST OUTDOOR ATTRACTION
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Runner Up: Brookside Gardens

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seas 'n' greetings

Ever since my toddler became obsessed with Frosty the Snowman, our family has celebrated Christmas in July. Yes, even now that he's a teen. I don't know anyone who loves lights, carols and Christmas magic more than he does. We look forward to Christmas in July as a fun break from typical summer days. It also serves as a reminder to kickstart holiday planning.

Whether you love the traditional feel of Christmas or want to add a summertime twist to your festivities, you'll love these ideas.

HOW TO *celebrate christmas* IN JULY

BY **CHERIE
GOUGH**

INDULGE IN HOLIDAY-THEMED FOODS



1. Make snowman pancakes. Stack different sized pancakes on plates to resemble snowmen. Use chocolate chips for eyes and buttons; then decorate with whipped cream and powdered sugar "snow."

2. Work together in the kitchen to make a favorite meal or dessert usually reserved for the holidays.

3. Use cookie cutters to cut watermelon and honeydew into Christmas tree shapes.

4. Cool off with snow cones or snowballs topped with red (cherry or strawberry) and green (lemon-lime or green apple) flavorings.

5. Roast snowmen s'mores: Use a food-safe pen to draw faces and buttons on stacked marshmallows before roasting over an outdoor firepit. Don't forget the red and green sprinkles!

HOST A GIFT EXCHANGE

If you're including friends or other family members

in your celebration, host a white elephant gift exchange or draw names for Secret (Surfin') Santa. Encourage guests to exchange favorite summer items such as beach balls, sand toys, lip balm or cocktail mix for the adults. Set a price limit so everyone is on the same page.

PAY IT FORWARD (AKA "JOY TO THE WORLD")

Brighten the day of neighbors and friends by delivering treat bags filled with Christmas-themed items: crafts and stickers for young families, or a gift card, popcorn and glow sticks for tweens.

Create an acts of kindness calendar after brainstorming ways to give back daily or weekly. Be sure to get the kids' input to increase buy-in.

HO-HO-HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

1. Make a playlist of family favorite holiday songs. In our household, Christmas music and movies get unlimited play time in July.

2. Host a Christmas movie night complete with festive twinkle lights and a frozen hot chocolate or popcorn station with fun toppings to mix in.

3. Have a "snowball" fight with white or red and green water balloons.

4. Build a "snowman" at the beach or in a sandbox.

5. Sneak in some summer writing practice by writing a letter to Santa just to say hi and see how toy production is going. Be sure the





kids tell him how good they've been so far this year.

6. Make a wreath adorned with tropical flowers, flamingos or cocktail umbrellas.

7. Hold an ugly sun hat contest. Supply hats, silk flowers, pompoms, ribbon and any other craft supplies in holiday colors that you have on hand. Let the decorating begin!

BE AN EARLY BIRD

Get your Christmas card photo done by taking a perfect family portrait. How awesome to have something checked off your list early!

With Christmas already on the brain, it's a great time to do some early shopping to prevent the stress of rushing around later. If nothing else, gather small, nonperishable gifts

as stocking stuffers and put them away. You'll thank yourself in December.

Do your kids usually give handcrafted gifts to family members? A lazy summer day is the perfect time to visit a pottery shop or paint studio. Think of the long lines and last-minute runs to the craft store you'll avoid.

Our family enjoys reading a different holiday book each night in December. If you curate a collection of Christmas books, preview some from the library now (while they're all available), and then purchase a few favorites that will be ready for your holiday book basket reveal. ■

Cherie Gough is a freelance writer and mom of two who treasures life's small moments. Find her on IG: @cgoughwrites.

WHERE TO CELEBRATE LOCALLY

JULY 25, 7-9 P.M.

Resin Cutting Board and Painted Ornament Workshop (Hammer and Stain Rockville)

JULY 26, 7-11 A.M.

2025 Christmas in July 5K/Half (Chesapeake & Ohio Canal path in Washington, D.C.'s Georgetown neighborhood)

JULY 26-27, 11 A.M.-5 P.M.

Christmas in July with music, wine tastings and holiday vendors (Laurel's Cultural Enrichment Center)

Year-round Christmas stores in the DMV include A Christmas To Remember (McLean, VA), The Christmas Attic (Alexandria, VA) and The Christmas Sleigh (Middleburg, VA).

FIND A GREAT SCHOOL

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big summer fun on a small budget

BY KATIE SCHUBERT

LET'S FACE IT: Amusing your children all summer can be a real budget buster. Keeping your little ones entertained from breakfast until bedtime can really add up. Since my daughter, Alice, was born in 2021, I have mastered the art of keeping her busy without breaking the bank. Here are some of our favorite local, free and inexpensive activities in the DMV.



PARKS, TRAINS, CAROUSELS AND A PACKED LUNCH

One of Alice's favorite activities in warmer weather is riding the carousel. Any carousel. I love the one at **Rio Lakefront** just off Interstate 270 in Gaithersburg. Parking is plentiful and complimentary. For just \$7, your child can ride the carousel all day long. Adults tickets are free with any child under 42 inches tall. Right next to the carousel is a terrific playground that is suitable for a wide range of ages. With walking trails that ring the lakefront, there is plenty of space for everyone to get their energy out. While there are many restaurants to choose from at Rio, we often bring our lunches and eat at the shaded picnic tables. Complimentary Wi-Fi makes it easy to stay connected. There are several fish-feeding stations where you can get a handful of pellets for a quarter. If you need a break from the sun, Barnes & Noble is located at Rio as well. Head to the kids' section for some reading time. Refill your water bottles at the café. All told, a typical morning at Rio Lakefront costs us somewhere between \$7 and \$8 (depending on how much I let Alice feed the fish).

Another great local place is the **Cabin John Regional Park**.

Alice loves to ride the carousel, especially at Rio Lakefront (top) and perches on her dad's shoulders during a walk through the National Zoo.

Situated on 6 acres and well shaded by beautiful old trees, the park features playground areas for both younger and older children. The park has several picnic shelters available to rent but otherwise free to use. The main attraction is the mini train that runs every half hour. This scenic 2-mile ride takes approximately 15 minutes and costs \$4 per person. Little ones younger than 2 ride for free with a paying adult. For added fun, line up a bit early and try to snag the last row in the caboose to face backward for the entire ride. The train passes by the playground area, and the conductor usually pulls the train horn to delight all the children waiting nearby. It's another great place to bring a packed lunch, and an afternoon here costs us \$10 if we only ride the train once.

Maryvale Park in Rockville is also a cost-effective way to keep the kids busy. On more than 7 acres, this park is packed with plenty of things to do. In addition to the usual playground equipment, Maryvale features a pond with an overlook deck, a stream with a foot bridge, basketball courts and soccer fields. Maryvale also has a splash pad available to everyone at no cost. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. through Labor Day, the splash pad has staff onsite during hours of operation.

Alice, who gets her athleticism from my husband, loves to ride her scooter as fast as she can. One great location is the nearly 6-mile-long **Bethesda Trolley Trail**. Starting from near the Twinbrook Metro Station in Rockville and ending at Battery Park in Bethesda, this paved pathway has ample opportunities for scooting and bike riding.

LIONS, TIGERS AND BEARS FOR FREE!

Every year, I renew our **Smithsonian's National Zoo** membership. While visits to the 163-acre zoo are always free for everyone, the \$92 dollar premier package includes three parking passes (which are otherwise \$30 per visit), a 15% discount on food, retail and stroller rentals and early and exclusive access to zoo events. Additionally, members are not required to reserve entry passes in advance. The membership also allows for free and reduced entry to dozens of other Association of Zoos and Aquariums facilities nationwide. The Speedwell Conservation Carousel is \$4 per ride and all riders under 42 inches must be accompanied by an adult. Zoo members are entitled to unlimited free rides on the carousel

for up to four riders. We tend to ride the carousel several times per visit. I'm pretty sure our membership paid for itself on carousel rides alone within two months. The zoo grounds open at 8 a.m., with most exhibitions opening at 9 a.m. I like to get to the zoo with Alice around 9 a.m. to avoid most of the rush-hour traffic.

Additionally, many of the animals tend to be more active in the earlier hours before it gets really hot out. Small water misters are installed

Visits to the 163-acre ZOO are always FREE.



A RAINY DAY IS NO REASON TO STAY AT HOME. The public library system has events every day of the week.

along the main thoroughway to help you stay cool. In addition to the three free parking passes (which must be reserved in advance), the Metro Red Line is a short walk away from the zoo entrance. If you pack a lunch and manage to avoid a trip to one of the many gift shops, this fun-for-the-whole-family activity can be all but free.

RAIN, RAIN...IS NOT A PROBLEM

We are definitely an outdoor family. But a rainy day is no reason to stay at home. The **public library system** has events every day of the week. Our local library does story times on Tuesday and Saturday mornings, and we attend often. If we find ourselves looking for a story time on a different day of the week, we love to check out other libraries near our house. I always do my best to arrive early so Alice can pick out some books and "help" me check them out.

For a great way to buy books, support the library and be kind to your wallet, check out the **Friends of the Library**. This nonprofit organization sells secondhand books and uses the proceeds to fund library projects and provide money for supplies, events and more. It's a great way to spend a few minutes and a few bucks to refresh your reading materials. Often, we bring in books that we are done with as a way to continue to support the library.

Some rainy days, we just don't feel like getting up and going out. On those days, I break out arts and crafts. I always keep some new crafting supplies in the hall closet where she can't reach. Sign up for a free **Michaels Rewards membership** and keep an eye out for coupons. Michaels does free in-store pickup, which is a great way to keep the impulse purchasing down. I like to buy Alice small (think 4 inches by 4 inches or smaller) canvases and washable paint and dot markers so she can let her creativity loose. We recently bought her a small easel from IKEA for \$19.99. As for smocks, IKEA has those, too — long-sleeved with a Velcro closure at the back. I snagged two of them at \$3.99 each. To contain the mess, I put an old bed sheet under the expected paint blast radius.

Keeping a kid busy, happy and entertained takes a lot of effort. Hopefully, these tips help make your summer a little bit more manageable.

Be sure to check the websites for each location to confirm times, availability and pricing. ■

Katie Schubert is a mother of one extremely active and opinionated 4-year-old. Her very best advice for keeping things affordable is to win the Powerball. Mega Millions would also probably work.



It's been five years since the world shut down because of COVID-19. Some consider the pandemic to be a thing of the past and have moved on with their daily lives, ditching masks and returning to events and activities that would have been decried as superspreaders during the height of the pandemic.

For many people, though, the pandemic is still raging on — and for some, life has never been the same since they contracted COVID-19. Following the rise of the disease came the emergence of long COVID, a chronic illness that can develop after contracting COVID-19 even once, and its effects can last for as little as three months and as long as several years. Because it's a relatively recent phenomenon, there is no uniform definition for the disease, but common symptoms include chronic fatigue, memory and cognition issues often referred to as “brain fog,” a loss of taste and smell and respiratory issues.

And it's not only the immunocompromised or elderly who can develop long COVID. The condition has started to appear in children as well, and treatment options can be fairly limited. But hospitals and health organizations across the country have started programs to educate healthcare professionals about the disease, with one such program being led by the Kennedy Krieger Institute.

THE MORE WE KNOW

The Pediatric Long COVID ECHO is an educational program taking place over a 10-week semester that trains primary care providers in best practices for children who have contracted long COVID. Kennedy Krieger's long COVID clinic first opened in the summer of 2020, but as reports and studies about the condition continued to emerge in the coming months, the need for proper education on long COVID became especially important as doctors and patients alike struggled to navigate it.

“We have a longstanding history of treating kids with complex conditions using a sort of multidisciplinary approach, and we felt that we could serve the need [to treat long COVID] if it came about,” says Dr. Laura Malone, a pediatric neurologist and the director of the Pediatric Post-COVID-19 Rehabilitation Clinic at Kennedy Krieger. “The goal of [The Pediatric Long COVID ECHO] is to learn how to recognize it and initiate treatment, so we can make care more accessible for children who need it.”



LAURA MALONE

ARE MY KIDS AT RISK?

The ECHO program launched about a year ago and has since trained nearly 100 healthcare professionals and educators in subjects like headaches and dizziness, POTS/dysautonomia, fatigue and mental health considerations relating to the condition.

Malone notes that studies have determined that around 1% to 5% of children in the United States have long COVID symptoms, though she believes that some of those studies are conservative in their estimates.

“I think that in some cases, the prevalence rates that are out there are actually underdiagnosing,” she explains. “A lot of long COVID symptoms are difficult for children to recognize, and they might not be attributed to long COVID at first, but to other health issues.”

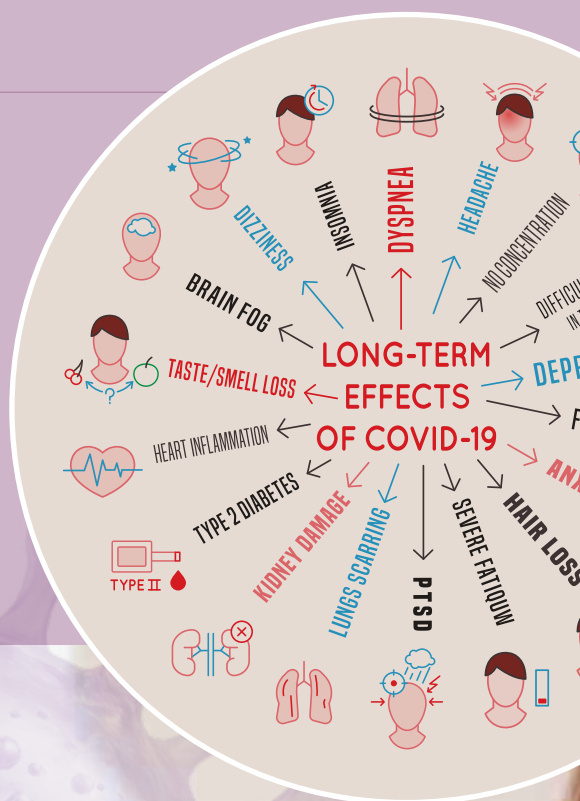
One recent study, “Long COVID in Young Children, School-Aged Children, and Teens,” published in *Journal of the American Medical Association's JAMA Pediatrics* in May, determined a much higher prevalence for children with a history of COVID-19: 10% to 20%.

That's almost 6 million children in the U.S., which is higher than the number of children with asthma — the most common chronic health problem in children — according to the study.

While people with pre-existing health conditions are more prone to long COVID, people with no disabilities or health issues can also develop this condition. It can affect children who had little to no symptoms when they had COVID, according to the study published in *JAMA Pediatrics*.

FIVE YEARS AFTER THE PANDEMIC,

BY JILLIAN DIAMOND



MALONE: COURTESY OF KENNEDY KRIEGER INSTITUTE
CELL: PING KINGDOM; CHILD: PIXEL SHOT;
COVID SYMPTOMS GRAPHIC: DOUBLE BRAIN/ADOBESTOCK

LONG COVID STILL LINGERS

**DESPITE THE
INCREASED NEED
FOR CARE AND
TREATMENT FOR
PEOPLE WITH
LONG COVID,
FEWER THAN
20 DEDICATED
LONG COVID
CLINICS ARE
CURRENTLY
OPERATING
IN THE UNITED
STATES.**



“Because children tend to be pretty healthy, most kids don’t have any pre-existing conditions, but can still get long COVID,” Malone says. “There’s a slightly increased risk for people with pre-existing conditions like diabetes, obesity and cardiac conditions, but it’s not only people with those conditions that can develop long COVID.”

A NEED FOR TREATMENT

Despite the increased need for care and treatment for people with long COVID, fewer than 20 dedicated long COVID clinics are currently operating in the United States. Families seeking treatment for the condition often have to travel long distances to receive it. The ECHO program is held virtually, with participants across the country, which helps make long COVID treatment methods more accessible and mitigates the need for travel.

Kennedy Krieger’s Pediatric Post-COVID-19 Rehabilitation Clinic primarily uses individualized care, as long COVID symptoms can vary from person to person. The hospital helps long COVID patients to make slow, gradual progress in dealing with physical and cognitive fatigue, as well as working with schools to ensure that children with long COVID can receive an education in a way that accounts for these new symptoms.

Because COVID is a complex illness, it can take a while to treat and may require multidisciplinary care. The ECHO program aims to make those methods more accessible to other doctors and educators. Currently, Kennedy Krieger runs the program twice a year, and the team behind the program is looking into asynchronous options so participants can complete the curriculum on their own time.

Since an immediate cure for COVID is lacking, Malone notes that the best long COVID care is preventative.

“There have been studies, both in adults and children, that have shown that the COVID 19 vaccine has actually been able to show a decreased risk of developing long COVID, and so that’s one of the things that we continue to recommend for individuals,” she says. “COVID awareness has dipped, but unfortunately, COVID is here to stay. It’s really important that we as a community and health-care organization are working to try and treat kids that are having these more indolent, difficult-to-describe symptoms, because it can really impact their day-to-day functioning.”

PROGRESS TOWARDS NEW TREATMENTS

Our understanding of long COVID continues to develop as more scientists study the disease. The study in JAMA Pediatrics notes that symptoms of long COVID vary depending on the age of the affected child. Symptoms like having trouble focusing and back pain do not arise until the afflicted patient is school-age or older, while symptoms such as trouble sleeping, a dry cough or a stuffy nose can be apparent even in infants. Adolescents are more likely to see the reemergence of classic COVID symptoms like loss in taste or smell and have more fatigue-related symptoms and trouble with memory.

The important thing for parents to keep in mind is that for some children, symptoms are consistent, while for other children, they come and go – or new symptoms develop, according to the study. Long COVID symptoms can last for months or years.

In some cases, children and adults with long COVID were reported to have postexertional malaise (PEM), in which symptoms flare up or new symptoms arise after minimal physical or mental exertion or sensory overload, often 24 hours after a triggering event.

But treatments for long COVID may not be that far away. A study conducted in Japan in early March, which was published in peer-reviewed open access journal Scientific Reports, found that a method that has been practiced in Japanese medicine since the 1960s could be effective against the disease. Epipharyngeal abrasive therapy (EAT), regular swabbing of the nostrils with a zinc chloride solution, was found to be effective in reducing long COVID symptoms. The study hypothesizes that viral RNA from COVID can build up in the nasal cavity, causing persistent long COVID symptoms, and that regularly clearing away this residual RNA could reduce symptoms. ■

Know Where To Go: Primary Care, Urgent Care or Emergency Department

A family guide to getting the right care at the right time

BY LISA CLOUGH, MS ED.M CHES®

Primary Care

For non-urgent conditions, start with your primary care physician (PCP) or pediatrician. A primary care physician (PCP) is a doctor who provides ongoing, comprehensive healthcare for a wide range of less urgent health concerns for adults. Pediatricians serve a similar role for children. They are the first point of contact for patients for preventive care, diagnosis and treatment of various acute and chronic conditions, and they can refer patients to specialists.

While PCPs and pediatricians can diagnose illnesses and help with sickness, they can also help when you are feeling good by working with you to develop healthy lifestyle habits that may prevent serious health conditions and keep you feeling well.

You and your children should go to your primary care physician or pediatrician for:

Cough or sore throat
Nausea or diarrhea
Rash or minor burns
Minor fever, cold
Eye pain/irritation
Back pain
Bumps, cuts, scrapes
Stitches
Mild asthma
Burning with urination
Ear or sinus pain
Allergic reactions
Minor headache
Immunizations
Sprains and strains
Animal bites

Urgent Care Center

Can't get in to see your PCP or pediatrician but it's not a life-threatening condition? Urgent care can help.

Doctors who work at urgent care centers provide immediate medical care for non-life-threatening conditions that need attention within 24 hours outside of regular office hours but are not severe enough to warrant an emergency department visit. Urgent care doctors often have training in both family medicine and emergency medicine to be able to treat a wide variety of conditions. And urgent care centers oftentimes have on-site X-ray capabilities for diagnosing minor sprains, strains and fractures.

For your children, identify an urgent care in your area that has a pediatrician or other pediatric medical specialists.

You and your children should go to urgent care for these conditions when you cannot reach your primary care physician or pediatrician:

Abdominal pain
Cough or sore throat
Nausea or persistent diarrhea
Rash or minor burns
Fever without a rash
Minor fever
Moderate flu-like symptoms
Eye pain/irritation
Back pain
Bumps, cuts, scrapes
Stitches
Mild asthma
Burning with urination
Ear or sinus pain
Allergic reactions
Minor headache
Immunizations
Sprains and strains
Animal bites
Dehydration

Emergency Department

Chest pain, acute onset illness or severe injuries that need more attention than a PCP or pediatrician can provide warrant a visit to the emergency department.

Emergency department (ED) physicians are specially trained physicians who work in emergency departments to provide immediate care 24/7 for patients with acute and life-threatening injuries or illnesses. Emergency physicians are trained in how to stabilize patients, perform a wide variety of procedures and make critical decisions under pressure. They collaborate with many other healthcare professionals to ensure the most comprehensive care.

For children, identify a local hospital in your area with a pediatric emergency department. These EDs have pediatric emergency physicians and other healthcare professionals specially trained to support the emergency healthcare needs of children, often including child life specialists to help children cope with medical trauma.

If you think you or your child is having a health emergency, trust your instincts and call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.

Go to the emergency department when you have a condition that needs immediate medical attention:

Chest pain	Severe allergic reactions
Suspected overdose or poisoning	Situations that require CPR, intubation or advanced imaging
Severe bleeding or burns	Anaphylaxis
Deep wounds	Diabetic emergency
Head trauma	Mental health crisis
Severe headaches	Sexual assault
Loss of conscious	Broken bones or dislocated joints
Seizures	Vaginal bleeding when pregnant
Difficulty breathing/severe asthma	Fever with rash
Stroke symptoms	Facial lacerations ■
Spinal injuries	
Severe abdominal pain	

Lisa Clough is a health journalist and Certified Health Education Specialist.

The Lost Art of Playing Outside

15 Things To Do in Your Backyard

BY PAM MOLNAR

Summer is the best time to be a kid. School is out, the weather is great and each day promises a new adventure. At least that's how it used to be. Today, summer's biggest rival is a digital display. It's time to ditch the electronic devices, gather up the neighborhood kids and show them how to have some old-fashioned summer fun.

Get on Some Wheels

Pull out your bikes, skateboards or roller skates and explore your neighborhood streets. Set up traffic cones in an obstacle course to see who can get through it the fastest, but don't forget to wear your safety gear.

Sidewalk Chalk

Let your imagination take over as you create decorative scenes, trace your friends and play games like tic-tac-toe. Chalk can also be used to create four square layouts and starting lines and boundaries for a basketball court.

Water Gun Shooting Range

Gather empty water and soda bottles and set them up on a deck railing or table edge. Fill your water gun and try to knock them over. On windy days, fill each bottle with an inch of water.

Set Up a Bike-Washing Station

After a ride on the trails, your bike needs a good cleaning. Set up a station in the driveway with soapy water, a hose and some rags to dry up. This is a fun way to cool off while getting something accomplished.

Fence Volleyball

The backyard fence provides a simple volleyball net. Players stand on either side and play volleyball with a beach ball. You can also play pool noodle volleyball, in which players try to keep balloons from landing on their side by hitting them back over with pool noodles. It's played with five to 10 balloons and a noodle for each player.

Sharks and Minnows

Line up the players, called minnows, on one end of the yard. One shark stands in the middle of the yard. The minnows try to cross to the other side of the yard without getting tagged and becoming a shark themselves. Play continues until all minnows have changed to sharks.

Watermelon-Eating Contest

Cut watermelon into half-moon pieces and set them in front of each player on the table. On go, try to eat the watermelon as fast as you can without using your hands.

Pull Out the Playdough

When it is hot and you need a break from running games, set up a



table in the shade and get creative with playdough. Bring out cookie cutters, rolling pins and anything that creates some texture.

Dodgeball

Set up several soft vinyl balls at the center between two teams. On go, charge the center to get to a ball and start throwing balls at other players. If a player catches a ball, the thrower is out. If players miss the catch or get hit with the ball, they're out instead.

Kick the Can

Place a metal can in the middle of the driveway or backyard patio. Players hide while the person who is "it" tries to find them (while keeping an eye on the can). If the seeker gets too far away from the can, another player can come out of hiding and kick the can. If that player is tagged, they'll become "it." If not, the player is safe. Play continues until all players kick the can or until a player is found or tagged.

Kiddie Pools and Slip and Slides

A kiddie pool is a great place to cool off and play with dolls and float boats. Set up a slip and slide nearby and you have created hours of entertainment right in your own backyard.

Water Balloon Toss

Stand in parallel lines and pass a water balloon back and forth without dropping it. Change it up by setting one person in the middle of a circle with a bowl on their head. Players try to toss the balloon in the bowl.

Kickball

This game is similar to baseball, but it levels the playing field so all ages and skill levels can play. The pitcher rolls a large ball to the "batter," who kicks it. Like in baseball, the kicker runs the bases and the opposing team tries to get the kicker out before they make it home.

Make Mud Pies

Summer is about getting dirty. Fill a disposable container with dirt and add water, flower petals and rocks. Stir with a stick or get your hands in there to mix it up. You can also use your pie filling to draw or write on the sidewalk.

Create a Fort

If you don't have big cardboard boxes at home, head to the hardware store to purchase moving boxes. Create a fort with doors and windows and decorate with markers, crayons and other craft items. ■

Pam Molnar is a mother of three. She has fond memories of summer-time games with her neighbors and enjoys watching her children make summer memories of their own.

Exploring Special Education Schools

BY JILLIAN DIAMOND

Is a special education school right for your child? These schools can be public, nonpublic or private and often utilize different teaching methods than traditional public schools, as well as professional training programs, that are specially designed for students with disabilities.

Though the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act guarantees that all students with disabilities have access to public school education at no cost, some families choose private and nonpublic schools that charge tuition in favor of their specialized programming. Many states offer financial assistance programs to help shoulder the cost.

To apply to these schools, students typically receive an evaluation to determine their disability and educational needs. But it can be difficult to determine which school is right for you. Here are some factors to keep in mind as you explore schools in the DMV.

Demographics

While some special education schools cover a wide range of disabilities, including physical, intellectual, developmental and learning disabilities, others are more specific — and may be a better option for children with that disability.

Like its name suggests, **Model Secondary School for the Deaf** in Washington D.C. serves students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Because of its singular focus, classes are taught using American Sign Language, something that would be more difficult to do at a more generalized special education school. This way, classes are more accessible and students develop ASL skills at school. Students have access to more resources and to peer bonding with those who have similar experiences. Of course, schools catering to a wide range of needs can give your child the opportunity to meet and befriend students with other disabilities and learn more about them.

Curriculum

The way subjects are taught can vary greatly between special education schools. It can depend on the age of students taught or the kinds of disabilities they have. Some special education schools will take their students



through the standard public school curriculum used for their district, but with the use of adaptive tools and additional resources. Others use completely different approaches to teaching, such as **The Lab School of Washington**, which specializes in teaching students with learning differences using a more hands-on approach, with STEM and arts-based curriculum that has students making crafts, doing interactive science activities and acting out roles. This more immersive teaching style can be beneficial for students who may not thrive in a school environment that relies more on visual and auditory learning. Art can also help students with communication difficulties to better express themselves.

Individualized education is common at special needs schools, as they take students' specific needs into account and help to tailor the curriculum to their learning style. In both public and nonpublic special education programs, it is common for parents to fill out an Individualized Education Program (IEP) plan for their child, outlining their specific needs and learning style.

Other common approaches to learning at special education schools include multi-sensory learning, which engages the five senses and allows students to get hands-on experiences with the subjects they are learning about.

Therapy

In addition to a regular school curriculum, many special education schools such as **Ivymount School** in Rockville, Maryland, offer therapy programs for students. These

usually include occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy and in-school counseling.

While many public schools also offer therapy services, students often have to miss classes to take therapy, as the regular curriculum is not made with extra time for therapy in mind.

According to the National Institutes of Health study "Therapy use for U.S. school-aged children with developmental disabilities: State variation and determinants," in-school therapy can be especially helpful for developing children's physical, language, emotional and social skills, as developmental disabilities affect children early in life. Administering therapy at an early age can help children with disabilities develop important life skills.

Post-School Programming

Graduating high school at age 18 and heading off to college may not be an option for all students with disabilities or neuro-divergence, but special education schools offer tools to help students enter the workforce, go to college or receive continuing care.

PHILLIPS School in Annandale, Virginia, is one of many schools offering programs that help prepare students for prospective jobs by teaching them technical skills. Through its Career and Technical Education (CTE) Pathway Program, students with behavioral issues and developmental disabilities can learn skills used in the culinary arts, agriculture and construction trades like plumbing and carpentry. ■

MPT Helps Develop PBS Kids Animated Series With Autistic Main Character

BY JILLIAN DIAMOND

Move over, “Bluey” and “Paw Patrol” — there’s a new lovable animated animal in town, and this one’s breaking barriers on children’s TV. Created by author and illustrator Zachariah OHora for PBS Kids, “Carl the Collector” features a neurodiverse cast, with the titular Carl being the network’s first autistic main character.

Maryland Public Television (MPT) has played a key role in the development of this show, aiming to introduce it to classrooms and give parents resources to talk about autism with their children.

“It’s not a show about autism, or only for kids with autism. It’s a show for everyone,” says Krista Respass, senior managing director of early childhood education at MPT. Respass was responsible for guiding the development of “Carl the Collector”-based resources for parents and teachers, which are now used across the country.

We spoke with Respass to learn about the collaboration between MPT and PBS Kids and how “Carl the Collector” encourages autism acceptance.

How did the collaboration between PBS Kids and MPT come about? What made MPT want to support the show?

When we were approached for this, we were so excited that it wasn’t even a question if we would or not. The show is so meaningful and important. The producers talked to a lot of local stations around the country, and our colleagues at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, who we’ve worked with in the past, made a recommendation for them to talk to us. We really hit it off, and had such a clear, shared passion and vision for supporting kids and families with this show. It’s been such a great partnership.

What is the difference between autism awareness and autism acceptance?

You might be more familiar with the term “Autism Awareness Month,” which was used for a very long time, but there’s been a shift more towards thinking about



autism rather than just building awareness. It’s grown so prevalently in so many families, so we’re really trying to move more towards acceptance. It’s more likely than not that we all know someone in our lives who has been impacted by autism, and accepting people as they are is really the theme of “Carl the Collector,” differences and all. It’s about being inclusive, as opposed to just being aware.

How does “Carl the Collector” promote autism acceptance?

What I think is really so important about the show, and what makes it resonate so well with families, is that it’s very authentic. The show is created with writers, animators, staff members and even child voice actors who are on the spectrum. People who authentically live this life are involved with creating the show and its stories. But the show isn’t about having autism, it’s about friendship, kindness, inclusivity and empathy. It’s all the qualities we want to foster and support in young children.

How might kids with autism see themselves in Carl?

PBS Kids did a series of screenings for parents and their children, and we did a few here locally. We produced some videos of parents of neurodivergent and neurotypical children, as well as those children and their siblings. They really connected with some of the stories. There’s an episode where Carl decides he has to tell his friends he has autism, and he’s very nervous about it. The children we talked to who have autism really connected to that, and so did the parents,

because they’re trying to guide their children on how to do that.

When you’re a parent watching, and you know the behavior typically seen in autism, parents are picking up on that right away. And their kids are seeing their behavior reflected in a character, which is really important.

Could you tell me about the activities that have been created for parents and teachers as part of this collaboration?

We have worked with an expert team of advisors to look at all of the episodes, identify different social and emotional subjects across different categories. We create activities for educators to use in the classroom, where they can show clips of the show to their class to discuss. With each lesson, we include a letter that goes home with each student to let their family know what they learned today, and additional resources. There are several articles the advisors have written for parents which are on the PBS Parents website, so parents can continue the learning at home.

What has the response to the show been like?

The show has been so incredibly well-received, and it’s been embraced by both kids and families. Carl is a very lovable character, and these are situations that really resonate with a lot of families. Having this representation is also an important aspect of our work in media literacy overall. Media literacy in early childhood is a lot of different things, like developing healthy habits, but it’s also about having parents think about the quality of content they’re introducing, and the values of it. Is it providing representation for kids and families who want to see themselves, but also ways for kids to see and understand people who are different? ■

Resources for parents are available at pbs.org/parents/shows/carl and resources for teachers are available at mpt.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/the-plushie-collection-gallery/carl-the-collector.

* **DIRECTORY** / disability resources

AUTISM SOCIETY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

asn.v.org | 703-537-9487
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Oakton, VA 22124

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Part of the Virginia Department of Health's statewide network of excellence serving children and youth with disabilities, the organization's team coordinates with families to find community and healthcare resources in Northern Virginia.

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FORMED FAMILIES FORWARD

formedfamiliesforward.org | 703-539-2904
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Fairfax, VA 22030

A nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting foster, kinship and adoptive families of children and youth with disabilities and other special needs; serves families, educators and child welfare professionals in the Northern Virginia region to improve the developmental, educational, social, emotional and post-secondary outcomes

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P.O. Box 341590, Bethesda, MD 20827-1590
KEEN (Kids Enjoy Exercise Now) empowers youth with disabilities and volunteer coaches through participation in free, noncompetitive one-on-one programs, supporting the overall health and well-being of all individuals. More information about activities taking place in Baltimore, Montgomery County, Washington, D.C., Arlington and Fairfax are available online.

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marylandfamilynetwork.org | 410-659-7701
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Formed from the merger of two nonprofit organizations — the Maryland Committee for Children and Friends of the Family — the Maryland Family Network operates a statewide network of Family Support Centers that help families with infants and toddlers to become stronger and self-sufficient. The organization's Child Care Resource Centers offer training, mentoring, coaching and other supports to Maryland's child care workforce. Its LOCATE Child Care Special Needs Service is a free service available to any family who has a child with an IEP or an IFSP from birth through age 21.

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BY LINDSAY C. VANASDALAN



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Allows kids to explore and mimic real-life car cleaning tasks like washing and cleaning, helping them develop important motor skills while having fun. Fill the water pressure tool with water, grab your cleaning cloth and put on your apron, hat and goggles and let the cleaning fun begin. \$49.99, ages 3+, [walmart.com](https://www.walmart.com)



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Free | wharfdc.com/fourth

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This annual concert brings in visitors from across the country, with performances by the U.S. Army Band, National Symphony Orchestra and other national musical groups. If you can't make the concert in person, PBS will be live-streaming it on its website and local PBS stations.

Free | pbs.org/a-capitol-fourth

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JULY 12, 6-9:45 P.M. | ORONOCO BAY PARK
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Free | alexandriava.gov

* NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE DAY PARADE

JULY 4, 11:45 A.M. | CONSTITUTION AVE., WASHINGTON, D.C. 20001

Hosted by the National Park Service, this annual parade celebrates the July 4 holiday with balloons, floats and marchers from local organizations and bands. Even celebrities! The parade is also live-streamed on YouTube.

Free | july4thparade.com



PARADE: RON ENGLE; BOY WITH FLAG: SPYRAKOT/DOBESTOCK

* (HULA) HOOP DREAMS

JULY 3, 4 P.M.

Learn a new skill to impress your friends at the Share The Love of Hula-Hooping! program at Westover Branch Library in Arlington, VA. Participants will learn hula-hooping tricks and techniques.

* TIE-DYE FUN

JULY 8, 3-4 P.M.

Customize your own tote bags at the Color Your World Tie-Dye Party at Culmore Library in Falls Church, VA! All supplies for tie-dying will be provided.

* POOL PARTY PARADISE

JULY 18, 5-8:30 P.M.

Make a splash at Friday Family Fun Night at the Pool, held at Chinquapin Park Recreation Center in Alexandria, VA. There will be an hour of pool fun followed by a movie screening and snacks.

* TAKE A TRIP TO "MURAL ISLAND"

JULY 20, 10:30 A.M.

Join author Katie Yamasaki for a read-aloud of her picture book "Mural Island" at Politics and Prose Bookstore in Washington, D.C. The book is inspired by Yamasaki's real-life work as a professional muralist!

MORE EVENTS

TANABATA | THE JAPANESE STAR FESTIVAL

JULY 10, 5:30-8 P.M. | HILLWOOD ESTATE
4155 LINNEAN AVE. NW, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20008

Celebrate and learn more about this unique Japanese festival at Hillwood Estate and its Japanese-style garden! Write wishes and poems for the new year, try Japanese calligraphy and enjoy a performance by the Washington Toho Koto Society at this event, held in partnership with the Japan-America Society of Washington D.C.

\$5-\$20; free for ages 6 and younger | hillwoodmuseum.org

SENFEST 2025

JULY 13, 10 A.M.-10:30 P.M. | VETERANS PLAZA
1 VETERANS PLACE, SILVER SPRING, MD 20910

This annual festival and cultural heritage day celebrates Senegalese culture in Montgomery County, with plenty of opportunities to explore Senegalese food, art, culture and history. It's meant as an inclusive event appropriate for all ages and a great chance to learn about an important local community.

Free | silverspringdowntown.com

SILVER SPRING INTERNATIONAL FOOD & CRAFT FESTIVAL

JULY 20, 1-7 P.M. | VETERANS PLAZA - 1 VETERANS PLACE, SILVER SPRING, MD 20910

Celebrate what makes Silver Spring unique at this annual cultural festival highlighting art and food from around the world! Browse the Artisan's Haven and find unique gifts for friends, family or yourself, try foods from different countries and enjoy live music.

Free | silverspringdowntown.com

SCIENCE BEHIND HARRY POTTER

JULY 27, 1-5 P.M. | STABLER-LEADBEATER APOTHECARY MUSEUM
105-107 SOUTH FAIRFAX ST., ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314

Learn about the real scientific and medical practices that inspired the Wizarding World in this special guided tour highlighting the herbal remedies and healing techniques behind Hogwarts' Herbology and Potions classes! At the end of the tour, make a potion of your own to take home.

\$15 | alexandriava.gov/Apothecary



THEATER AND PERFORMING ARTS

'ARACHNE: MASTER OF THE WEB'

JULY 5 & 26, 3 P.M.
TRAVELING PLAYERS STUDIO
1961 CHAIN BRIDGE ROAD, TYSONS, VA 22102

Any fan of Greek mythology or the Percy Jackson series of books is sure to love this new family-friendly interpretation of one of the most iconic Greek myths. When the weaver Arachne boasts that she's better at weaving than the goddess Athena, her skills are put to the test as Athena challenges her to a competition.

\$16 | travelingplayers.org

'SESAME STREET THE MUSICAL'

JULY 10-31, SHOWTIMES VARY
THE KENNEDY CENTER
2700 F ST. NW, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20566

Get up-close and personal with your favorite Sesame Street characters at this stage show for young audiences featuring beloved Muppets like Elmo, Cookie Monster and Abby Cadabby! The show continues through Aug. 31.

Tickets start at \$40 | kennedy-center.org

ENCORE STAGE & STUDIO PRESENTS 'FOOTLOOSE THE MUSICAL'

JULY 19-27, SHOWTIMES VARY
THOMAS JEFFERSON COMMUNITY THEATRE
125 S. OLD GLEBE ROAD, ARLINGTON, VA 22204

This musical theater production adapts the beloved 1984 movie into a family-friendly romp for all ages! When Ren discovers that dancing is banned in the town his family has moved to, he takes on the challenge of challenging authority and bringing rhythm back.

\$16-\$22 | encorestage.org

MARYLAND YOUTH BALLET PERFORMS 'CINDERELLA'

JULY 25-27, 10:30-11:30 A.M.
CHILDREN'S THEATRE-IN-THE-WOODS
1551 TRAP ROAD, VIENNA, VA 22182

The classic fairy tale is brought to life through Wolf Trap's Children's Theatre-in-the-Woods, which takes ballet and performing arts outside during the summer months.

\$12; free for ages 2 and younger
wolftrap.org

* DMV MADE: CELEBRATING A CULTURE OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS

JULY 26, 1-7:30 P.M. | NATIONAL MALL | 50 14TH ST. SW, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

This festival focuses on how health and fitness meet arts and culture, featuring activities like dance and fitness classes, live muralists and places to explore everything from poetry and storytelling to health and wellness. There will be plenty of kid-friendly activities as well!

Free (VIP tickets available for extra charge) | wblinec.org/dmvmade



Family-Friendly Towns on Maryland and Virginia's Eastern Shore

BY JILLIAN DIAMOND

THE EASTERN SHORE is a great place to visit with many charming small towns. You might learn something new or discover your new favorite day-tripping destination.

These are our picks for some of the best towns on the Eastern Shore to visit with family.

CHINCOTEAGUE ISLAND, VA

Chincoteague Island is home to the only publicly accessible beach between Ocean City and Virginia Beach but is a quieter getaway than both of those bustling vacation towns.

It's popular for fishing, crabbing and boating in the summer, but the island is probably best known for its wild ponies — like in Marguerite Henry's children's novel, "Misty of Chincoteague." The Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company has held an annual pony swim (from neighboring Assateague Island to Chincoteague) drawing about 40,000 visitors each July since 1925, followed by a carnival and auction of the ponies.

It also has one of the most popular wildlife refuges in the United States. If you'd like to spy a bald eagle, the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge has hiking, kayaking and bird watching on its 14,000 acres, with more than 400 species of birds. Looking for dolphins? Try an island boat tour.

If your eyes are set above the atmosphere, you can see space-themed exhibits at the nearby NASA Wallops Flight Facility Visitor Center — and even watch rocket launches!

CAPE CHARLES, VA

Cape Charles has the only public beach on Virginia's Eastern Shore that doesn't charge an entrance or parking fee. Cape Charles Town Beach has calm, clear water with small waves, making it perfect

for paddleboarding, kayaking or just going for a swim with younger family members who may not be ready for rougher ocean waves.

The town's historic district dates back to the 1880s, leaving many preserved buildings to visit. If you're in the mood for a concert or play, the Historic Palace Theatre, which is housed in a 1940s movie house, is an especially unique venue.

The area also has a few interesting nature parks. Savage Neck Dunes has some of the tallest sand dunes on the Eastern shore, while the Cape Charles Natural Area Preserve gives visitors a view of the surrounding forest from an elevated boardwalk.

ONANCOCK, VA

Onancock was called "the gem of the Eastern Shore" in the 17th century, and that reputation still holds true today. The town has a rich history, apparent in museums such as the Watermen's Heritage Museum, dedicated to the titular profession in Virginia, and the Samuel D. Outlaw Blacksmith Shop Memorial Museum, a working smithy where visitors can learn about blacksmithing and watch metalworkers in action.

The town is also ideal for art lovers. See beloved classics and original theater at The North Street Playhouse. The Eastern Shore Art League has its home base in town and often hosts exhibits and art-themed events. And the vintage Roseland Theater shows foreign films and holds an annual international film festival that brings film buffs into town.

ST. MICHAELS, MD

Quaint and peaceful, St. Michaels was the runner-up for the "Best Historic Small Town" award in *USA Today's* 2025 Readers' Choice Awards. Once an important location during the War of 1812, it's now a relaxing place to spend some time by the shore.

One of the town's biggest attractions is the Chesapeake Bay Marine Museum, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary in 2025. The museum also functions as an active shipyard, so visitors can see historic and working boats. Another must-see is the Classic Motor Museum, a meetup spot for vintage car collectors which houses a collection of 20th century vehicles.

Boating is a popular activity for locals and tourists alike. Rent a kayak or paddleboard and take on the St. Michaels Water Trail, four designated boating trails that take paddlers around the town's waterways.

CAMBRIDGE, MD

Cambridge is a waterfront town surrounded by the countryside. Its downtown has been lauded as one of the best in the country, and it's a great place to spend the day shopping and eating. Explore art via Dorchester Center of the Arts, a local nonprofit supporting arts education, or learn about famed abolitionist Harriet Tubman, who was born nearby. The town is home to the Harriet Tubman Museum & Educational Center, which honors her life and legacy. The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Scenic Byway also passes through town and encompasses the trails that were used by former slaves on their journey to freedom. ■

Cool Down This Summer With a Sweet Slushie

BY FAMILY FEATURES

Each season throughout the year seems to have its own “flavor,” and summer is no exception. Hamburgers and hot dogs off the grill, refreshing watermelon at snack time and cool, delicious ice cream on warm evenings.

While many people think of sweetpotatoes during the holidays, you can make this sweet vegetable a key ingredient year-round — including summertime. As one of the most versatile veggies you can find, they’re easy to add to a variety of recipes while enhancing flavor and boosting nutritional content.

Sweetpotatoes can be your summer staple in both simple and elevated recipes alike, as well as in both sweet and savory dishes. They can be cooked or prepared in several ways: on the stove, baked, microwaved, grilled or slow-cooked.

Or, for an easy way to cool down in the heat, try them in a creamy drink like this Sweetpotato Summer Slushie. It may surprise you, but sweetpotatoes are ideal for sipping — smoothies and cocktails are both crowd-pleasers, especially during sweltering summer days. This refreshing treat can be made with or without the boozy kick; just break out the blender and kick back in the sunshine.

To discover more ways to cook and enjoy sweetpotatoes all summer long, visit ncsweetpotatoes.com. ■

Sweetpotato Summer Slushie

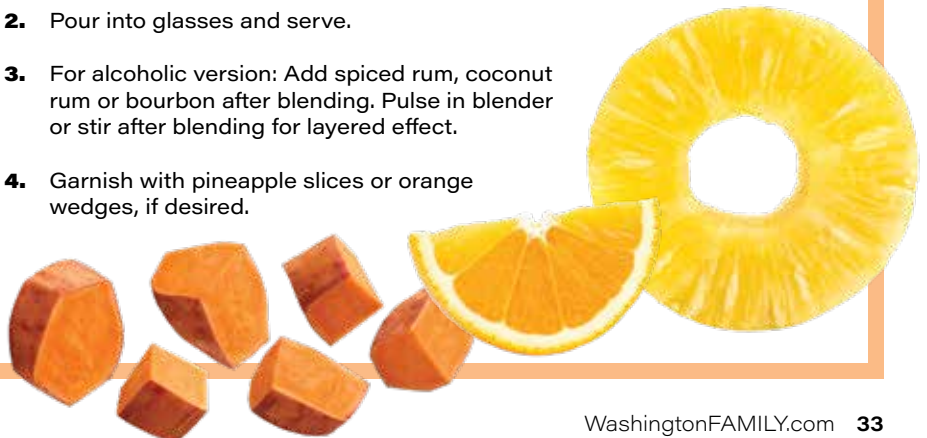
Recipe courtesy of the North Carolina Sweetpotato Commission

Ingredients

- 1 cup cooked, mashed North Carolina Sweetpotatoes
- 1 cup pineapple juice
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/4 cup coconut milk
- 2-3 tablespoons simple syrup or honey (adjust to taste)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups crushed ice
- 2 ounces spiced rum, coconut rum or bourbon (optional)
- pineapple slices or orange wedges, for garnish (optional)

Directions

1. In blender, blend sweetpotatoes, pineapple juice, orange juice, lemon juice, coconut milk, simple syrup or honey, vanilla extract and ice until smooth and slushy.
2. Pour into glasses and serve.
3. For alcoholic version: Add spiced rum, coconut rum or bourbon after blending. Pulse in blender or stir after blending for layered effect.
4. Garnish with pineapple slices or orange wedges, if desired.



SLUSHIE: COURTESY OF NORTH CAROLINA SWEETPOTATO COMMISSION VIA FAMILY FEATURES;
SWEET POTATOES: PHOTO FIND;
PINEAPPLE: SUPAMAS;
ORANGE: LUPACO PNG/ADOBESTOCK

A close-up photograph of a dog's face, likely a Weimaraner, with brown and white fur and striking green eyes. The dog is looking slightly to the left.

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Good Different

Happy Disability Pride Month! Community members of all ages and abilities are invited to participate in DC Public Library Disability Pride Month events and celebrate the experiences of youth with disabilities by reading a great book. As well as being fun stories, these books all offer good conversation starters for families.

BY CLAIRE FOGARTY, CHILDREN'S LIBRARIAN FOR THE
CENTER FOR ACCESSIBILITY, DC PUBLIC LIBRARY



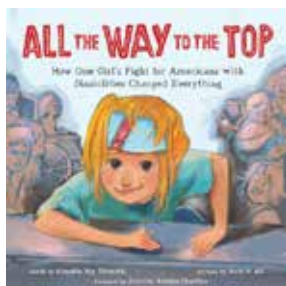
PICTURE BOOKS

"All the Way to the Top"

by Annette Bay Pimentel

illustrated by Nabi H. Ali

Jennifer Keelan, born with cerebral palsy, became a disability rights activist after being unable to attend her local school, because there was no ramp for her wheelchair. At age 8, she participated in the history-making Capitol Crawl, crawling up the Capitol steps with other disability rights activists to push for the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). "All the Way to the Top"



shows kids that all young people can make a difference — and that there is more to be done to continue Jennifer's legacy. This book includes thoughtful family discussion questions.

"Brilliant Bea"

by Shaina Rudolph and

Mary Vukadinovich, illustrated

by Fiona Lee

Bea, who is smart but feels left out because her dyslexia causes her to take longer than other kids to figure out her schoolwork, gets "stuck" when faced with a new writing project! With help from her teacher, who gives her a tape recorder to record her stories, and a new friend who offers to illustrate her story, Bea finds her voice. This warm, expressive picture book — printed in dyslexia-friendly font — can broaden adults' understanding of dyslexia while boosting confidence in kids who learn differently.

EARLY READERS

The Wednesday and Woof series

by Sherri Winston, illustrated

by Gladys Jose

This delightful beginning chapter book series stars Wednesday, a spunky aspiring detective with juvenile arthritis, and her service dog, Woof, as they solve neighborhood mysteries, like a cat-napped cat and a runaway robot! With playful illustrations, red herrings galore and a lighthearted tone, these books also serve as a great introduction to the concepts of chronic diseases and trusting your body.

MIDDLE GRADE

"Good Different"

by Meg Eden Kuyatt

Readers will empathize with Selah, a seventh grader who flew under the radar at school by following her "rules for being normal," until she accidentally hit a classmate while overstimulated. Selah's world is turned upside down, but a supportive teacher encourages her to express herself through poetry and learn more about how to manage her sensory needs. This novel includes an author's note about her own experience with autism and self-advocacy resources for parents and kids.

The Stuntboy series

by Jason Reynolds, illustrated

by Raul the Third

Graphic novel fans will be drawn to the story of Portico Reeves, a sensitive kid whose secret superhero alter ego, Stuntboy, helps him cope with his anxiety.

This fast-paced, funny book, packed with colorful cartoon illustrations that reflect Stuntboy's imagination, also manages to deftly tackle serious subject matter as Stuntboy confronts the reality of his parents' divorce.

TEENS

"Louder Than Hunger"

by John Schu

Jake is an eighth grader who loves poetry, rollerblading and spending time with his grandma, but he is haunted by an internal voice that tells him to stop eating and start over-exercising. After being diagnosed with anorexia, he is committed to a residential treatment center and begins a harrowing journey toward recovery. This raw novel-in-verse, a fictionalized account of the author's own experiences as a young teen, can resonate with all teens, especially those who struggle with low self-esteem or disordered eating.

"Disability Visibility: Adapted for Young Adults"

edited by Alice Wong

This empowering collection of essays offers all teens a powerful window into the experiences of people living with a range of disabilities. Highlights include "Love Means Never Having to Say ... Anything," by Jamison Hill, who is unable to speak due to myalgic encephalomyelitis, and "Guide dogs don't lead blind people. We wander as one," by deafblind lawyer Haben Girma, as well as "We Can't Go Back," a speech by DC Public Library's own Ricardo Thornton about his harrowing experience as a child in the Forest Haven institution. ■

Tina Byer

BY JILLIAN DIAMOND

For Tina Byer, the past few years have been fantastical. The IT consultant has become a major name on BookTok, the TikTok community dedicated to reading. On her TikTok account, which currently has 34,600 followers, and her Instagram, which has 12,400, Byer posts about her passion for romance and fantasy novels — often in a princessy ball gown.

Outside of BookTok, Byer is a mother of two who grew up in Germany but moved to Northern Virginia area when she was in middle school. She lives in Woodbridge with her husband, Adam, and sons, Everett (9) and Harrison (7).

Responses have been edited for length and clarity.

Did you always love reading?

Absolutely. Growing up in Germany really fostered that, too. I loved “Grimm’s Fairy Tales” and fantasy stories as a kid. When I moved as a teenager, the dystopia craze was in full swing, so I was really wrapped up in “The Hunger Games” and “Twilight” and their fandoms.

How did you first get involved in the BookTok community, and what made your account take off?

I was sourcing recommendations from my friends, and one of them suggested “A Court of Thorns and Roses,” which is a very popular fantasy romance book. I got completely sucked in and started posting about it on Instagram. I hadn’t really used Instagram that much before then; I mostly posted pictures of my kids or my house.

FAMILY FAVORITES

Food: Tacos

Local Spot: The neighborhood pool. My kids could go there every day.

Vacation Spot: Disney World

Family Activity: Board games or biking outside

Book: It’s not my favorite, but it’s a Minecraft book. (Laughs) It’s another way I keep them engaged with reading.



Tina Byer and her family

Suddenly, I had a stranger comment on my posts for the first time ever, and I thought that was so fun. From there, I kept posting and making new friends, realizing there were events to go to, and then BookTok came along. I didn’t think I would go anywhere on TikTok, because I thought I was too old, but I started cross-posting things there.

How do you balance your career and social media with raising your kids?

It’s definitely a challenge for any mom to have a hobby on top of working and parenting. I’m fully remote, so the time that I save not having to commute is the time that I usually put into my book socials, either first thing in the morning or after my kids are home from school.

Being able to consume books and not just make content about it is important to me. What’s funny about having book socials is that the more time you commit to the social side, the less time you have to actually read. I listen to audiobooks while I’m doing dishes, while I’m doing laundry, and I’m able to still keep up with my reading hobby.

How do you encourage your kids to read?

They’re still quite little, and they don’t love to read independently yet. But they like when I read to them, so I lean into that. They still want to hear the story, and I think that’s really great.

For my older son, I got this idea from one of his teachers where she would read

[her students] a chapter book and then show them its movie adaptation. I’ve been continuing that at home, and it helps motivate him. So, it’s about finding different ways to get them excited without forcing it, because I definitely don’t want them to turn away from reading or see it as a chore.

What do your kids think of your job?

Gen Alpha is so tuned into social media, so they definitely have some interesting questions about it. My kids have never seen my TikToks because they’re not allowed to go on that app yet, but they have favorite YouTubers they watch who have millions of followers. And they’ll be like, “Mommy, why don’t you have as many followers as Mr. Beast?” and I’ll be like, “I think Mommy’s doing alright for herself.”

A lot of mothers are on BookTok. How does your content speak to them?

I make videos to remind my followers, “If you only read one book this year, that’s OK, and that’s a win, because one is better than none.” I do post my reading goals and my reading tracking, but I never want [reading] to feel like a competition for anyone.

I try to remind moms especially that it’s OK if you had a goal and you didn’t reach it, and it’s OK if you tried to read this week and you just didn’t have time. All of our lives are so uniquely different, and we all have our own challenges. ■

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