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2016  
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# ParentMap

*'cause parenting is a trip!*

## Leap into the holidays

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*gift guide*

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# Let it show!

Our big, fun list of 70 plus jingle shows and concerts

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PHOTO AT TOP: EVERGREEN CITY BALLET / CHRIS CLARK PHOTOGRAPHY



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## Winter wonder getaways

Need a last-minute plan for winter break? Or maybe you'd like to treat your kids to a downtown Seattle stay to catch some serious holiday sparkle? Find super ideas for a quick holiday getaway that kids will love, including a Seattle staycation to see *Star Wars* gingerbread houses or a trip to Leavenworth's truly magical Christmas Lighting Festival, complete with hand-bell choirs, and Saint Nick sightings. [parentmap.com/holidaygetaways](http://parentmap.com/holidaygetaways)

## Time to make some memories!

Family time is about making memories that last a lifetime. But what if you want to help preserve those memories for you and your kids? We've tested a whole pile of new apps and programs to find 6 magical memory makers, from an easy app that combines a baby journal with milestone tracking to a social media app that turns your family into professional storytellers. [parentmap.com/memoryapps](http://parentmap.com/memoryapps)



## Time to make camp!

If you're sticking around for winter break, why not let your kids experiment with new interests and skills at a local camp? Find dozens of ideas for cool kid care, from circus camp to STEM camp to nature camp and more at [parentmap.com/wintercamps](http://parentmap.com/wintercamps). And if your kid balks at the big camp environment, we'll have a brand-new list of small, homey camps where kids can learn to craft, sew, cook and more: [parentmap.com/tinycamps](http://parentmap.com/tinycamps).

## Whine pairings

You don't have to sacrifice the grown-up grog to keep the kids pleased during the holidays. We've rounded up the big-kid and little-kid versions of delicious seasonal swills (such as cranberry punch and peppermint shakes — spiked if you please!) with simple recipes for each. You're welcome.

[parentmap.com/whinepairings](http://parentmap.com/whinepairings)



## Conversations about race matter

Since its inception in 2013, the multicultural group Families of Color Seattle has grown from running small parent support groups into a community-building resource for families of all ethnicities throughout the city. Now the organization is working to combat racism and support families in an increasingly racialized society through a powerful Community Dialogues series. Upcoming topics include anti-bias education and anti-racist birthing. Learn more: [parentmap.com/FOCSlectures](http://parentmap.com/FOCSlectures).

## ParentMap

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PUBLISHER/EDITOR Alayne Sulkin

### EDITORIAL

EXECUTIVE EDITOR Natalie Singer-Velush  
OUT + ABOUT EDITOR Elisa Murray  
CALENDAR EDITOR Nancy Chaney  
PROOFREADER Sunny Parsons  
OUT + ABOUT INTERN Ashly Moore Sheldon  
CONTRIBUTORS  
Nancy Schatz Alton, Bryony Angell,  
Will Austin, Melissa Benaroya, Tiffany Doerr,  
Guerzon, Mallia Jacobson, Tiffany Pitts,  
Laura Reagan-Porras, Kristen Russell,  
Kali Sakai, Angela Stowell

### PARENTMAP.COM

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER Julian Haight  
SOCIAL MEDIA + DIGITAL PRODUCTS MANAGER  
Rory Graves

EMAIL PROGRAM MANAGER Brenda Gage  
PUBLISHING ASSISTANT Nicole Persun

### ADVERTISING SALES + PARTNERSHIPS

Ida Wicklund  
Dani Carbary

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SALES + MARKETING SUPPORT MANAGER  
Jessica Collet

SALES ASSISTANT Jen Baird

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EVENT OPERATIONS Tara Buchan  
EVENT + MARKETING COORDINATOR  
Mallory Dehbod  
EVENTS ASSISTANT Zoe Bloom  
COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT Christina Boyer

### ART + PRODUCTION

DESIGN + PRODUCTION, PRINT  
Emily Johnson  
DESIGN + PRODUCTION, PRINT + DIGITAL  
Amy Chinn

### ADMINISTRATION

BUSINESS MANAGER Sonja Hanson  
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# SUPER SEED COOKIES

During the busy, tradition-packed month of December, cooking with kids is a great way to create lasting memories of the special times that accompany our favorite foods and holidays.

PCC Chef Jackie Freeman bakes up a fragrant batch of festive, colorful cookies with her guests, 9-year-old Ana and her cousin Tiffany, from Farestart. Find the video and recipe at [pccnaturalmarkets.com/healthykids](http://pccnaturalmarkets.com/healthykids).



**healthy  
kids  
cook**

**watch the video**  
scan the QR code below

These cookies have a tasty mix of crunchy seeds and chewy dried fruit. Currants are a holiday-friendly upgrade from raisins, and pretty pumpkin seeds provide loads of fiber and magnesium.



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dear reader

## Spirituality ≠ organized religion

In a galaxy long ago and far away, there was no God. Certainly not the talking, walking version from the Hebrew Bible and New Testament who counsels, exalts, blesses, troubles, sees, hears and touches. What is it about the *Star Wars* galaxy that engage millions worldwide in near religious devotion? December 18 will be forever sacred for many as *The Force Awakens* us! *Star Wars* characters emerge grand in our imaginations — the somber Darth Vader,



Sulkin Shabbat  
extended family

the boasting Han Solo, and take-charge Princess Leia. R2-D2, a curiously endearing machine worked its way into my heart with its stubby little body, bleeping voice and wide, round eye.

Let's beam down from space for a moment to meet local **Jedi Master**

**Shaye Whitmer (Someone you should know, p. 62).** Whitmer, who makes his own light sabers, is quite convincing from head to heart — by day he teaches sixth grade chemistry and astronomy; by night he builds his summer camp, Saber Academy.

We've got the themed playthings covered in our **Star Wars, STEM, and Shopkins gift guide** (p. 24). **Let it show!** (p. 34) is a wild sleigh ride through the holiday arts in December, highlighting the dozens of entertainment adventures that await your family. Delight your brood with magical music and mistletoe or classical Nutcrackers debuting around the region. This month we also welcome a fabulous new column, **Full Plate**, from local foodie and mom Angela Stowell, of Ethan Stowell Restaurants fame. We look forward to an ongoing conversation with the Stowells about how to feed and connect with our families.

With all the sparkle of gifts and shows, we all still may be "**Reaching for something greater**" (p. 13). Our feature profiles how four local families define spirituality. My family, like yours I presume, races through our workweek feeling likes it is one nonstop work day.

This is the time of year to BREATHE.


Our family steps into a sacred space every Friday night at sundown as we observe Shabbat. I've taken the best of my ancestors' past practices and merged them into my children's futures. I drop my work each Friday afternoon, start baking challah, grocery shop between risings, and transform ParentMap's world headquarters to blessed gathering of family and friends. This keeps me sane,

centered, and on Shabbat we elevate our minds to a question of the night that engages and often challenges us all ("How would you handle Syrian refugees in light of the Paris attacks?" "What do you love about America and what don't you like?").






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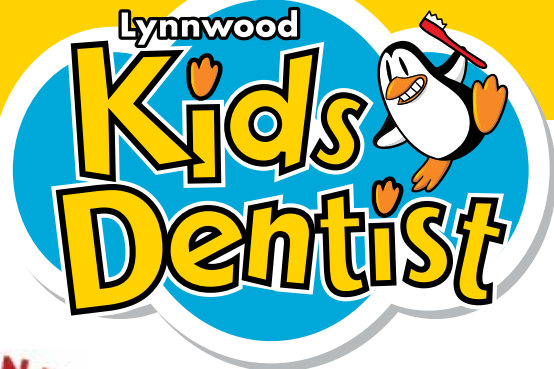


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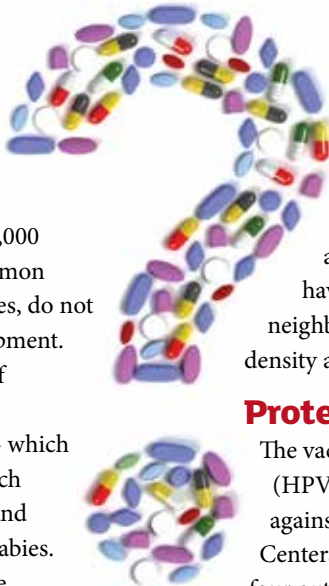


## PARENT FUEL

*family news, snack-sized*

### Antibiotics and pregnancy

Good news for the thousands of pregnant women in our country who are prescribed antibiotics. A new study of 290,000 pregnancies confirms that common antibiotics, known as macrolides, do not harm an unborn child's development. Researchers at the University of Montreal in Canada looked at potential effects of the drugs — which include common antibiotics such as erythromycin, fidaxomicin and clarithromycin — on unborn babies. They caution that more obscure antibiotics still need further study.



the number of supermarkets, healthy specialty stores and fast-food outlets in their neighborhood. The analysis showed that a higher number of fast-food outlets in the neighborhood was tied to lower bone mineral density and bone mineral content in newborns; having more healthy specialty stores in the neighborhood was tied to higher bone mineral density at ages 4 and 6.

### Protecting kids against cancer

The vaccine against human papillomavirus (HPV) is considered critical for protection against certain cancers, but according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, fully four out of 10 girls and six out of 10 boys have yet to get the vaccine. Now, a Harvard University study finds that some of the blame for that might lie with pediatricians. According to the study, 27 percent of doctors do not strongly endorse HPV vaccination — even though HPV is the single most common sexually transmitted infection in the U.S., responsible for 70 percent of the cervical cancer cases worldwide, as well as anal and penile cancers. Talk to your doc!

### Gut reaction

The antibiotics news is not all good this month. Researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health say the drugs might be making kids fat! They may do this by changing gut bacteria, leading to weight gain. The study of nearly 164,000 children found that at age 15, children who had taken antibiotics seven or more times weighed about 3 pounds more than those who did not take antibiotics. “Your [body mass index] may be forever altered by the antibiotics you take as a child,” says study leader Dr. Brian Schwartz. “Our data suggest that every time we give an antibiotic to kids, they gain weight faster over time.” Schwartz says this underscores the need to avoid systemic antibiotics wherever possible.

### No bones about it

In Doritos Locos Taco news this month, it looks like living in a neighborhood with greater access to fast-food outlets may be linked to poorer bone development in early childhood, according to a new study. Researchers at the University of Southampton in the U.K. compared the bone mineral density and bone mineral content of children at birth, and then at age 4 and/or 6, to



### Sing, child, sing

Singing calms babies down better than talking, according to new research published in the journal *Infancy*. Researchers at the University of Montreal found that when upset babies ages 3–6 months old listen to music, they remain calm for significantly longer than when they listen to speech — nine minutes, as opposed to four minutes. All the fun of crib-side karaoke along with five screech-free minutes for you? You're welcome.

### Holiday helpers

Wanna get the gimmes out of your holiday? Research shows that giving to others leads to happiness in young children, and it can certainly make the season more meaningful. A few local charities to consider: Holiday Stockings for Homeless Children ([holidaystockings.org](http://holidaystockings.org)) sews, fills and delivers stockings full of toys to local homeless children. Collect and donate toys, clothes and food (gifts for teens are especially needed) to Hopelink ([hope-link.org](http://hope-link.org)) or Wellspring Family Services ([wellspringfs.org](http://wellspringfs.org)). Adopt a family by shopping for and delivering gifts together through Bellevue LifeSpring ([bellevuelifespring.org](http://bellevuelifespring.org)) or any YWCA ([ywcaworks.org](http://ywcaworks.org)). Or go whole hog and host a holiday donation drive for foster kids through Treehouse ([treehouseforkids.org/get-involved/donation-drives/holiday](http://treehouseforkids.org/get-involved/donation-drives/holiday)); it will mail you a packet to get started. ■

— Kristen Russell

# Get centered

*Breaking out of the exam room for better birth outcomes through Centering*

By Kali Sakai

**W**hen the home pregnancy test turns blue and blood test results are confirmed, it's time to schedule prenatal visits. Typically, moms-to-be schedule monthly 20-minute appointments with a health care provider to ask all the serious, quirky and confounding questions that have occurred to them. In the tiny exam room, they receive the usual urine test, blood pressure check, weight check, uterus measurement, and the provider listens for a heartbeat.

Although pregnancy feels new to every woman, many women experience similar things. Yale-educated nurse midwife Sharon Schindler Rising observed that many expectant mothers asked her the same questions, which consistently knocked her off schedule. Rising figured there had to be a better way for women to navigate the bewildering gantlet of prenatal care while gaining knowledge and confidence about what was to come. So, in

1993, she developed Centering-Pregnancy and later became executive director of the Centering Healthcare Institute ([centeringhealthcare.org](http://centeringhealthcare.org)).

The method has caught on with providers and families, and been championed by local midwifery groups for years. Doctors are on board, now, too: This year, the first Centering pregnancy residency clinic in Washington state is being held at Swedish Family Medicine – Cherry Hill.

## What is Centering?

Centering prenatal care is a method in which 10 women or couples with similar due dates meet together, learn care skills, participate in a facilitated discussion and develop a support network, which includes a doctor or midwife who completes the monthly standard physical assessments. Centering participants attend 10 two-hour sessions for a total of 20 contact hours throughout pregnancy and early postpartum, versus the standard 3.5 total hours.

Centering has been proven to improve outcomes, increase satisfaction with the experience for both mothers and providers, and lower health care costs. These findings were documented in a 2007 National Institutes of Health study, illustrating how impactful Centering can be. Specifically:

- Women in Centering/group care were only 9.8 percent likely to have preterm births, notably less than the 13.8 percent in standard care.
- Women in group care possessed significantly better prenatal knowledge, felt more ready for labor and delivery, and experienced greater satisfaction with their care.

## locations that offer centering

**Providence Regional Medical Center**, Midwifery Clinic (Everett)

**Group Health Midwifery** (Bellevue, Tacoma and Seattle)

**Franciscan Women's Health** (Tacoma & Lakewood)

**Neighborcare Health at Columbia City** (Seattle), in connection with UW Medicine

**Swedish Ballard**, Midwifery (Seattle)

**Swedish Issaquah**, Midwifery (Issaquah)

**Swedish Family Medicine** — Cherry Hill (Seattle)

- Breastfeeding initiation was higher in group care at 66.5 percent, compared to 54.6 percent in standard care.
- The study's authors concluded that the group prenatal care model resulted in equal or improved perinatal outcomes at no added cost.

For my one-on-one prenatal doctor visits years ago, I did my best to write down all the questions beforehand, but inevitably I forgot something or didn't know exactly what to ask. With Centering, a substantial benefit is the "group wisdom," as Rising calls it, when a Centering facilitator encourages all observations, intuition and insights.

"Having a group discussion led to better conversations overall. Oftentimes, someone would ask something and I would think to myself, I'm glad they asked that. I was wondering that as well," says Shannon Testa, Swedish Ballard Centering participant and mother of a son, age 5.

Perhaps the only downside of Centering is that this method requires a greater time commitment from the participants. If there are older children at home or conflicts in scheduling, that could be an issue. But Centering can serve a broad population of women, from low-income families with limited access to prenatal care to high-risk pregnancies needing extra visits for closer follow-up.





### Long-term connections

Centering was initially championed by midwives. Because of the positive impact on birth outcomes, it quickly caught the attention of physicians, including those of Swedish Family Medicine – Cherry Hill in Seattle. Their first cohort of babies will arrive in December/January, and the clinic hopes to serve 80–100 women annually.

“When it comes to prenatal care, our role is to help a woman take control of her health and guide her in building a healthy life for herself and family,” says Jeremia Bernhardt, M.D., the clinical operations director at Swedish Family Medicine – Cherry Hill. The main challenge Bernhardt sees to delivering this method of care is changing old patterns and assumptions. “Centering is a different way to approach medical care. Though it is clear [from the research] that this model is better, most physicians have been trained in, and have practiced in a traditional model of office-based care,” he says.

Centering isn't new to Seattle. Local midwifery groups, including Swedish Midwifery and Women's Health in Ballard — the area's longest-running Centering program — have offered it for almost a decade. “The group support continues even after they all have their babies,” says Fra Na Ready, ARNP, CNM, a nurse practitioner and midwife at Swedish Midwifery Ballard. “I ran into a couple at Green Lake one day with their 5-year-old. They said their group still gets together for potlucks every couple of months.” ■

*Kali Sakai is a Seattle-based freelance writer.*






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# Reaching for *something greater*

How local families define spirituality in old ways and new

By Tiffany Doerr Guerzon

**A**s parents, we work hard to cultivate our kids' academic learning, healthy habits and self-esteem. We make sure they do their homework and brush their teeth, eat their carrots and share their toys.

But what about the teachings that are harder to quantify? In an age of hectic schedules and an almost fervent focus on achievement, how are we showing our kids how to reach for something greater? How do we expose them to the type of deep, transformative connection to the human spirit from which an almost magical sense of purpose and value can emerge?

Science shows there are indeed measurable benefits when we nurture our children's innate spirituality. "Spirituality is associated with significantly lower rates of depression, substance use and abuse, and risk taking," writes Lisa Miller, Ph.D., in her book *The Spiritual Child*.

But "spirituality" doesn't necessarily mean organized religion. Miller defines spirituality as "an inner sense of living relationship to a higher power (God, nature, spirit, universe, the creator, or whatever your word is for the ultimate loving, guiding life-force)."

Today's parents are raising their kids differently than those of previous generations. There is an increasing segment of the population that doesn't affiliate with any organized religion, and this is especially true in the Pacific Northwest. A 2015 Gallup poll showed that only 24 percent of people

in Washington state report attending worship services in a church, synagogue or mosque weekly.

Miller says that all children are "born spiritual" and that, as parents, we can nurture this trait to help our kids thrive. Ways to do this include being open and nonjudgmental when our kids ask spiritual questions, developing spiritual practices, and nurturing our bonds to family and all creatures.

ParentMap spoke with four Seattle-area families who generously shared some of the spiritual rituals they practice with their kids. These parents teach us about what it means to reach and teach toward something greater, even though something greater is different for everyone.

## *An island in time*

The dining table is set, and the platters are filled with steaming salmon and roasted vegetables. The scent of doughy warmth emanates from the two loaves of braided egg bread, or *challah*, which rest under a colorful, embroidered silk cloth. Standing before a candle-filled silver tray, Elizabeth Davis lights two candles, representing guarding and remembering the Sabbath, in a five-branch brass holder that her grandmother transported from Russia. She then lights one candle for each of her three children. Eighteen-year-old Sophie steps up to light candles in holders from her mom's bat mitzvah, 12-year-old Hannah lights ones in a colorful, Star of David-shaped set, and 8-year-old

Sammy uses a tea light. With the 10 flames flickering and reflecting off the silver tray, Davis passes her hands above the candles three times, sings a prayer in Hebrew and then covers her eyes.

"At that moment, when I cover my eyes, I feel peace," she says.

And so begins the most important day of the week for the Davis-Jacobs-Rittenberg family: Shabbat, or Sabbath. Beginning at sundown on Friday night, and ending one hour after sundown on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath is a time to disconnect from the world and reconnect with each other, Davis explains. The ritual continues with the family singing a prayer together and dancing to welcome the Sabbath. Then the parents place their hands on the children's heads and bless them each in turn. After this blessing, Davis' husband, Rob Jacobs, often sings "Eishet Hayil" ("A Woman of Valor"), a poem from Proverbs. More prayers are sung before dinner, including the blessing of the fruit of the vine (wine or grape juice), the ritual washing of hands and the blessing over the challah. Once the bread is blessed, salted, sliced and passed to everyone, the eating begins.

Shabbat is often described as "an island in time." Candlelight and the sound of Hebrew prayers help the outside world to fall away. Computers and TVs are turned off, and cell phones are quieted, leaving this family free to focus on the faces around the table and feel the peace and joy of the Sabbath.

Davis feels that this important practice helps to connect them as a family and to God. >>

## Something greater

continued from page 15

"The heart of Judaism is in the home, with family," she says. But, with three kids, keeping an ancient ritual after a long week is no easy task for two working parents. "One of the kids usually melts down at some point," Davis says with a sigh. But this busy mom has learned how to streamline Shabbat, planning simpler meals and making the challah dough on Thursday nights.

She also tries to make Shabbat fun. Even though one's best clothes are traditionally worn at the Friday-night celebration, Davis has relaxed the family dress code. Sometimes they change things up by allowing everyone to wear pajamas, or by serving breakfast for dinner. After the ritual washing of the hands, everyone must be silent until the bread is blessed, which results in lots of silly miming, loud humming and gesticulating.

During Sabbath, the family avoids electronics, instead turning to reading, talking and playing games, and they attend synagogue together on Saturday morning.

Davis and her husband feel that raising their children with a structure of Jewish life gives them a good foundation in an increasingly complicated world.

"We hope by raising kids with a faith tradition and being actively engaged in a faith community, it'll help us insulate our kids. But I mean insulate, not bubble-wrap!" she says with a laugh.

"We try to teach our kids that each individual has value and is irreplaceable, but at the same time, we hope they're learning that 'it's not all about you.'"

### The heart connection

Eryn DeFoort stands on her front deck of her Vashon Island home overlooking Puget Sound, as she does every night. She and her 4-year-old son, Mickey, balanced on her hip, breathe deeply of

"Those first few moments after a child wakes up set the tone for the day"

the salt-tinged air and listen to the sounds of the water. After a few minutes, DeFoort asks her son to say goodnight to the moon and stars, and then continues Mickey's bedtime ritual inside.

"When he is ready for bed, I tell him it's time to talk to the angels, and he lies down and closes his eyes," DeFoort says. The two hold hands as Mickey visualizes his guardian

angels. Then he talks about his day and what he is thankful for. "We ask the angels to connect us to our family members and to protect them. If there was an argument at preschool, for example, we'll talk about it and send love to the other children involved." The conversation continues with a discussion about what Mickey has to look forward to the next day.

DeFoort, a single mom and holistic minister, doesn't practice any specific religion, but she tries to preserve her son's natural spirituality, a trait she believes all children are born with. She wants Mickey to connect with something bigger, especially for those times in which he is afraid or confused. They emphasize this by being out in nature, talking about God, being "present" and by practicing a type of deep breathing that they call "belly breathing."

"Being divorced, I have come up with ways to help him process the separation he feels from me or his dad when we aren't together," DeFoort says. "We practice the 'heart connection,' which is this invisible string or cord of light that he visualizes connecting him from his heart to his dad." DeFoort explains that she believes that the "heart cord" is a string of energy that is visible to some, existing between parents and children or between other loved ones. "It's easy for young children to see this and believe in its efficacy to soothe the 'missing' feeling."

The two have a similar ritual in the mornings to ease into the day. Mother and son sit on the couch and cuddle, look out of the window and talk about what the birds are doing or what the weather is like or how the sun is waking up.

"Those first few moments after a child wakes up set the tone for the day," DeFoort says. "I'm teaching him to be present in the moment, at least for a few minutes before the rat race begins."

I want these practices to be embedded in his consciousness so that Mickey will remember them later in life when he is needing tools to handle stress."

### How we are treating others?

The table in the cozy dining area is covered in a red, white and green tablecloth, and the scent of toasted garlic bread wafts through the air. It is quiet except for the sound of homemade soup bubbling on the stove. The lights are dimmed as a 10-year-old Maggie Hansen lights a lavender "hope" candle in the Advent wreath on the table. Her family then recites a prayer together: *Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let these gifts to you be blessed.* As parents Mark and Necia Hansen, along with children Maggie and 8-year-old Sammy, begin eating, Mark Hansen says, "Let's talk about what the candle means."

It is Advent, the season of anticipation and the Hansen family's favorite part of the religious calendar. Advent is celebrated during the four weeks before Christmas, during which Christians look forward to the anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ on Dec. 25. Active in their Episcopal church, the Hansen family celebrates Advent by lighting a candle each night at dinner. Each week has a different theme: hope, joy, faith and peace. The circular gold wire candleholder holds four taper candles, three lavender and one pink. A white pillar candle fills the center. One additional candle will be lit each week (the pink candle is for "joy" week), culminating with the lighting of the white "Christ" candle on Christmas. The children embellish the candleholder with pine branches and other greenery they gather from outdoors, forming the wreath. >>



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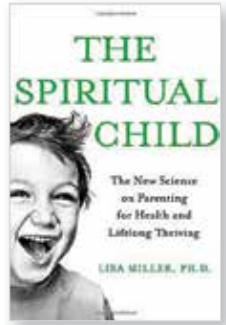
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## Something greater

continued from page 15

In the flickering candlelight, all is warm and peaceful in this suburban Kent home. Dinners during Advent are a nice break from a busy day, say these parents, both of whom work and go to school full-time. The family then discusses the week's theme, allowing each person to say what the theme means to them.

"On hope week, for example, we talk about our hopes. And sometimes the kids will say what they 'hope' to get for Christmas," Necia Hansen says with a smile. "But that's OK, they're kids."

Mealtime and bedtime prayers are another important ritual, year-round. "If we forget to pray, Sammy will remind us," Mark Hansen says. They sometimes choose a prayer by rolling a prayer dice — a chunky block of wood with a different prayer inscribed on each side.

Necia Hansen was raised Christian, but not in a church, and Mark Hansen was raised in the Episcopal faith. After the couple had their first child, they felt compelled to find a church community that fit their family.

"I don't need church for my religion, but I need it for my village," Necia Hansen says.

Necia points out their family motto, "Love each other." These important words are stenciled onto painted wooden blocks and sit on the mantel in the great room for all to see.

"When the kids are arguing, we'll say to them, 'Are you being kind? Are you being loving?' When they tell us there is a new kid in their class at school, we ask, 'Were you welcoming?'" Necia Hansen says. "For us, spirituality is more about how we are treating others."

## Raising their voices together

Upon entering the Columbia City Church of Hope, I notice the words inscribed above the door: "Here Find Peace." Inside, near the front, a group has gathered, sitting on pews and chairs pulled into a circle. Its members invite me to join them, and I am handed a laminated sheet of music. The faces around me reflect the ethnic diversity of this South Seattle neighborhood. As people trickle in and put

on name tags, others smile and scoot over to make room. Above us, colorful stained glass windows are set high in the walls of the old building, some partially covered by sheets of wood. In the circle, children nestle with their parents or sit with friends. A sturdy toddler is passed to the arms of another woman, so that the young mother can tend to her other child, who is in a wheelchair. When the Columbia City Family Chorus stands, I am struck by the variety of sizes and ages in the group, preschoolers singing side by side with senior citizens. This feels more like a loving family gathering than a choir practice.

The music is eclectic, ranging from the Japanese "Hotaru Koi," sung in a round, to Taylor Swift's "Why You Gotta Be So Mean?" to original compositions by choir leader Kathleen Tracy. Kids and adults sing enthusiastically, led by Tracy on guitar, their joined voices soaring to the high ceiling of the church. When we start singing "Shine," one of Tracy's compositions, the singing becomes even more spirited. One of the stanzas perfectly describes this choral group:

*Young & old we come here seeking shelter  
To heal our hearts, to make a better world  
To give ourselves permission to be human  
When we know we are enough,  
our hearts are lifted up and we can shine . . .*

Ambre, along with her husband, CJ, and 8-year-old son, Loren (they asked that their family's last name not be used), have been singing in the secular community chorus for several years. "It lifts up our hearts and spirits, and reconnects us with ourselves, our family and our community,"

"For me,  
spirituality is  
about being  
inspired  
and feeling  
connected  
to something  
greater than  
ourselves"

Ambre says. For this family, singing is spiritual.

"This is a nice respite from work," CJ says. "The focus is on enjoyment, and there are no mistakes." CJ admits that it can be difficult to fit a weekly activity into a busy family schedule.

"Sometimes I come home from work and think, 'Do I really want to go out again?' But I do because I always feel better afterward. It's about harmonizing with everyone. It makes me feel connected to something greater."

"Group singing gets us beyond the story and particularity of our individual lives and connects us to the simple

truth of being human together," says Tracy, the chorus director. "When we can slow down enough to make space for community experiences such as these in our lives, it is deeply nourishing. There isn't much out there for the unchurched, but we are all made to sing."

While the family doesn't attend church, Ambre considers her family to be spiritual in other ways. "For me, spirituality is about being inspired and feeling connected to something greater than ourselves," she explains. "There's a fundamental sense that whatever happens, it's OK, because we are a part of something bigger. That's what I want for our son."

Fostering a connection to something greater, whether it be faith in God, community, nature or the universe, can give kids something to lean on when we can't be there. There are as many ways to be spiritual as there are stars in a clear night sky, and they are all beautiful. ■

*Tiffany Doerr Guerzon is a freelance writer and the mother of three children, including a teen. Read more of her writing at TDGuerzon.com.*



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## Kitchen wishes

By Angela Stowell

Every year the holidays roll around, and I get at least three emails, two texts, a phone call and a handful of Facebook messages from various friends and neighbors asking what kitchen gadget they must acquire for their loved one. While I appreciate their trust in my ability to accessorize my own kitchen, most are really surprised (and maybe a little disappointed!) when my response isn't for a new sous vide machine or high-tech — and hard to use — wine opener. Ethan and I have always kept things pretty simple in the kitchen, but it is especially important now that we have two small children. You really only need a few things to create a well-stocked, functional kitchen: a set of good knives (I like Global, Ethan likes Shun), an assortment of basic All-Clad pots and pans, and a good cutting board. That said, there are a few other “must haves” we love.

### EDITOR'S NOTE

Angela Stowell is CFO and partner at Ethan Stowell Restaurants in Seattle, which encompasses 12 restaurants including Tavalàta and How to Cook a Wolf. Angela also helped found Eat Run Hope, an annual 5K and culinary event that benefits the Fetal Health Foundation. Angela and Ethan have two young sons.

**VITA PREP** The ultimate blender for soups, smoothies and baby food. My youngest isn't a huge fan of green vegetables, so I offer a fruit smoothie with spinach or kale. The Vita-Prep also handles hot food, which is perfect for winter soup purées.

**OXO VEGETABLE PEELER** It seems so simple, but a good vegetable peeler makes a big difference when trying to get dinner prepped quickly.

**SLOW COOKER** An essential in my kitchen in the winter months for soups, stews and braised meat. Also great for steel-cut oats, which take 20–30 minutes on the stove top. Before going to bed, I put the oats in the cooker and a little more water than the recipe calls for, along with half of a cinnamon stick or a few cardamom pods and turn the cooker to “warm.” Hot cereal awaits the next morning. The great thing about gifting a slow cooker is you can spend a relatively small amount of money and get a good product or you can go for the higher-end All-Clad version.

**RICE COOKER** I don't get fancy here. All I want is a basic rice cooker that allows me to walk away and know that at least one part of our meal is going to cook itself.

**SCANPAN** Superhigh-quality nonstick pan, which I did not think was important until I had kids and became a short-order egg cook every morning.



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Ethan and I both love these cutting boards! We actually had the entire kitchen pass at Anchovies & Olives made from a Boos Block. The boards are made of high-quality wood and they don't slip around. Hands down, the most used item in our kitchen.

**AVOCADO SAVER** Another great stocking stuffer. I got one as a gift a few years ago and thought I would never use it, but it's *so much easier* to put unused avocado in the saver and toss it in the fridge.

### NESPRESSO MACHINE

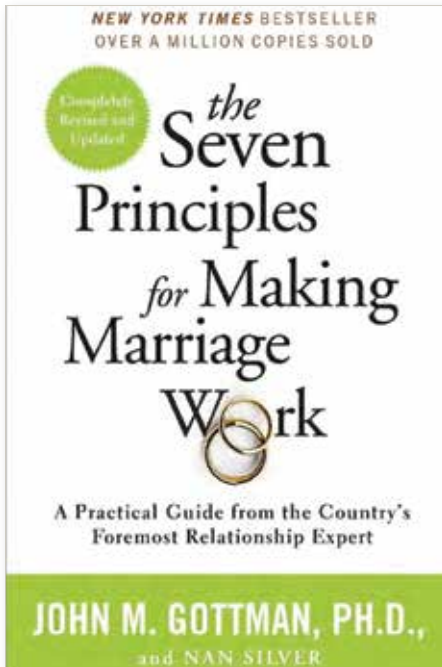
Being from Seattle, I realize this might be a controversial recommendation. We have amazing coffee in our city, but I actually like this espresso and I love that I get a no-mess almond milk latte every morning. And now you can recycle the pods, which was a sticking point for me for awhile.

Whatever awaits you under your tree or in your stocking, we hope it will make life a little easier in the kitchen and help your family connect over good food! ■

# ParentLab

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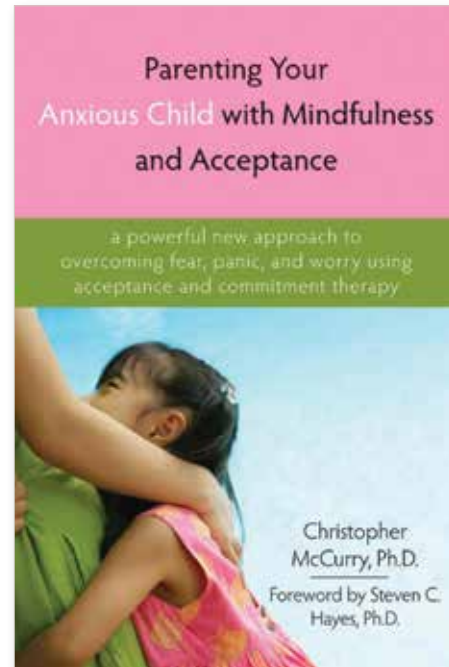
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# Q&A

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## How to keep the past at bay while parenting

**Q:** I'm new to parenting a teen, but I've noticed my triggers often make parenting a teen hard. When my child gets detention for not following the dress code, my history of having to follow rules for how girls dress adds more fire to the flame. What's the easiest way to set aside your own personal triggers with teenagers?

**A:** When someone tells you something degrading about your kid, it's really hard to quiet the inner voice that says, "I'm not a great parent." I guess we have two superhard tasks: 1) stop our supercritical inner thoughts and 2) trust the system.

Take this example: My daughter set the microwave on fire in an after-school program. I was horrified that my otherwise perfect child had done this, yet I was angry at her detention, which I felt was harsh. I also secretly hoped the punishment worked. So I know exactly what you're feeling, but you have to trust the system to discipline your child because you're not always there.

Sometimes in the heat of the moment, we say things to our kids we later regret. Then we need to model self-forgiveness and allow our kids to forgive us. Say and believe "Tomorrow's another day; let's just try again." We worry that our kids will not let a negative comment go, but I was really mad at my mom for things she regretted saying to me and I forgave her long ago.

How can we stop ourselves as we are being triggered? I tell parents, "When you've said the same thing three times, it's probably time to stop." I've told my kids to remind me of this when I'm mad. They've said, "Mom, you've said the same thing three times—stop!" or "I think we need to take a break for 30 minutes!"

I also think we need to rethink texting and social media blurts about our kids (and our kids about us). It's OK to type "Today is totally frustrating!" But if we write about other people, everything gets complicated and exponentially worse if they see our words from other sources.

If nothing seems to be working, it's OK to see a counselor. It doesn't need to be 10 years of weeping on a couch. It can be three or six sessions where a professional can help you think through your triggers and come up with solutions.



*Cora Collette Breuner, M.D., MPH, is member of the Division of Adolescent Medicine and the Orthopedics and Sports Medicine Department at Seattle Children's Hospital. She is the chair of the Committee on Adolescence for the American Academy of Pediatrics, the current director of the Adolescent Eating Disorder Clinic and the director of the Adolescent Biofeedback Clinic, as well as a professor at the University of Washington School of Medicine.*

## How do I (sort of) tame the roughhousing?

**Q:** My 5-year-old son has an intense need to roughhouse. His pre-K program allowed some body play (with supervision), but now he's in a structured kindergarten with a hands-off policy. How do we help him get the physical playing he needs while also learning important boundaries? (P.S. He is an only child.)

**A:** When there's an intense need for physicality, I always ask if the child's brain is reading sensory information in a neurotypical way. It's normal to roughhouse, but if a child isn't feeling sensations, he requires intense sensations to make spatial sense of the world. So, think about your son and decide if you need to look into sensory-processing issues.

People love to wrongly pin things on the only child. Still, if a child tackles his brother five times, the brother is going to fight back, which is a natural consequence. If your son hasn't met the wall of futility — a firm "no" is like a sibling tackle — he may be used to having his physicality accommodated.

Now, the new school: Be in close communication with the teacher, letting her or him know your son's a good guy and you're working on this issue. Together, explore how your son can move in class and on the playground.

After school, he must expend energy. He might need tae kwon do or sports we aren't always fans of, such as football or boxing. Some parents set up the safest trampoline possible for their energetic angels.

Right now, your child is having new boundaries placed upon him, and this feels bad to him. Convey a strong message: This new school is a hard, big change, but we can do this together. Give him hope and leadership. Say, "Mommy is talking to your teacher and your teacher loves you."

Your son may or may not understand this brand-new logic, but talk about it. Do we wrestle in airports or while someone is driving a car? Maybe we don't roughhouse because there are more pencils and scissors in kindergarten.

Language is a small way of turning a corner in the mind. Discuss values: "In our family we love to wrestle and be very physical, but we also respect other people's space and bodies." He won't fully understand this, but that's OK, just keep saying it.

There's a fine line to walk as your son learns to adapt to no-wrestling kindergarten and yet not feel bad about himself. Your son's deep physical impulses are out of his control, and the burden of change for this behavior lies solely on your shoulders. Keep making sure your son feels safe, loved and happy as he gets used to his new classroom.



*Meghan Leahy is a certified parent coach and a parenting columnist for The Washington Post. She's passionate about helping children grow, learn and change in a positive manner, and about helping parents bring lightness, laughter and love into their homes.*

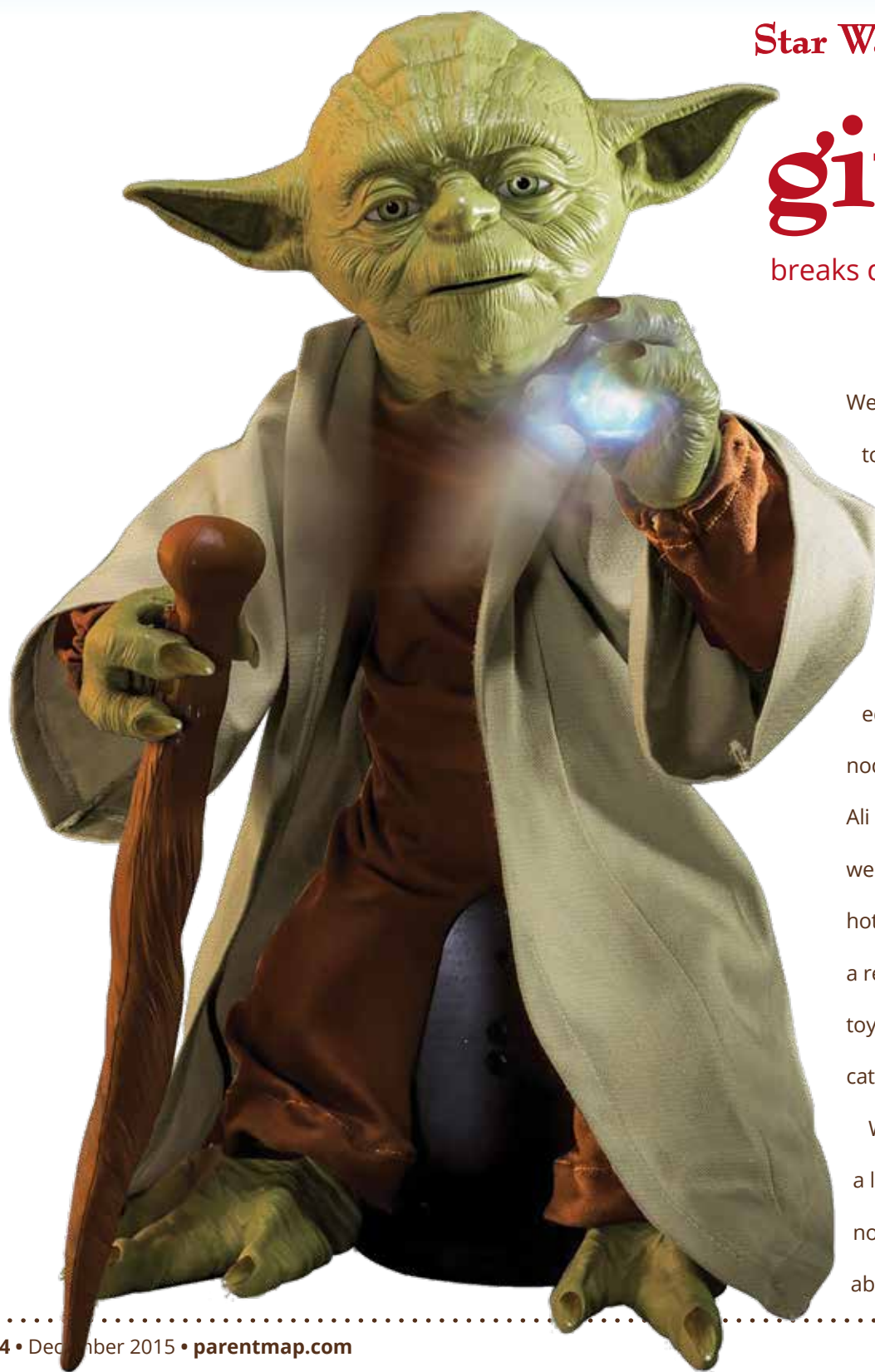
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Star Wars, STEM and Shopkins

Our 2015

# gift guide

breaks down this year's holiday toy buzz

BY MALIA JACOBSON

We want so much for our kids' holiday booty:

toys that provide fun, of course, but also learning and maybe a dash or two of parental nostalgia. This is our lucky year, it turns out. In 2015, hot holiday toys are skewing toward science and math education; collectibles that include some nods to parents; and goofy whole-family play. Ali Mierzejewski, senior editor of toy review website The Toy Insider, expects the white-hot STEM toy trend to be counterbalanced by a renewed interest in old-school unplugged toys, new offerings in the popular maker toys category and an explosion of *Star Wars* toys.

What might be right for your family? Here's a list of cool toys and kits that kids want, right now — many of which parents will be excited about, too.



## Force-full Star Wars toys

The Dec. 18 release of *Star Wars, Episode VII: The Force Awakens* is triggering an avalanche of themed playthings, including many that span multiple age ranges and promote parent-child play. “The great thing about these toys is that parents who are *Star Wars* fans usually love playing with them just as much as kids do,” notes Mierzejewski.

### TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS

#### Star Wars Scanimation Book

\$14.95, Workman Press

Is your 4-year-old getting in on the *Star Wars* craze? If so, this sturdy board book should delight: *Star Wars: 11 Scenes from a Galaxy Far, Far Away* features holographic photos that shift and shimmer as the page moves. Look for images of an exploding Death Star, the Millennium Falcon zooming through space and of course, Yoda holding a glimmering green light saber.

### SCHOOL-AGE

#### Legendary Jedi Master Yoda Action Figure, Collector Box Edition

\$180, Spin Master

If you're looking for a galaxy-size splurge for your young Jedi master, check out this remarkably realistic Yoda action figure. Standing 16 inches high, it speaks 115 phrases, and features full voice recognition and a 360-degree range of motion.

Fans of the Dark Side can also check out the animatronic **Darth Vader** from Thinkway Toys (\$130), a 17-inch robotic action figure that switches from battle to training mode, has 31 points of articulation (movement) and includes lifelike movie sound effects.

### SCHOOL-AGE

#### Death Star Planetarium

\$20, Uncle Milton

Take a ho-hum bedtime out of this world

with this gift, which lets you turn your kid's bedroom ceiling into a replica of the *Star Wars* galaxy. An Earth galaxy mode allows users to switch back and forth, comparing the two galaxies and building science knowledge and vocabulary. Parents can stretch out on the floor with kids and brush up on their planet proficiency. “This is a toy that parents love, too,” says Carole Nolasco, buyer/merchandiser for Seattle's Top Ten Toys.

### SCHOOL-AGE

#### Star Wars Thumb Doodles

\$16, Klutz

*Star Wars* toys don't have to be high tech, robotic or pricey, says Sarah Furstenberg, owner of Clover Toys in Ballard. This one fuses art and a *Star Wars* theme, allowing kids to create characters that begin with a thumb print. The simple concept means even young grade-schoolers can carry out the craft relatively independently.

### TEEN TO ADULT

#### Millennium Falcon Bluetooth Speaker

\$50, iHome

This high-quality collectible looks great on a desk or dresser, says Mierzejewski of The Toy Insider, but that's only part of its appeal. Approximately 10 by 10 inches, this lithium-battery-powered speaker plays the *Star Wars* theme and wirelessly streams calls and audio from as far as 30 feet away, featuring clean, clear sound and a blue light that illuminates when in use.





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continued from page 25

## Super STEM Building kits and engineering toys

The latest twist on STEM toys includes science and engineering toys for the pre-K set and classic wooden toys with retro appeal that pack surprising math and science lessons. And building kits are hotter than ever. “They play into what we call the ‘construction with function’ toy trend,” says Mierzejewski of The Toy Insider. “Building toys are adding more moving parts to up the play value, with working doors, expanding bridges and more function to keep kids engaged even longer.” With plenty of cold, wet Northwest winter days on the horizon, that’s a win.

### TODDLERS AND OLDER

#### My First Ball Track

\$60, HABA

Introduce tots to engineering, physics and problem solving with this basic expandable ball and track set. Furstenberg of Clover Toys loves this set for its enduring multi-age appeal. “The intro set comes with larger wooden balls safe for age 1 and up, but there are tons of really cool add-ons that make it appealing up to age 10.” Couple this set with the My First Ball Track Ball Ramp, and build the set with other HABA ball track sets, including the Chatter Ball Track set, the Clamps and Ramps set, and the Marble Ball Track Set for kids ages 4 and older.

### SCHOOL-AGE

#### Mighty Makers Fun on the Ferris Wheel Set

\$35, K’nex

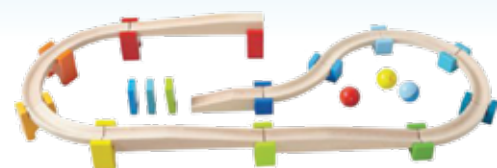
State-fair season may be months away, but young builders can keep busy until then with this 324-piece set that features three different math and engineering builds: a working Ferris wheel, a pirate ship ride and a boardwalk game. Once construction is complete, kids can decorate and accessorize the rides, and purchase snacks and tickets at the booths.

### SCHOOL-AGE

#### Lego Elves Treetop Hideaway

\$50, The Lego Group

With an intricate, whimsical design that appeals to boys and girls, this set will keep makers engaged for hours building a magic portal, a working ladder bridge, a bucket lift and a secret compartment. >>



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# santa photos

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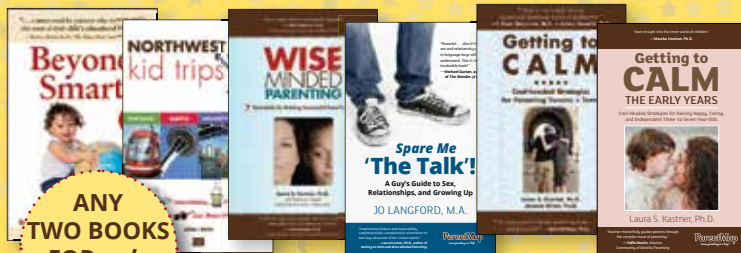


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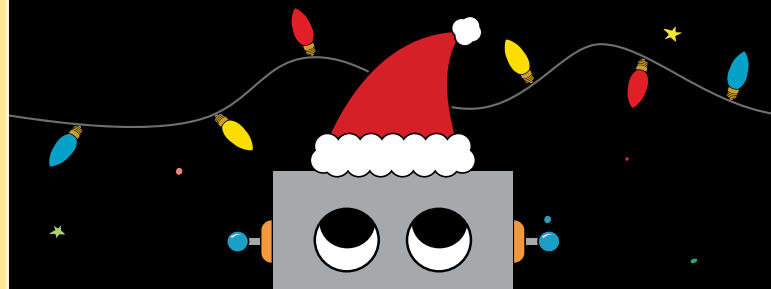
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continued from page 27

SCHOOL-AGE

**Craft-Struction Box**

\$40, GoldieBlox

This 275-piece craft kit turns curious and craft-loving kids on to engineering concepts, says Furstenberg. While GoldieBlox is known for story-based engineering kits that come with picture books, this kit encourages more open-ended play, though crafters can glean inspiration from weekly how-to videos at Blox Town ([bloxtown.com](http://bloxtown.com)).



SCHOOL-AGE/TWEEN

**Demolition Ball Wrecking Building Kit**

\$30, SmartLab

Smash! Let's face it: Sometimes the best part of building is knocking it all down when you're done. The latest addition to the best-selling, award-winning Demolition Lab line lets builders mix and match wall panels, floors and rooftops to construct one-of-a-kind buildings, then knock them down with the provided demolition wrecking ball, and learning about physics, momentum and problem solving in the process.

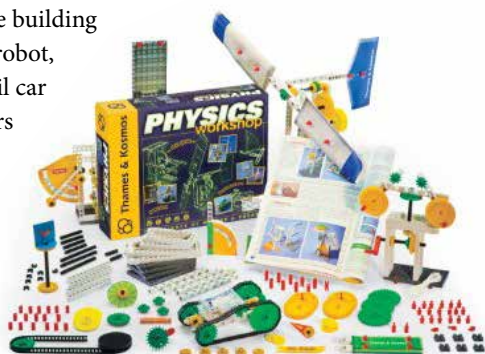


SCHOOL-AGE/TWEEN

**Physics Workshop**

\$55, Thames & Kosmos

This 300-piece set from Thames & Kosmos lets older kids play with physics principles by experimenting with gears, levers, screws, inclined planes, pulleys, wheels and axles while building 36 projects, including a Mars robot, windmill, two-speed crane, sail car and hammer machine. Builders learn about simple and compound machines along with basic physics equations; more complex projects, such as the pendulum clock, drive understanding of concepts like centrifugal force. >>



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## gift guide



*continued from page 29*

## Go old school Unplugged and collectible toys

Despite the surge of interest in science-based toys, unplugged or old-school playthings continue to be popular with families and kids. These toys cross over trends, spanning popular categories like collectibles and whole-family toys, says Ali Mierzejewski of The Toy Insider.

### TODDLERS AND OLDER

#### Animal Family Sets

\$25, Calico Critters

These 2-inch fuzzy animal figures are growing steadily popular with little ones, says Carole Nolasco, of Seattle's Top Ten Toys. Parents can purchase a basic family set, picking from the adorable selection of woodland creatures, and grandparents and other family members can add to the collection with the Starter Home Cozy Cottage (\$40), furniture such as a set of bunk beds (\$10) and accessories like the Let's Go Camping set (\$22).

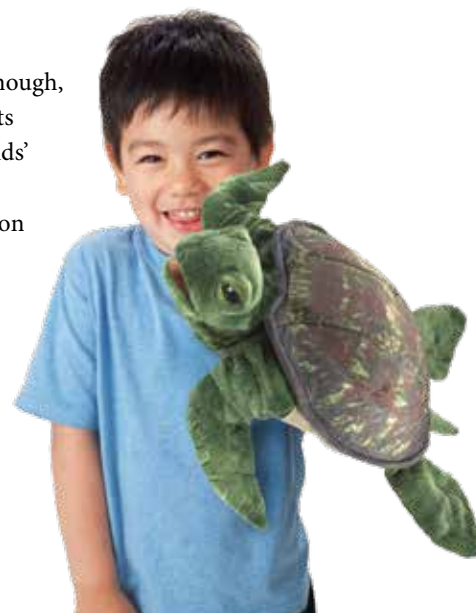


### PRESCHOOL AND OLDER

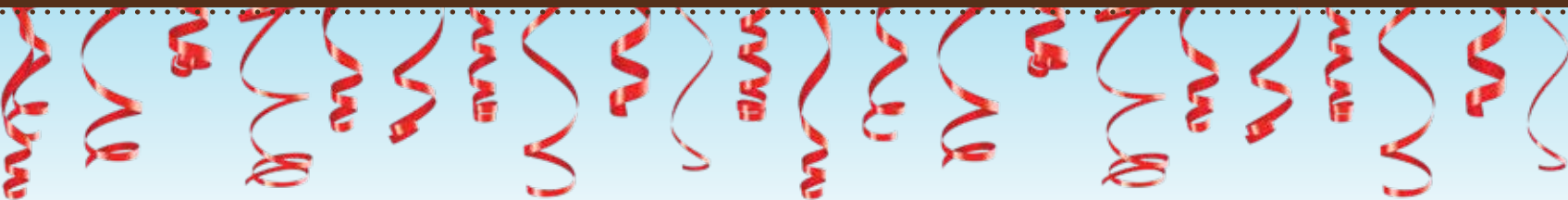
#### Puppets

\$10-\$30, Folkmanis

Adorably plush and just lifelike enough, award-winning Folkmanis puppets put theater-quality stagecraft at kids' fingertips. A favorite of The Toy Insider as well as film and television producers, these hand and finger puppets encourage open-ended play and help kids connect to the natural world. Pair a few of these with the Melissa and Doug Deluxe Puppet Theater (\$90) or the HABA Doorway Theater (\$50) for an unplugged gift sure to spark hours of old-fashioned play.







#### PRE-K AND OLDER

### Season 3 Scoops Ice Cream Truck

\$25, Shopkins

Have a kiddo into the hot Shopkins trend? You'd better be quick; these tiny collectibles popularized on YouTube sell out within hours of landing on store shelves. This cute truck from the most recent Shopkins "season" is a great introductory Shopkins toy, with an umbrella stand, working wheels and two surprise Shopkins with shopping bags.

#### WHOLE FAMILY

### Pie Face Game

\$20, Hasbro

This game is poised to be a big holiday hit (pun intended). It does exactly what the title says: After players spin a dial, a hand launcher splats one (un?)lucky player in the face with a whipped-cream pie (you can also use a sponge for less mess). You earn points each time you don't get pied in the face. This is the perfect game for classic silliness with the whole family or a group of friends who need to blow off steam on a weekend afternoon. 🎁



*Malia Jacobson is an award-winning health and parenting journalist and mom of three. Her latest book is Sleep Tight, Every Night: Helping Toddlers and Preschoolers Sleep Well Without Tears, Tricks, or Tirades.*

## independent toy and gift shops

### EASTSIDE Bellevue

Crossroads Toys  
Facebook, "Crossroads-Toys"

Fireworks (seven locations)  
fireworksgallery.net

KidsQuest Children's Museum Store  
kidsquestmuseum.org

Lakeshore Learning Materials  
lakeshorelearning.com

Uncle's Games (also in Redmond)  
unclesgames.com

Wee Tots  
shopweetots.com

Kirkland  
Simplicity ABC  
simplicityabc.com

Issaquah  
White Horse Toys  
whitehorsetoys.com

Mercer Island  
Island Books  
mercislandbooks.com

Redmond  
I play  
iplaybaby.com  
Marbles, The Brain Store  
marblesthebrainstore.com

Snapdoodle Toys  
snapdoodletoys.com

### SEATTLE Ballard

Card Kingdom  
cardkingdom.com

Clover Toys  
clovertogs.com

Secret Garden Books  
secretgardenbooks.com

### Columbia City/ Central District

Magpie Toys + Clothes  
magpiekid.com

Retroactive Kids  
retroactivekids.com

### Downtown

The Big Wind-Up  
Facebook, "Great Wind Up"

Magic Mouse Toys  
magicmousetoys.com

Marbles, The Brain Store  
marblesthebrainstore.com

### Green Lake

Mockingbird Books  
mockingbirdbooksgl.com

### Greenwood

Top Ten Toys (also in Pacific Place)  
toptentoys.com

Couth Buzzard Books  
buonobuzzard.com

### Magnolia

Nifty Toy + Gift  
Facebook, "Nifty Toy Gift"

### Maple Leaf

Math 'n' Stuff  
mathnificent.com

### Queen Anne

Blue Highway Games  
bluehighwaygames.com

### South Lake Union

Tottini  
tottini.com

### University Village/District

Kid's Club  
shopkidsclub.com

University Book Store (five locations),  
www.bookstore.washington.edu

Village Maternity  
villagematernity.com

### Wallingford

Alphabet Soup  
Facebook, "Alphabet Soup Children's Books"

Archie McPhee  
mcphee.com

Bootyland  
bootylandkids.com

### West Seattle

Curious Kidstuff  
curiouskidstuff.com

Max & Quinn's Atomic Boys  
atomicboysseattle.com

### NORTH SOUND Bothell

Toys That Teach  
toysthatteachbothell.com

### Edmonds

Teri's Toybox  
Facebook, "Teri's Toy Box"

### Kenmore

Snapdoodle Toys  
snapdoodletoys.com

### Bainbridge Island

Calico Cat Toy Shoppe  
calicocattoys.com

### SOUTH SOUND Olympia

Captain Little  
captainlittle.com

### Renton

Creative Mom Toys  
creativemomtoys.com

### Tacoma

ChildTrek  
childtrek.com

Learning Sprout Toys  
Facebook, "Learning Sprout"

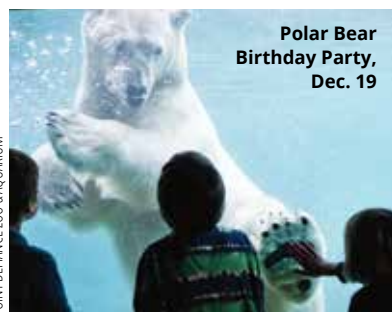
Teaching Toys and Books  
teachingtoysandbooks.com



## PICKS



**Treasure Island**  
at Lakewood  
Playhouse,  
Dec. 10–20



**Polar Bear  
Birthday Party,**  
Dec. 19



**Jingle Bell Run, Dec. 24**



**My Fair Lady at  
Village Theatre,**  
through Jan. 21



**Redmond Town Center Carousel,**  
through Jan. 3

### SUNDAY



**Seattle Children's**  
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[www.seattlechildrens.org](http://www.seattlechildrens.org)

**Free Ski Helmet Fitting & Giveaway**  
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[www.MakeSureTheHelmetFits.org](http://www.MakeSureTheHelmetFits.org)

Free winter sport helmets available for children at least 4 years old to age 18. One helmet per child. Wearers must be present and be fitted to receive a helmet. Quantities are limited. First come, first served. No appointments needed.

6

**Santa Train.** Quick! Don't wait to get your tickets for this popular train ride to visit Santa. Select dates through Dec. 19. \$22; age 1 and under free. Northwest Railway Museum Depot, North Bend. [trainmuseum.org](http://trainmuseum.org)

**Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.** Hop on for a fantastic, flying, musical adventure based on the 1968 film. Friday–Sunday through Dec. 20. \$22–\$31. Ages 6 and up. Tacoma Musical Playhouse. [tmp.org](http://tmp.org)

13

**Winter Sport Helmet Fitting and Giveaway.** Kohl's and Seattle Children's team up to protect kids' noggins. 10 a.m.–1 p.m. **FREE.** Ages 4–18; wearer must be present. Seattle Children's Bellevue Clinic and Surgery Center, Bellevue. [makesurethehelmetfits.org](http://makesurethehelmetfits.org)  
**Science with Dr. Tom.** Join a science-terrific expedition to explore the role water plays in our environment; observe, take samples and test them. 10:30 a.m.–noon. **FREE;** preregistration required. Ages 5 and up. Seahurst Park, Burien. [envsciencecenter.org](http://envsciencecenter.org)

20

**Santa Visits ACM.** Santa and Mrs. Claus cruise in for photos in a 1906 Cadillac; digital photo included. Saturday–Sunday, Dec. 12–13, 19–20; check website for times. Included with admission. LeMay – America's Car Museum, Tacoma. [americascarmuseum.org](http://americascarmuseum.org)  
**Christmas Ship Viewing.** Several chances to see the parade of ships and hear the Dickens Carolers today, departing Kirkland at 3:30 p.m. and 8 p.m., with stops at Madison Park (4:40 p.m.) and Madrona Beach Park (9:35 p.m.). **FREE.** [argosycruises.com](http://argosycruises.com)

27

**Winter Fishtival.** Dive into local marine life with hands-on activities and special talks. Today's theme: puffins. Dec. 26–Jan. 4. Included with admission. Seattle Aquarium. [seattleaquarium.org](http://seattleaquarium.org)  
**Winter Wildland.** Resident animals enjoy special winter-time enrichments such as fruit, tree treats and snowmen. Saturday–Sunday, Dec. 26–27. Included with admission. Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, Eatonville. [nwtrek.org](http://nwtrek.org)

### MONDAY

7

**The Big Chanukah Show.** This free musical variety show features the Shalom Klezmer Band and Rabbi James Mirel lighting the candles. 7–9 p.m. **FREE;** donations requested. All ages. Stroum Jewish Community Center, Mercer Island. [sjcc.org](http://sjcc.org)  
**PEPS Lecture: The Science of How Young Children Learn.** UW I-LABS speaker discusses children's early relationships, learning and development. 6:30 p.m. \$15 per couple or pay-what-you-can. Caregivers of ages 0–5. Verdant Health Commission, Lynnwood. [peps.org](http://peps.org)

14

**Holiday Carousel.** Pick your ride and take a spin to help Treehouse help foster kids. Daily through Jan. 1 (closed Dec. 25). \$3 suggested donation. Westlake Park, Seattle. [treehouseforkids.org](http://treehouseforkids.org)  
**Polar Plaza Ice Skating.** Bundle up and enjoy the sights and sounds of downtown Tacoma while you glide across the ice. Daily through Jan. 10 (closed Dec. 1, 7, 8). \$4–\$8; skate rental \$2. Tollefson Plaza, Tacoma. [polarplaza.com](http://polarplaza.com)

21

**Light the Night: A Solstice Walk.** Join a candle-lit walk through the trails of Bloedel Reserve to celebrate the shortest day of the year. 4 p.m. \$15; preregister. All ages. The Bloedel Reserve, Bainbridge Island. [bloedelreserve.org](http://bloedelreserve.org)  
**Pacific Place Snow Show.** Pause your holiday hustle and bustle to marvel at the indoor snow flurries flying at this downtown mall. Daily through Dec. 24, 6 p.m. **FREE.** Pacific Place, Seattle. [pacificplace.com](http://pacificplace.com)

28

**Kwanzaa Print Patterns.** Make an African-inspired print and explore the holiday of Kwanzaa. 1:30 p.m. Included with admission. Ages 3–10 with families. The Children's Museum, Seattle. [thechildrensmuseum.org](http://thechildrensmuseum.org)  
**WildLights.** Experience the zoo after dark, illuminated in holiday sparkle. Daily through Jan. 3, 5:30–8:30 p.m. (closed Dec. 24–25). \$6.95–\$9.95; ages 2 and under free. Woodland Park Zoo, Seattle. [zoo.org](http://zoo.org)

### TUESDAY

1

**Teddy Bear Suite and Festival of Trees.** It's the penultimate day to view gorgeously decorated trees in the hotel lobby; the sweet Teddy Bear Suite is open to view daily through Dec. 27. **FREE;** donations requested. Fairmont Olympic Hotel, Seattle. [fairmont.com/seattle](http://fairmont.com/seattle)  
**Santa Story Time.** Cozy up by the fireplace and hear a holiday story straight from the big guy in the red suit. Tuesdays, Dec. 1, 8, 15; 10 a.m. **FREE.** Redmond Town Center. [redmondtowncenter.com](http://redmondtowncenter.com)

8

**Lego & Building Madness.** Gather with like-minded construction enthusiasts to build with Lego, blocks and more. 3:30–5 p.m.; check online for more dates and branches. Pierce County Library, Parkland Spanaway Branch. [piercespanawaylibrary.org](http://piercespanawaylibrary.org)  
**Math Buddies.** Elementary students meet with a teen volunteer for math games and activities. Tuesdays, Dec. 1, 8, 15; 4–5 p.m. **FREE.** Grades K–5. Seattle Public Library, West Seattle Branch. [spl.org](http://spl.org)

15

**Swansons Reindeer Festival.** Kids don't think reindeer are real? Come meet real-live Dasher and Blitzen, along with their camel buddy Curley. Daily through Dec. 24. **FREE.** Swansons Nursery, Seattle. [swansonsnursery.com](http://swansonsnursery.com)  
**Hyatt House Horse Carousel.** Take a break from the holiday hustle with a ride on the sparkling seasonal carousel. Daily through Jan. 3 (closed Dec. 25). \$3 suggested donation. Redmond Town Center. [redmondtowncenter.com](http://redmondtowncenter.com)

22

**Snowflake Lane.** It's a nightly holiday parade of toy soldiers, dancers and other characters under falling snow. Daily through Dec. 24, 7 p.m. **FREE.** Bellevue Way and N.E. 8th St., Bellevue. [magicseason.com](http://magicseason.com)  
**Fantasy Lights.** Load everyone into the car for this 2-mile drive lined with clever light displays; tune to 95.3 FM for audio accompaniment. Daily 5:30–9 p.m. through Jan. 1. \$14/car; half-price nights listed on website. Spanaway Park. [co.pierce.wa.us](http://co.pierce.wa.us)

29

**Redmond Town Center Skating Rink.** No ice needed at this nifty synthetic skating rink. Daily through Jan. 3 (closed Dec. 25). \$7 includes skate rental; check website for Merry Mondays special. Redmond Town Center. [redmondtowncenter.com](http://redmondtowncenter.com)  
**Ivar's Clam Lights.** Stroll a one-mile path with thousands of lights decorating trees and shrubs in fanciful shapes. Daily Dec. 4–Jan. 1, 5–9 p.m. **FREE.** Gene Coulon Memorial Beach Park, Renton. [rentonwa.gov](http://rentonwa.gov)



## WEDNESDAY

2

**Cuentacuentos Story Time.** Stop by for storytelling in Spanish with guest artists sharing their favorite books. Select Wednesdays, 11–11:30 a.m. Included with admission. Ages 2–5 with caregiver. Henry Art Gallery, Seattle. [henryart.org](http://henryart.org)

**Toddler Tales & Trails.** Kids and caregivers enjoy story time and a short nature hike. 10–11 a.m. \$2. Ages 2–5 with caregiver. Seward Park Audubon Center, Seattle. [sewardpark.audubon.org](http://sewardpark.audubon.org)

9

**Conservatory Story Hour.** Verdant surroundings make for an inviting story and craft time. 11 a.m.–noon. \$3 suggested donation; ages 11 and under free. Ages 3–8 with families. W.W. Seymour Botanical Conservatory, Tacoma. [seymourconservatory.org](http://seymourconservatory.org)

**Boat-building at the Burke.** Watch as a Burke curator and others construct an Angyaaq, a traditional Native boat, and make boat and paddle ornaments yourself. Daily Dec. 5–19. Included with admission. Burke Museum, Seattle. [burkemuseum.org](http://burkemuseum.org)

16

**The Language of Watercolor.** Visit Becka's Studio for hands-on experimentation with paper, color and water. 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Pay-what-you-will admission. Ages 1–5 with families. Children's Museum of Tacoma. [playtacoma.org](http://playtacoma.org)

**Emma.** Book-It continues its winter tradition of presenting a beloved Jane Austen novel brought to life on stage. Dec. 2–Jan. 3. \$25–\$55. Ages 10 and up. The Center Theatre, Seattle. [book-it.org](http://book-it.org)

23

**Winter Village and Train.** Admire an expansive, charming turn-of-the-century model village with running trains. Daily through Dec. 31 (closed Dec. 25). **FREE**; \$2 suggested donation to "drive" the train. The Armory at Seattle Center. [seattlecenter.com/winterfest](http://seattlecenter.com/winterfest)

**Zoolights.** Revel in the dazzling light creations — a bear family, a giant Pacific octopus and more. Daily through Jan. 3, 5–9 p.m. (closed Dec. 24). \$8.50–\$10; ages 2 and under free. Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Tacoma. [pdza.org/zoolights](http://pdza.org/zoolights)

30

**Counter-Couture: Fashioning Identity in the American Counterculture.** Last days to explore this exhibit celebrating the style of the hippie movement. Tuesday–Sunday through Jan. 10. Included with admission. Ages 12 and up. Bellevue Arts Museum. [bellevuearts.org](http://bellevuearts.org)

**Drama Workshop: Kids' Improv.** High school-age improv whiz leads kids in creating characters and scenes on the spot. 1 p.m. or 2 p.m. **FREE**; preregister. Grades 5–12. King County Library System, Bothell Branch. [kcls.org](http://kcls.org)

## THURSDAY

3

**Hello! Exploring the Supercute World of Hello Kitty.** This little kitty's popularity has spanned generations and crisscrossed the globe; discover her story. Daily (closed Dec. 25). Included with admission. EMP Museum, Seattle. [empmuseum.org](http://empmuseum.org)

**My Fair Lady.** A professor tries to teach a Cockney flower seller to speak properly in this beloved Broadway musical. Through Jan. 3; also Jan. 8–21 in Everett. \$38–\$70. Ages 7 and up. Village Theatre, Issaquah. [villagetheatre.org](http://villagetheatre.org)

10

**Magic Season Ice Arena.** Go for a spin in this large, open-air, covered rink; check website for Stroller Skate Thursdays and other special sessions. Daily through Jan. 10. \$9–\$12; skate rental included. Bellevue Downtown Park. [magicseason.com](http://magicseason.com)

**Ninjabread Men Workshop.** Teens decorate cookies in Ninja style or any style they wish. 6–7 p.m. **FREE**; preregister. Grades 6–12. King County Library System, Covington Branch. [kcls.org](http://kcls.org)

17

**Winter Magic Skating Rink.** Come get your glide on at Snoqualmie's new, larger synthetic rink. Dec. 12–20 (Dec. 22–Jan. 2 at the Ridge Amphitheater). \$3–\$10. Railroad Park, Snoqualmie. [cityofsnoqualmie.org](http://cityofsnoqualmie.org)

**SAM Lights.** Light up the night and join a processional with musical marching corps, activities, food truck fare available and more. 6–9 p.m. **FREE**; preregistration requested. Olympic Sculpture Park, Seattle. [seattleartmuseum.org](http://seattleartmuseum.org)

24

**Jingle Bell Run.** De-stress with family and friends on this fun, festive 3-mile run or walk with holiday costume contest. 10 a.m. or noon. \$10–\$20. All ages. Wright Park, Tacoma. [metroparkstacoma.org](http://metroparkstacoma.org)

**Gingerbread Village.** Do not miss epic *Star Wars* scenes made of cookies and candy. Daily through Jan. 3. **FREE**; donations appreciated. Sheraton Hotel, Seattle. [gingerbreadvillage.myevent.com](http://gingerbreadvillage.myevent.com)

31

**New Year's Eve Daytime Party.** Families celebrate the arrival of 2016 with special activities at a time that's just right for little ones. Noon–4 p.m. Included with admission. Imagine Children's Museum, Everett. [imaginecm.org](http://imaginecm.org)

**First Night Tacoma.** Tacoma's awesome, all-ages New Year's Eve street party features a parade and live music. 6 p.m.–midnight. Outdoor activities **FREE**; additional indoor activities \$10–\$14; ages 10 and under free. [firstnighttacoma.org](http://firstnighttacoma.org)

## FRIDAY

4

**Small Frye: Storytelling in the Galleries.**

Stories spring to life with Seattle Children's Theatre at this first Friday event, with stories and art-making session. 10:30–11:45 a.m. **FREE**; preregister for art. Ages 3–5 with caregiver. Frye Art Museum, Seattle. [fryemuseum.org](http://fryemuseum.org)

**Free First Friday Night.** Have a blast playing indoors on a chilly Friday night. 5–9 p.m. **FREE**. Ages 0–10 with families. Hands On Children's Museum, Olympia. [hocm.org](http://hocm.org)

11

**Issaquah Reindeer Festival.** Meet Santa, try out his sleigh, feed reindeer and enjoy story time with an elf. Daily Dec. 1–23, 10:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. \$10–\$14; ages 1 and under free. Cougar Mountain Zoo, Issaquah. [cougarmountainzoo.org](http://cougarmountainzoo.org)

**Treasure Island.** Ahoy, young Jim Hawkins finds plenty of excitement and adventure when he inherits a map leading to hidden treasure. Dec. 10–20. \$10–\$15. Ages 8 and up. Lakewood Playhouse. [lakewoodplayhouse.org](http://lakewoodplayhouse.org)

18

**Winterfest Ice Rink.** Take a twirl on the ice at this compact indoor rink. Daily through Jan. 3 (closed Dec. 25). \$2–\$7 cash only; includes skate rental. Fisher Pavilion at Seattle Center. [seattlecenter.com/winterfest](http://seattlecenter.com/winterfest)

**The Lights of Christmas.** See a million lights illuminating Warm Beach Camp, plus listen to live music and partake in kids' activities. Select evenings Dec. 3–29, 5–10 p.m. \$8–\$16; ages 3 and under free. Stanwood. [thelightsofchristmas.com](http://thelightsofchristmas.com)

25

**Fiddler on the Roof Sing Along.** "Tradition!" Sing your heart out with Tevye and his family during this screening of the beloved 1971 movie. Kosher Chinese food buffet included. Time TBA. \$24–\$25. SIFF Cinema at Uptown, Seattle. [siff.net](http://siff.net)

**Garden d'Lights.** Plant and critter shapes created from over half a million lights sparkle and amaze. Check website for select free admission days. Daily through Jan. 2, 4:30–9 p.m. \$5; ages 10 and under free. Bellevue Botanical Garden. [gardendlights.org](http://gardendlights.org)

## SATURDAY

5

**19th Century Christmas.** Experience an old-fashioned, gadget-free holiday with stories, music, crafts and more. 11 a.m.–4 p.m. \$5–\$8; ages 4 and under free. Fort Nisqually Living History Museum, Tacoma. [fortnisqually.org](http://fortnisqually.org)

**Redmond Lights.** Celebrate a diversity of holiday traditions with the lighting of City Hall, a luminary walk and live entertainment. 4–8 p.m. **FREE**. City Hall, Redmond. [redmondlights.com](http://redmondlights.com)

12

**Green Lake Pathway of Lights.** Stroll the path around Green Lake, glowing with holiday luminaria. 4:30–7:30 p.m. **FREE**; food drive donations requested. Green Lake Park, Seattle. [facebook.com/greenlakepathwayoflights](http://facebook.com/greenlakepathwayoflights)

**Hanukkah Under the Stars.** Crafts, games, science demos, food vendors, acrobatics by SANCA, music by Shul of Rock and more. 5:30–7:30 p.m. **FREE** with donation of a new pair of socks; RSVP. Stroum Jewish Community Center, Mercer Island. [sjcc.org](http://sjcc.org)

19

**Polar Bear Birthday Party.** Will it be cake that the polar bears munch on to celebrate their big day? Come find out and wish them a happy day. 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Included with admission. Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Tacoma. [pdza.org](http://pdza.org)

**Circus.** Last weekend to cheer on the characters of a puppet circus, including ringmaster, clown, shy lion and more. Saturday–Sunday, Dec. 5–20. \$9–\$11. All ages. Northwest Puppet Center, Seattle.

26

**Model Train Festival.** Take in an eye-popping array of model trains, built and operated by grown-ups who really love trains. Dec. 21–Jan. 1 (closed Dec. 24–25), 10 a.m.–5 p.m. \$7–\$9.50; ages 5 and under free. Washington State History Museum, Tacoma. [washingtonhistory.org](http://washingtonhistory.org)

**Datina Folkloric Ensemble.** This spirited, colorful troupe performs traditional music and dance from Romania. 12:30–1:30 p.m. **FREE**. Seattle Center Armory. [seattlecenter.com/winterfest](http://seattlecenter.com/winterfest)



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**Bender's One Big KISS for Seattle Children's Radiothon**  
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Join KISS 106.1 FM's Bender Nation morning show for heartwarming and inspiring stories of Children's patients, families and staff. The radiothon will broadcast from Seattle Children's. Help us beat last year's total of \$881,000. Presented by the John L. Scott Foundation. To donate online, visit [www.giveto.seattlechildrens.org/radiothon2015](http://www.giveto.seattlechildrens.org/radiothon2015).



# Let it

Ring in  
December  
with one of  
these 70-plus  
jingle shows  
and concerts,  
from free  
sing-alongs to  
spectacular  
splurges


**By leaps and bounds:**  
Kids help choreograph  
Kaleidoscope Dance  
Company's holiday  
show, Dec. 6



# show!

By Nancy Chaney

In December, stress can loom large, even amid all the supposed joy. Here's a surefire recipe for rediscovering the spirit of the season: Park your shopping list and gather your family and friends to hear soaring music, see a fanciful ballet, cry at a touching holiday classic or laugh until the tears flow at a holiday romp. Dress up a little (or a lot, if you like) and take in some holiday wonder at one of these 70-plus joyful shows and concerts.

Note: This list is organized by region, then by the shows' start dates. Some happen only once or twice, some a handful of times, and some have multiweek runs. Shows that appear at different venues in different regions are listed under the region where they occur first. Shows with adult ticket prices of \$15 or less are marked as "cheap." 

## Seattle

**The Sound of Music.** This beloved musical of stage and screen — chronicling the Austrian World War II story of an unusual governess who helps a father reconnect with his children and form a family — will be many a family's holiday splurge. With a sensational, all-local cast and favorite songs such as "Do-Re-Mi" and "Sixteen Going on Seventeen," you can't go wrong. **Through Jan. 3. \$29 and up. Ages 5 and older; no babes in arms. The 5th Avenue Theatre, Seattle. [5thavenue.org](http://5thavenue.org)**

**George Balanchine's The Nutcracker.** Pacific Northwest Ballet debuts its much-anticipated staging of the famed Russian dancer and choreographer's version of the *The Nutcracker*, based on Balanchine's childhood memories of dancing in the ballet in Russia. Sets are designed by renowned children's author/illustrator Ian Falconer (*Olivia the*



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# Let it show!

continued from page 35

*Pig*). Through Dec. 28. \$32–\$156. McCaw Hall, Seattle. [pnh.org](http://pnh.org)

**A Christmas Carol.** ACT's annual production of Dickens' classic holiday tale traces the Christmastime redemption of Ebenezer Scrooge. Caveat: Includes scary ghosts and zombie-ish children — consider age and sensitivity of kids you take to this show. Through Dec. 30. \$37–\$90. Ages 5 and older; no babes in arms. ACT – A Contemporary Theatre, Seattle. [acttheatre.org](http://acttheatre.org)

**A Charlie Brown Christmas.** Charlie Brown is feeling blue until the gang reminds him of the true meaning of Christmas in this popular *Peanuts* tale, with the fantastic jazz score by Vince Guaraldi. Dec. 3–26; sensory-friendly, all-ages show Dec. 5. \$25. Ages 6 and older. Taproot Theatre, Seattle. [taproottheatre.org](http://taproottheatre.org)

**Christmastown: A Holiday Noir.** In its second year, this thriller by local playwright Wayne Rawley features hard-boiled detective Nick Holiday and promises Christmas chills, cheers and chuckles. Dec. 4–24. \$17–\$34. Ages 12 and older. Bathhouse Theater at Green Lake, Seattle. [seattlepublictheater.org](http://seattlepublictheater.org)

**Once Upon a December.** The advanced choirs of Northwest Girlchoir — Amabile, Vivace, Amore and Ensemble — present a reflective holiday program that includes Caldwell and Ivory's "Hope for Resolution" and the classic "Carol of the Bells." Dec. 4. \$13–\$25; ages 5 and younger free. First Free Methodist Church, Seattle. [northwestgirlchoir.org](http://northwestgirlchoir.org)

**Miracle on 34th Street.** Seattle Radio Theatre performs a live radio production of the holiday classic story of the "real" Santa Claus and his impact on the people he encounters. Show will be broadcast live on KIRO-FM radio. Dec. 4. \$5–\$15. Ages 6 and older. Town Hall, Seattle. [townhallseattle.org](http://townhallseattle.org)

**The Snowman.** Seattle Symphony and the Seattle Opera Youth Chorus accompany this delightful animated movie about the adventures of a boy and his snowman pal. Dec. 5. \$15–\$20. Ages 6–11 with families. Benaroya Hall, Seattle. [seattlesymphony.org](http://seattlesymphony.org)



Do re marvelous: *The Sound of Music* rocks The 5th Avenue Theatre

MARK KITAOKA

**Holiday Recital.** Northwest Boychoir Apprentices and Preparatory Choirs, made up of singers ages 7–11, present their selection of songs for the holidays. Dec. 5. \$10–\$12. Ages 5 and older. Our Lady of the Lake Church, Seattle. [nwchoirs.org](http://nwchoirs.org)

**Three Orchestras Concert.** Seattle Youth Symphony's Symphonette, Debut and Junior Symphony orchestras play their winter recital for the enjoyment of all. Dec. 6. \$15–\$23. Meany Hall, Seattle. [syso.org](http://syso.org)

**Merry Chris Mouse.** Using Japanese bunraku-style puppetry, Thistle Theatre presents the original, musical story of a mouse family faced with helping a fellow creature at Christmastime. Dec. 5–20. \$10. Ages 3 and older. Thistle Theatre Studio and Sunset Hill Community Club, Seattle; Bellevue Youth Theatre. [thistletheatre.org](http://thistletheatre.org)



To a tea: *Beauty and the Beast* at The Paramount

© BROADWAY.COM / MATTHEW MURPHY

**Beauty and the Beast.** This lavish touring production of the beloved Broadway musical tells the tale of misleading appearances, loyalty and true love, and plays just five shows in Seattle. Dec. 11–13. \$35–\$110. Ages 6 and older. The Paramount Theatre, Seattle. [stgpresents.org](http://stgpresents.org)

**Tiny Tots Holiday Hooray!** Lisa and Linda lead little ones in a snowy, interactive sing-along featuring holiday songs and a special musical guest. Dec. 11–12. \$12. Ages newborn–5 with families. Benaroya Hall, Seattle. [seattlesymphony.org](http://seattlesymphony.org)

**Peace on Earth.** Seattle Choral Company celebrates the peace of Christmastime in the soaring acoustics of Saint Mark's, including a pre-concert sing-along. Dec. 11–12. \$25; students free with identification. Saint Mark's Cathedral, Seattle. [seattlechoralcompany.org](http://seattlechoralcompany.org)

**Nutcracker Sweets.** This popular, one-hour *Nutcracker* by ARC Dance caters to young audiences and their families. Warning: It sells out quickly. Dec. 11–13, 19. \$10–\$30. All ages. ARC Dance Space, Seattle (Dec. 11–13); Shorewood Performing Arts Center, Shoreline (Dec. 19). [arcdance.org](http://arcdance.org)

**A Festival of Lessons & Carols.** A combined choir of Northwest Boychoir and Vocalpoint! Seattle sing, give readings and encourage the audience to sing along in a performance designed after a traditional Christmas



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TOP BOX  
PARENT MAP



# Let it show!

continued from page 37



BEN VANHOUTEN

**Note perfect:**  
**Northwest Boychoir**

Eve service at King's College in Cambridge. Dec. 11–22 (Dec. 22 performance with Northwest Sinfonia at Benaroya Hall). \$11–\$80. Various Seattle-area venues. [nwchoirs.org](http://nwchoirs.org)

**A Gift of Song — Seattle Girls' Choir Holiday Concert.** All five levels of choirs come together to delight audiences with joyous holiday songs, both old favorites and new selections. Dec. 12. \$15–\$20. Town Hall, Seattle. [townhallseattle.org](http://townhallseattle.org)

**The Best Christmas Pageant Ever.** The wacky Herdman family brings new perspective to their church's annual pageant, a hilarious holiday tradition at Seattle Public Theater. Dec. 12–24. \$17–\$34. All ages. Bathhouse Theater at Green Lake, Seattle. [seattlepublictheater.org](http://seattlepublictheater.org)

**Hansel & Gretel and the Three Bears.** The Fremont Players and the Fremont Philharmonic return with their annual panto, full of outrageous characters, catchy songs and audience participation. Bonus: Hale's brews and snacks available for purchase. Dec. 12–Jan. 10. \$7–\$13. All ages. Hale's Palladium, Seattle. [fremontplayers.com](http://fremontplayers.com)

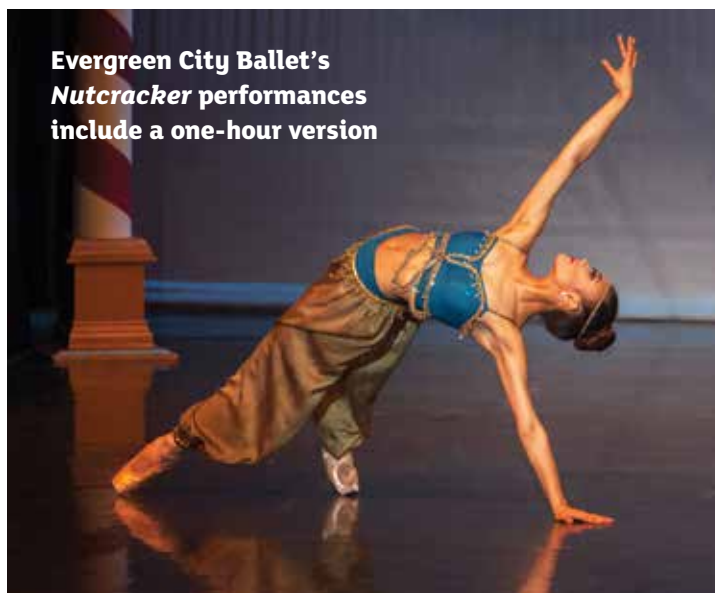
**Somewhere in My Memory.** The full roster of Northwest Girlchoir members, ages 6–18, performs a charming program inspired by the holiday music memories of the community; sing-along included as well. Dec. 13. \$8–\$20; ages 5 and younger free. University Christian Church, Seattle. [northwestgirlchoir.org](http://northwestgirlchoir.org)

**Carmina Angelorum: Songs for Harp & Treble Voices.** Seattle Girls' Choir's Prime Voci and Cantamus ensembles perform elegant holiday music accompanied by harpist Juliet Stratton. Dec. 13, 19, 20. \$8–\$12. Chapel of St. Ignatius (Dec. 13); First United Methodist Church (Dec. 19); Holy Rosary Church (Dec. 20), Seattle. [seattlegirlschoir.org](http://seattlegirlschoir.org)

**The Nutcracker by Cornish Preparatory Dance Company.** Cornish dancers, including dance program students ages 6–18, showcase their talents in this fun and fanciful version of the holiday ballet. Dec. 18–20. \$16–\$20. Cornish Playhouse at Seattle Center, Seattle. [cornish.edu](http://cornish.edu)

**Handel's Messiah.** The Seattle Symphony, along with its chorale and select soloists, presents this beautiful choral work that includes the moving Hallelujah Chorus. Dec. 18–20. \$25–\$88. Benaroya Hall, Seattle. [seattlesymphony.org](http://seattlesymphony.org)

**Ellington's Sacred Music.** Earshot Jazz presents its annual holiday tribute to jazz legend Duke Ellington with Seattle Repertory Jazz Orchestra, Northwest Chamber Chorus, guest vocalists and featured tap dancer Alex Dugdale. Dec. 26. \$14–\$38. Town Hall, Seattle. [townhallseattle.org](http://townhallseattle.org)



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**Evergreen City Ballet's**  
**Nutcracker performances**  
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## Eastside

**'Twas the Night . . .** This holiday tradition takes the classic Christmas Eve poem into comical, musical overdrive, with the Big family and its crew awaiting St. Nick. Through Dec. 20. \$15. Ages 4 and older. Studio East Mainstage Theater, Kirkland. [studio-east.org](http://studio-east.org)

**It's a Wonderful Life: A Radio Drama.** Youth Theatre Northwest actors perform a radio version of the beloved holiday story; look for a special dinner theater performance. Dec. 4–6. \$13–\$15; \$45–\$55 for dinner theater performance. Ages 10 and older. Emmanuel Episcopal Church; Mercer Island Beach Club for dinner theater. [youththeatre.org](http://youththeatre.org)

**An Elf's Tale.** In this fun, original musical, Santa's list of naughty children is growing every year, and a creative elf feels compelled to address this problem. Dec. 4–13. \$5–\$12. All ages. Bellevue Youth Theatre–Crossroads. [ci.bellevue.wa.us/BYT-productions.htm](http://ci.bellevue.wa.us/BYT-productions.htm)

**Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Christmas Carol.** This Victorian mashup has Sherlock on the verge of retirement and then visited by three spirits who give him a peek into his future. Dec. 4–19. \$17–\$22. Ages 10 and older. Renton Civic Theatre. [rentoncivictheatre.org](http://rentoncivictheatre.org)

**The Nutcracker by Evergreen City Ballet.** This beloved period production of the classic ballet features new sets and costumes and will be performed in three venues. One-hour shows for young children are in Bellevue and Auburn. Dec. 4–6, 12–13, 19–20. \$16–\$32. Theatre at Meydenbauer Center, Bellevue; Auburn Performing Arts Center; Ikea Performing Arts Center, Renton. [evergreencityballet.org](http://evergreencityballet.org)

**The Nutcracker by International Ballet Theatre.** IBT performs the beloved ballet in traditional Russian style with elaborate sets and costumes from

# Let it show!

continued from page 39

Ukraine, plus Arabian dancers and a fierce battle scene. Dec. 4–6, 11–23. \$25–\$50. Kirkland Performance Center; Theatre at Meydenbauer Center, Bellevue. [ibtbellevue.org](http://ibtbellevue.org)

## A Christmas Carol.

SecondStory's original adaption tells the classic holiday story of Scrooge in a colorful way that's designed to please audiences of all ages.

Dec. 4–23; pay-what-you-can preview Dec. 3. \$22–\$27. SecondStory Repertory, Redmond. [secondstoryrep.org](http://secondstoryrep.org)

**Noel by the Numbers.** Bellevue Girlchoir and Bellevue Boychoir sing a program of traditional "countdown" carols, plus new works, favorites and a sing-along designed to ignite the holiday spirit. Dec. 5. \$13–\$18. Redmond Performing Arts Center. [bellevuegirlchoir.com](http://bellevuegirlchoir.com)

**Christmas in Sammamish.** Sammamish Symphony Orchestra plays a selection of holiday favorites, accompanied by The Liberty Singers. Anticipate a couple of surprises. Dec. 5–6. \$10–\$20. Eastlake High School, Sammamish. [sammamishsymphony.org](http://sammamishsymphony.org)

## The Elves & the Toymaker.

StoryBook Theater presents the heartwarming tale of thoughtful elves who help out a desperate toymaker and his wife. Dec. 5, 12–20. \$8–\$15. Ages 3–10 with families. Auburn Avenue Theater; Kirkland Performance Center. [auburnwa.gov](http://auburnwa.gov), [storybooktheater.org](http://storybooktheater.org)

**Magic of Mistletoe.** Bellevue Youth Symphony Orchestra, together with BYSO's Philharmonia, Flute Orchestra and Flute Choir, presents its annual holiday concert. Other BYSO ensembles perform earlier the same day. Dec. 6. \$12–\$15. Bellevue High School Performing Arts Center. [byso.org](http://byso.org)



**Christmas Carol Jr.** In this 50-minute adaptation of the well-known story, Mrs. Claus tells the tale of Scrooge to her zany elves, who pretend to be the ghosts, neutralizing any scare factor. Dec. 12–20. \$5–\$10. Ages 5 and older; all-ages shows on Sundays. SecondStory Repertory, Redmond. [secondstoryrep.org](http://secondstoryrep.org)

**Geoffrey Castle's Celtic Christmas.** Enjoy ancient Celtic melodies in songs from Castle's new Christmas CD, plus appearances by the Seattle Irish Dance Company and the King County Firefighters Pipes & Drums band. Dec. 18–19. \$15–\$25. Kirkland Performance Center. [kpcenter.org](http://kpcenter.org)



# South Sound

**A Christmas Story.** This hilarious holiday tale follows a boy and his dogged quest for the Christmas gift of his dreams, a Red Ryder BB gun. Through Dec. 20. \$20–\$24. Ages 6 and older. Tacoma Little Theatre, Tacoma. [tacomalittletheatre.com](http://tacomalittletheatre.com)

**A Charlie Brown Christmas.** The commercialization of Christmas is getting Charlie Brown down, until he takes on an important job that helps bring to light the true spirit of Christmas. Through Dec. 20; pay-what-you-can performance Dec. 4. \$13–\$19. All ages. Olympia Family Theater. [olyft.org](http://olyft.org)

**A Christmas Story — The Musical.** Based on the beloved '80s movie, this musical follows the misadventures of young Ralphie, his family and his quest for a Red Ryder BB gun. Through Dec. 19. \$12–\$22. Ages 8 and older. Sumner Performing Arts Center. [manestagetheatre.com](http://manestagetheatre.com)

**Sleeping Beauty.** Centerstage continues its holiday tradition of presenting an English-style panto production, a hilarious twist on a fairy tale, full of fabulous songs, corny jokes and a surprise gag. Through Dec. 20. \$10–\$30. Ages 5 and older. Centerstage Theatre, Federal Way. [centerstagetheatre.com](http://centerstagetheatre.com)

**Seattle Men's Chorus — Home for the Holidays.** Always a holiday hit, Seattle Men's Chorus's festive program includes classic carols plus a lively sing-along. Dec. 3. \$19–\$69. Pantages Theater, Tacoma. [broadwaycenter.org](http://broadwaycenter.org)

**Sing-along with Santa.** St. Nick leads families in singing a selection of heartwarming favorites with live musical accompaniment. Santa also reads a story and poses for photos; professional shots for purchase, or bring your camera. Dec. 5. \$10. Tacoma Musical Playhouse. [tmp.org](http://tmp.org)

**Mistletones and Songflakes.** Masterworks Choral Ensemble invites families for a program of favorite holiday songs, plus a sing-along and a possible visit from the big guy in the red suit. Dec. 5. \$10–\$22. Washington Center for the Performing Arts, Olympia. [washingtoncenter.org](http://washingtoncenter.org)



### Red, White and Blue Holiday Concert.

The 133rd Army Band of the Washington National Guard welcomes the season with its annual concert for the community, featuring patriotic and holiday selections. **Dec. 6. FREE; tickets required.** Auburn Performing Arts Center. [auburnwa.gov](http://auburnwa.gov)

**Joyous Journey.** The Federal Way Symphony plays Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite and other holiday classics, together with soprano Rachel DeShon and a surprise guest soloist. **Dec. 6. \$28-\$35; ages 18 and younger free.** Saint Luke's Lutheran Church, Federal Way. [federalwaysymphony.org](http://federalwaysymphony.org)


**Sounds of the Season.** Sarah Ioannides conducts her first "Sounds of the Season," as the Tacoma Youth Chorus joins the Tacoma Symphony Orchestra in this musical tribute to the holiday season. **Dec. 6. \$19-\$79.** Pantages Theater, Tacoma. [tacomasympphony.org](http://tacomasympphony.org)

### Magical Strings — A Celtic Yuletide.

Three generations of the Boulding family and guests gather for festive Celtic music, Irish dancing, storytelling, juggling and more. **Dec. 6-14. \$12-\$28.** Venues in Kent, Tacoma, Seattle, Mount Vernon and Bellevue. [magicalstrings.com](http://magicalstrings.com)

### Christmas with the Gothard Sisters.

This trio of Northwest-native sisters performs Celtic fiddle tunes and displays its dancing talents. **Dec. 10, 13. \$12-\$23.** Edmonds Center for the Arts; Auburn Avenue Theatre. [edmondscenterforthearts.org](http://edmondscenterforthearts.org), [auburnwa.gov](http://auburnwa.gov)

**Mary Poppins.**  Heavier Than Air Family Theatre invites families to swallow a spoonful of sugar as a practically perfect nanny cooks up a little magic to help a troubled family in turn-of-the-century England. **Dec. 11-19. \$10-\$12.** Ages 6 and older. Green River College, Auburn. [heavierthanair.com](http://heavierthanair.com)

### The Nutcracker by Ballet Northwest.

This Olympia dance company continues its holiday *Nutcracker* tradition, featuring 200 dancers as well as delightful costumes and sets. **Dec. 11-20. \$14-\$33.** Washington Center for the Performing Arts, Olympia. [balletnorthwest.org](http://balletnorthwest.org)

### The Nutcracker by Dance Theatre Northwest.

Dancers from this Pierce County school present their lovely version of the classic holiday ballet. **Dec. 12-13. \$22-\$26.** Mount Tahoma High School auditorium, Tacoma. [dancetheatrenorthwest.org](http://dancetheatrenorthwest.org)

### The Nutcracker and The Tale of the Hard Nut.

Tacoma City Ballet's production includes the rarely told *Nutcracker* backstory, the story of the magical Krakatuk nut; accompanied by the Tacoma City Ballet Orchestra. **Dec. 12-20. \$15-\$100.** Pantages Theater, Tacoma. [tacomacityballet.com](http://tacomacityballet.com) >>



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# Let it show!

continued from page 41

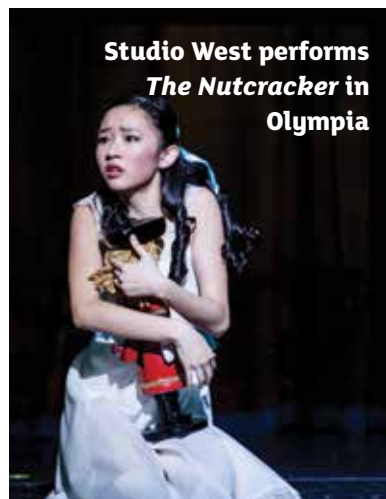
**Messiah.** The Tacoma Symphony Orchestra and Chorus together perform this beloved, triumphant work by Handel. Dec. 17, 18. \$25–\$45. Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church, Gig Harbor; St. Charles Borromeo Church, Tacoma. [tacomasymphony.org](http://tacomasymphony.org)

**The Nutcracker by Studio West Dance Theatre.** Studio West puts a fresh spin on the classic ballet, combining traditional dance with some delightful surprises. Dec. 17–20. \$16–\$25. South Puget Sound Community College, Olympia. [studiowestdanceacademy.com](http://studiowestdanceacademy.com)

**Ye Olde Merry Holiday (TV) Spectacular!** This variety show takes inspiration from classic holiday television specials and includes song, dance and humor. Show will be taped live with the audience. Dec. 18–20. \$19–\$49. Theatre on the Square, Tacoma. [broadwaycenter.org](http://broadwaycenter.org)

**The Christmas Revels.** The Puget Sound Revels' holiday song-and-dance variety show features a Nordic theme this year, with hardanger fiddle, trolls and a Finnish folktale. Dec. 19–23. \$12–\$34. Rialto Theater, Tacoma. [broadwaycenter.org](http://broadwaycenter.org)

**A Charlie Brown Christmas.** Charlie Brown gets over his holiday blues and remembers the true meaning of Christmas in this play based on the popular 1965 television special. Dec. 19–24. \$10. All ages. Tacoma Musical Playhouse. [tmp.org](http://tmp.org)



**The Science of Santa Claus.** The geek-tastic Doktor Kaboom, aka David Epley, attempts to dissect all of Santa's tricks, using physics to figure them out. Dec. 20. \$10. All ages. Auburn Avenue Theater. [auburnwa.gov](http://auburnwa.gov)

**Handel's Messiah Sing-along.** A who's who of South Sound musicians invites everyone to sing this exultant work together with the community; listeners welcome, too. Dec. 21. FREE. Washington Center for the Performing Arts, Olympia. [>>](http://studentorchestras.org)

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Photo by: Ian Coble



## Treelightful DIY ornaments

Making ornaments as a family is a wonderful tradition, and helps solve the problem of what to give the neighbors, teachers and babysitter. Here are few simple ones to make; find instructions and links, and more fab ideas at [parentmap.com/diyornaments](http://parentmap.com/diyornaments).



**Brilliant blocks:** This fantastic idea from Ana over at Babble Dabble Do ([babbledabbledo.com](http://babbledabbledo.com)) is simple: just pick up some wooden blocks from your favorite local craft store and let the kids craft their own designs with decorative tape, glitter, glue and paint.



**Baker's Delight:** A clever baker's twine ornament idea from About Family Crafts ([aboutfamilycrafts.com](http://aboutfamilycrafts.com)) not only looks really cool — but you can make it with materials around the house. You'll just need a small balloon, a jingle bell, baker's twine and liquid starch.



**Festive faces:** This creative ornament idea from The Cheese Thief ([thecheesethief.com](http://thecheesethief.com)) helps you recreate your little one's face onto an ornament using a round plastic or glass ball, acrylic craft paint and a little imagination. Another treasured keepsake!



**Baby's first ornament:** Want a perfect keepsake for your tot's first Christmas? Make a classic holiday ornament from Everything Emily ([everythingemilyblog.com](http://everythingemilyblog.com)); you use ingredients like flour, salt and water to make a salt-dough ornament with your baby's handprint. You can also make many other salt-dough ornaments that your family can keep for years.

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# Let it show!

continued from page 42

## North

**The Best Christmas Pageant Ever and Timmy Perlmutter's Extraordinary Hanukkah.** Edmonds Driftwood Players present a holiday double-header with two stories in which challenges turn into most memorable moments. **Through Dec. 20. \$22–\$25. Ages 6 and older.** Wade James Theatre, Edmonds. [edmondsdriftwoodplayers.org](http://edmondsdriftwoodplayers.org)

**Christmas in Edmonds.** Mosaic Arts Choir and Orchestra presents a program of holiday favorites in this benefit for the Puget Sound Christian Clinic, which offers free health care to the underserved. **Dec. 5. \$12. Edmonds Center for the Arts.** [edmondscenterforthearts.org](http://edmondscenterforthearts.org)

**The Nutcracker by Emerald Ballet Theatre.** This full-length performance of the Christmastime ballet features national guest artists and is accompanied live by the Rainier Symphony Ballet Orchestra. **Dec. 5–13. \$20–\$35.** Northshore Performing Arts Center, Bothell. [emeraldballet.org](http://emeraldballet.org)



**The Gift of Dance.** Kaleidoscope Dance Company presents its family-friendly holiday performance featuring dancers ages 7–16 who helped choreograph this show of imaginative modern dance. **Dec. 6. \$6–\$10.** Shorewood Performing Arts Center, Shoreline. [creativetdance.org](http://creativetdance.org)

**Under the Streetlamp.** In a special appearance, an acclaimed vocal group, made up of former cast members of *The Jersey Boys* musical, sings holiday standards plus American radio classics. **Dec. 9. \$34–\$44.** Edmonds Center for the Arts. [edmondscenterforthearts.org](http://edmondscenterforthearts.org)

**The Nutcracker by Olympic Ballet Theatre.** OBT presents its annual, full-length performance of the holiday favorite, featuring a new backdrop and staging that debuted last year. OBT also offers a shorter performance designed for schools and groups. **Dec. 11–13, 17–20. \$25–\$37.50; \$8–\$20 for group performances.** Everett Performing Arts Center; Edmonds Center for the Arts. [olympicballet.com](http://olympicballet.com)

**The Nutcracker by Washington School of Dance.** This Bothell dance academy's *Nutcracker* is narrated, one hour in length, and features more than 70 dancers ages 4–18. **Dec. 12–13. \$13.** Snohomish High School. [washingtonschoolofdance.com](http://washingtonschoolofdance.com)

**The Steadfast Tin Soldier — A Story Ballet.** Dance Fremont presents this charming, colorful ballet performed by more than 70 dance students and a special guest, former Pacific Northwest Ballet dancer Josh Spell. **Dec. 13–14. \$15–\$20.** Shorecrest Performing Arts Center, Shoreline. [dancefremont.com](http://dancefremont.com)

Nancy Chaney is ParentMap's calendar editor and lives in Seattle with her husband and their first-grade son.

## may the fun be with you

If silliness is as important to you as sparkle in your holiday shows, here are events to up the pure-fun factor this season. Find more holiday fun and outings at [parentmap.com/holidays](http://parentmap.com/holidays).

**Merry Sithmas?** Holiday treats plus construction plus *Star Wars*? You're in, right? The theme of the Sheraton Seattle's elaborate Gingerbread Village (gingerbread creations built by local architecture firms and the hotel's culinary team) is, yes, *Star Wars*, and should draw big crowds, light sabers in hand. **Through Jan. 3.** Free to view, but donations to JDRF Northwest Chapter appreciated. [gingerbreadvillage.myevent.com](http://gingerbreadvillage.myevent.com)

**Sweet movie screenings** Every year, SIFF screens the legendary 1971 film *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory* in Smell-O-Vision, meaning that the aroma of chocolate will waft through the theater during the movie; and viewers will also get "Wonkariffic goodie bags" to provide an even fuller sensory experience. Various show times at SIFF Film Center through Jan. 3; tickets are \$14–\$15. [siff.net](http://siff.net)

**Crazy-cool camel rides** As part of its spectacular Zoolights events, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium offers camel rides, weather permitting. Kids will love seeing a camel's impressive eyelashes up close, sniffing its fur and sitting

right on its hump. Ages 3 and older, during Zoolights hours, through Jan. 3. Rides cost \$6 (Zoolights admission extra). [pdza.org/zoolights](http://pdza.org/zoolights)

**Competitive caroling** There is nothing quite like the annual Great Figgy Pudding Caroling Competition, the street-corner sing-off in downtown Seattle featuring 40-plus groups trying to out-carol each other on streets around Westlake Park (combine it with a spin on the carousel). This year, the night will kick off with a bit of *The*

*Sound of Music* from The 5th Avenue Theatre. **Friday, Dec. 4, 6–8:30 p.m.** [pikemarketseniorcenter.org/figgy-pudding](http://pikemarketseniorcenter.org/figgy-pudding)

**Klezmer, 'Fiddler' and chopsticks, oh my!** Want to escape Christmas but nowhere to go? Head to SIFF Uptown for a non-Christmas extravaganza that includes a *Fiddler on the Roof* sing-along screening of the 1971 musical film (billed as "the best Jewish-themed musical"), a kosher Chinese food buffet and live Klezmer music. **\$24–\$25.** [siff.net](http://siff.net)



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## Milk on the go

*Where to pump in peace and quiet*

By Bryony Angell

If you're a nursing mother, you know how challenging it can be to find a place to nurse in comfort when out in public. But what if you are a nursing mother, away from your child, and you need to pump? Where do mothers on the go go to pump?

You certainly can't do it just anywhere. (Starbucks armchair, anyone?)

Expressing milk can be a stressful task, and the lack of available, comfortable locations to hook up that machine make it even more challenging. Even when there are facilities available to nursing moms, they may not be adequately advertised and are too few in number. Katie Childers, a West Seattle mom of a 9-month-old, shared her frustration about being stuck at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport recently. "I needed to pump at the airport and was not aware of the nursing room there. That's a pretty big airport, and I feel there should be more than one room." Instead, Childers says, "I pumped in the family restroom near my gate."

More than conveniences, public pumping stations support the health of babies, mothers and the whole family, experts say. "A mother who is pumping needs a private space because there's so much more exposure while she's setting up. She needs a sink to be able to wash her hands and pump parts, and an outlet," says Emily Pease, RN, the charge nurse for lactation services at Swedish Medical Center's Lytle Center for Pregnancy and Newborns.

Pease says there's a noticeable lack of these public facilities for nursing mothers in the Seattle area. "There is an international sign for breastfeeding that would be great to have any business post to indicate that nursing mothers are welcome," she says.

Despite the lack of support for moms who need to pump in public, more options are starting to, um, flow.

Mamava, a mother-owned company out of Burlington, Vermont, grew out of this vacuum. The company produces freestanding nursing pods that contain seats, a table, outlets and a locking door. (Mamava means "mama, go" in Spanish.)



*Mamava pods are landing in the Puget Sound region*

Pods have been installed in airports and malls across the U.S., including one put in recently at North Seattle College, the first site in the Puget Sound region to host a pod. More Mamava pods are destined for the Pacific Northwest: In addition to one already located at Spokane International Airport, four units are on the way to Madigan Army Medical Center in Tacoma, says Sascha Mayer, Mamava CEO and cofounder.

Awareness about the benefits of breastmilk has spread in recent years: The Academy of American Pediatrics (AAP) recommends human milk as a baby's optimal source of nutrition and immune protection, and states that the benefits cannot be replicated by formula. So a nursing mother is motivated to keep up her milk supply and bank as much expressed milk as she can, for good reason. The AAP recommends a quiet place to pump and says any stress could delay a mother's letdown reflex or reduce her milk supply.

But calm, private areas in public spaces are a tall order in an increasingly crowded and hurried world that still sometimes scorns mothers for breastfeeding outside the home. "One of our challenges is that we have a user audience — nursing moms — who tends to be very different from our actual customer — facilities operators, who are often older and male, but control the purchase. So we are constantly having to educate people on the logistics of breastfeeding on the go," Mayer says.

Pease of Swedish supports Mayer's mission. "Nursing is normal, and the more public nursing that is done reinforces that this is a normal way to feed a baby."

### What makes a good space

According to the Moms Pump Here website ([momspumphere.com](http://momspumphere.com)), which also provides a helpful lactation room locator app for North America, a public lactation room should provide the following:

- Comfortable seating
- Table
- Outlet to connect an electric breast pump
- Sink for cleaning nursing equipment
- Lockable door

Chilan Ta, manager of the Women's Center at North Seattle College, was instrumental in the procurement of the Mamava unit there. "The cost of the suite is much less than designating a room on campus and remodeling. The suite is portable, which allows our institution to relocate to optimal locations if areas are remodeled or the flow of student traffic changes," she says. The college has plans to purchase two more Mamava units in the future for placement on campus.

### How to find a public lactation room

Some libraries, educational institutions, sports facilities, transportation hubs and shopping malls



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## ages + stages

### Milk on the go

*continued from page 46*

provide spaces for mothers needing to nurse or pump. Some apps, such as the Mamava and Moms Pump Here nursing room finders, help moms locate nursing rooms around the country. (These apps are user driven, so may not list every room that is out there.)

Many facilities now provide space as a result of the Affordable Care Act, but others developed these spaces as a result of visitor or user input. Over and over, Ta heard from North Seattle College students about the need for a place to pump, and she describes what amounted to efforts that resembled a game of musical chairs to find space prior to the Mamava purchase. “This often involved disrupting people’s work days to arrange space ... [for instance] a student would use someone’s office while that person would go to lunch.”

There is a long way to go before basic lactation rooms are as common and standardized as changing tables in restrooms. Do not be fooled by the term “family restroom,” for instance. The family restroom provides ample space but no guarantee of a place to sit, a table or even outlets for pumping. A family restroom often means simply a large, locking stall or freestanding room with a drain.

The more that mothers and advocates request and expect nursing and pumping rooms in high-traffic public areas, the more commonplace these facilities will likely become. The following are a sample of public spaces in the Puget Sound area that provide a range of accommodations for a lactating mom on the go. These spaces are listed from most ideal to just “so-so,” and all welcome any mother needing a private place to nurse or pump.

The Mamava Pod at **North Seattle**

**College** (9600 College Way North, Seattle) is accessible to any student, staff or visitor to the college. The pod sits inside the north, second-floor entrance of the Health Sciences and Student Resources (HSSR) Building. The unit is safe, secure, attractive and lockable from the inside. The pod contains several outlets, seating for two adults and a table.

**Everett Community College’s North Everett campus** (2000 Tower St., Everett) offers staff and students a private nursing and pumping lounge on the second floor of Rainier Hall. The lounge is accessed through the women’s restroom, but is separate and lockable from the inside. Visiting mothers can obtain access via Security by calling 425-388-9990 or going to the Security office in EvCC’s Parks Student Union, Room 224.

#### Westfield malls

The Westfield Group operates several malls in Washington state, and for years has promoted a family-friendly public space with amenities such as complimentary strollers, covered parking for families and generously appointed family lounges. Information about these perks is easy to find on Westfield mall websites as well.

- Family lounge, **Southcenter Mall**, Tukwila (2800 Southcenter Mall, Tukwila). Two family lounges, one on Level 1 near Starbucks and Crazy 8, and the other on Level 2 at the Dining Terrace. Each lounge includes toys, kid-friendly TV programs, private nursing areas and baby changing stations, as well as comfortable seating and access to restrooms.
- Family lounge, **Capital Mall**, Olympia (625 Black Lake Blvd., Olympia). The Capital Mall’s family lounge features private nursing



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areas, baby changing stations and a large family restroom. Located near the Food Court between Subway and Panda Express.

**Sea-Tac Airport** (17801 International Blvd., Seattle). Seattle-Tacoma International Airport's moms' room is located across from Seattle Taproom between the Central Terminal and Concourse A gates. The room has adjustable lighting, rocking chairs, footstools, electrical outlets and side tables. Military families can also access another moms' room at the USO, located on the mezzanine of the Main Terminal.

**Seattle Central Public Library** (1000 Fourth Ave., Seattle). Seattle's flagship library's children's department hosts two large, comfortable and quiet seating areas as well as a respectably comfortable place to nurse or pump. The family restroom within the children's department contains chairs, outlets and a shelf. The key must be obtained from the family librarian, so use of the room is monitored to ensure privacy.

**Nordstrom women's lounges** (multiple Puget Sound-area locations). Nordstrom has had the right idea for years, providing a gracious "living room" feel to the restrooms it provides for its female

shoppers. Originally intended as a resting spot between retail flurries, the Nordstrom lounge has quietly become the best public space in which to nurse. While the lounges are not totally private for pumping, they include outlets and side tables. Nordstrom lounges are often superior to other mall facilities.

**The Bellevue Collection's women's lounge** (575 Bellevue Square, Bellevue). The women's lounge located on the west side of the second level of The Bellevue Collection mall gives the nearby Nordstrom lounge a serious run for comfort, elegance and quiet. Comfortable seating, outlets and tables are near the restroom for washing up. Like the Nordstrom lounges, The Bellevue Collection women's lounge is not designed for pumping, but can accommodate a mother willing to try.

**Safeco Field** (1250 First Ave. South, Seattle). According to the Seattle Mariners website, the nursing mothers' lounge is adjacent to the Guest Services Center in Section 128. The mothers' lounge is only open during game times. ■

*Bryony Angell is a freelance writer. She lives in Seattle with her family.*

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3-10

## Harmony for the holidays

*Helpful hints for blended families*

By Laura Reagan-Porras

**T**he holidays are stressful for most of us. But they can present special challenges for blended families, especially newly blended families. According to the U.S. Census, more than 50 percent of families are remarried or recoupled at any given time. About half of the 60 million children younger than age 13 are currently living with one biological parent and that parent's current partner. And many marriage and family sociologists believe that more than 64 percent of families are blended families at some point. That's a lot of families decorating the tree, meeting mom's new boyfriend's parents, and juggling holiday dinners, gifts and feelings.

I divorced 15 years ago and remarried eight years ago. I have gained some insights into what works and doesn't work when navigating the holidays as the mom of a blended family. As a marriage and family sociologist, I also facilitate coparenting education groups for parents in blended families. Here are some guidelines for a peaceful holiday.

### Have realistic expectations

There is not a perfect holiday meal. There is not a perfect gift that heals a child's grief over divorce, or one that smooths remarriage resentments. There is not a perfect holiday family activity that will make everyone suddenly feel closer. *There are only opportunities to connect.*

Children may choose to connect or they may not, depending on where they are in the process of accepting and feeling they are a member of the blended family. Wherever they are in the process is valid.

My husband invited our daughters (his stepdaughters) to his parents' Christmas Eve dinner, but he did not *push* them to go. They were older and had their own traditions established with me, as their biological parent, prior to the new marriage. My girls chose to go to dinner with his parents, but they did not want to stay for the gift-giving extravaganza because they really didn't know all the extended family members. Tweens especially may need to take their time embracing an extended family.



*Keeping activities simple helps diffuse tension and coaxes new family members get to know each other without pressure.*

Many experts believe it takes approximately five years to blend a stepfamily. Be patient with yourself, your partner or spouse, and the children.

### Be open, adaptable and flexible

"My mom doesn't make the turkey that way."

An actualized stepparent will not be threatened by a comment like this, and he or she will simply respond by saying something like: "Tell me how your mom does it. I might want to try it like that sometime."

If the child says, "Daddy's Christmas tree has the ornaments I made when I was little," a wise stepparent might respond: "That must be really special to have those special ornaments on the tree. Will you help me make an ornament for our tree?"

Biological parents might support the blended family dynamics by telling the child, "Not everyone does things the same way, and we can try a new way."

Learning to live with different people and different styles of conducting day-to-day life is a positive skill that can help kids of blended families for years to come in their interpersonal and professional lives.

### Choose simple family holiday activities

Keeping activities simple helps diffuse tension and coaxes new family members get to know each other without pressure. The following list offers suggestions that may lay the foundation for new family traditions.

- Watch a holiday DVD and string popcorn for the tree.
- Go to a holiday movie in a theater together.
- Go Christmas caroling around your neighborhood.

- Go to church, synagogue or mosque together.
- Volunteer together at a charity or nonprofit.
- Bake holiday cookies together.
- Make New Year's cards for military service personnel.

I grew up with the PBS show *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. He was fond of saying, "I like you just

### resources

**Remarriage Success**  
[remarriagesuccess.com](http://remarriagesuccess.com)

**The Stepfamily Foundation** [stepfamily.org](http://stepfamily.org)

**HelpGuide**  
[helpguide.org/mental/blended\\_families\\_stepfamilies.html](http://helpguide.org/mental/blended_families_stepfamilies.html)

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### REDUCED RISK OF COGNITIVE DECLINE

Due to better executive control, bilingualism has proved to protect against dementia, Alzheimer's disease and other age-related cognitive decline. Relative to older monolingual individuals, elderly bilinguals typically have an improved memory and overall executive control. In short: a bilingual brain seems to stay sharper, longer.

— Aurelie McKinstry and Nicole Persun

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## Harmony for the holidays

continued from page 51

the way you are." Family should be a place of unconditional love, where we are comfortable to be ourselves. Blended families must be the place where we practice this level of acceptance. ■

Laura Reagan-Porras, M.S., is a parenting journalist and sociologist. She facilitates coparenting education classes with members of blended families. She can be reached through her parenting resources website, Heart 2 Heart Parents (heart2heartparents.com).

### work toward harmony this holiday

**Lose the guilt:** Give your children and stepchildren permission to enjoy their time at the other parent's home, without guilt. By saying, "I know you're so excited to go see Santa with Dad" or "I'm so happy you are getting a tree with your mom. Have fun!" for example, you are freeing that child from the worry of how you'll feel. It's not about you.

**Remember gift equity:** There is nothing that makes a child feel as out of place on a special holiday than a reminder that they aren't equal or don't fully belong. When it comes to gifts, be guided by equity and inclusion.

- Stepparents and stepchildren should be encouraged to give cards or gifts that feel right to them.
- Stepgrandparents should give gifts of equal value to grandchildren and stepgrandchildren.
- Do not compete with your ex-spouse for a bigger, better gift as a way of demonstrating your love.

**Think ahead and plan for feelings:** Holidays with blended families take a lot of planning. For blended gatherings, think ahead about how each child will feel and what they might need to be comfortable and feel welcome.

- Do contact hosts or family members ahead of time to discuss ways to make the kids feel included.
- Think about titles: Does "stepuncle" feel right, or weird? This is an especially important conversation for new blended families.
- Don't overload. The kids are your priority — if it's too much, don't hesitate to leave early or cut down on commitments.
- Make some special one-on-one time with each child, to do a special activity and give them your undivided attention.

—Natalie Singer-Velush

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10-16

# Attitude of gratitude

*How to cultivate thanks in an age of 'gimme'*

By Melissa Benaroya

**W**hat parent does not want to be acknowledged and appreciated for his or her hard work, commitment and sacrifices? I hear so many parents complain that their kids don't appreciate what is done for them or provided to them. Many parents feel that their children are rude and disrespectful because the children are not saying thank you. I hear the words "spoiled" and "bratty" used often to describe kids who don't show gratitude or appreciation. Sound familiar?

There is no better time than the holiday season to turn our focus to the concept of gratitude and turn around any negative trends we see with our kids. Gratitude can be developed and nurtured, in both young people and in ourselves. We cannot force our kids to be grateful, but we can influence them to be more grateful. Gratitude is a behavior that must be caught, and not taught.

One of the ways we can influence or nurture gratitude in our kids is by modeling this behavior

ourselves. This might mean taking actions as simple as showing gratitude toward your child for doing the things they are supposed to do (cleaning up their messes, getting themselves ready in the morning or doing chores around the house). A simple "Thanks so much for getting the dishes done before dinner" can be enough to encourage your child to show appreciation toward you and others.

Another very effective way of nurturing gratitude is by modeling it in your own relationships. This can be done with your partners, friends and even with strangers. If you practice in front of your kids, everyone in your family will develop a greater awareness

*Showing appreciation for the everyday things, the smallest things, will help foster gratitude in your children.*

of the importance of being grateful. They will also witness the impacts of that gratitude by seeing how it makes those on the receiving end feel. Our kids are more likely to do what we do than do what we say. Showing appreciation for the everyday things, the smallest things, will help foster gratitude in your children.

And there are so many benefits. Research from the *Journal of Happiness Studies* in 2010 confirmed that when people display gratitude, they experience less depression, are more pleasant to be around, do better academically (for example, they have higher grade point averages) and have a more positive outlook on life. And you might not be surprised to learn that research has also confirmed that people are more well-liked by others

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## Attitude of gratitude

continued from page 55

when showing appreciation and gratitude.

So, what can we do? Practice! Maybe you're not in the habit of showing gratitude as much as you would like. Here are a few ideas to get you going:

- **Keep a gratitude journal.**
- **Sign up for a 21-day gratitude challenge.**
- **Create a ritual of sharing appreciation at the dinner table or at bedtime.**

When keeping a journal, you can either keep a physical journal or use an online tool such as Thanx4 ([thnx4.org](http://thnx4.org)). You can keep a family journal (see box) or help your children each keep their own. The goal is to write down between three and five things for which you feel grateful. The physical act of writing is important — don't just do this exercise in your head. Try to spend 10–15 minutes each day for at least one week. Studies suggest that writing in a gratitude journal from one to three times per week might actually have a greater impact on our happiness than journaling every day, so don't worry if you miss a day or two.

### A few pointers when writing your gratitude journal:

- 1) Be specific.** Instead of writing "I'm grateful for my friends," maybe expand your gratitude statement to "I'm grateful for having friends in my life whom I can count on and who help me out with my kids when I have an emergency."
- 2) Savor surprises.** Record events that were unexpected or surprising. These occurrences tend to elicit stronger feelings of gratitude.
- 3) Write regularly and stay consistent.** If you and your family are only going to write once a week, pick a day and a time that you know you will be available to journal.

We do not have to wait until the holidays roll around to give thanks or to think about cultivating more thankfulness in our homes and families. This should be something we do on a daily basis with and around our children. So, pick a practice that works for you and go for it! ■

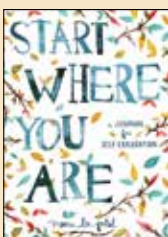
Melissa Benaroya, LICSW, is a parent educator and consultant in the Seattle area. She co-founded Grow Parenting ([growparenting.com](http://growparenting.com)).

## 6 fabulous family journals



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A journal for parents and children ages 4–10 (although the age range is flexible) to share the evolution of thoughts, feelings and dreams over the years. From the publisher: "Great for kids who want to keep a time capsule of their own whimsical thoughts and serious ideas about the world." A question by children's author Betsy Franco is featured for each day, with space provided for a response.



### Start Where You Are: A Journal for Self-Exploration

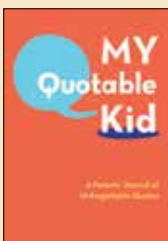
Open-ended questions such as "What are three thoughts that made you smile today?" are interspersed with whimsical watercolor artwork and inspirational quotes, making this journal a great tool to encourage reflection and gratitude in kids, and to nurture your family's creativity, mindfulness and self-motivation.



### Just Between Us: A No-Stress, No-Rules Journal for Girls and Their Moms

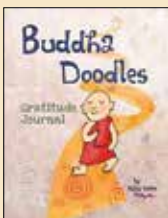
Have you ever wondered what your mom was like at your age? Or what your daughter's earliest memory is? What your mom thought the moment you were born? Or where your daughter would go if she could go anywhere?

Meredith and Sofie Jacobs have been sharing a journal since Sofie was 9, inspiring them to create this stylish journal to help other moms and daughters get to know each other in a new way. Thoughtful writing prompts and entertaining mini quizzes pave the way to discussing everything from friends and school to crushes and growing up. The journal features plenty of free space plus pages for drawing and making lists.



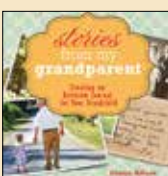
### My Quotable Kid: A Parents' Journal of Unforgettable Quotes

Designed for recording the funny, witty and outrageous things kids say over the years, this book can easily be used to record any daily thoughts, wishes or ideas from anyone in the family. Speech bubbles frame the thoughts on roomy pages, allowing for sharing and safekeeping.



### Buddha Doodles Gratitude Journal

The *Buddha Doodles Gratitude Journal* was curated by Molly Hahn ("Mollycules"), the creator of the Buddha Doodles series, and includes brand-new doodles not published anywhere else. Each page has a different illustration and a space to write down what you are grateful for, and creative prompts and inspirational quotes help the writing flow. Also check out Hahn's *Buddha Doodles Gratitude Journal: Shining Your Light* and *Buddha Doodles Gratitude Journal: Interconnected*.



### Stories from My Grandparent: An Heirloom Journal for Your Grandchild

The prompts in this book will help grandparents use their own words to tell their life stories, from childhood to present day. Grandparents can share with their grandkids memories of school days, important lessons learned, wisdom gained from raising a family, and the hopes and dreams they have for their grandchild. Grandchildren can learn more about their grandparents' lives, which will help cultivate a deep sense of respect and understanding.

— Natalie Singer-Velush

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## PRESCHOOL



See  
pg 49!

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**JANUARY 2016**

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**[parentmap.com/  
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## Does your child need a tutor?



### How do I know when my child needs a tutor?

Does your child struggle in a particular subject, or have a hard time completing homework or knowing how to study? Do you see zeros for homework, or are quizzes, tests and projects bringing down your child's grade? Is your child showing signs of serious frustration with the material? These are signs a tutor could help.

### What type of person will my child best respond to?

Does your child need an energetic extrovert, or will they do better with the quiet, gentle type? Consider your child's favorite teachers and coaches of the past. What personality types seemed to work the best and get the best results from your child? Look for tutors that fit that description.

### What credentials does my tutor have?

While a bachelor's degree may not signify tutoring ability, it does show that your tutor had the interest and drive to complete a four-year degree. If your tutor is still in school herself, ask for references and perhaps a paid trial run before committing. If your child has been diagnosed with a significant learning disability, you might want to seek a tutor with a special education background and/or specific training.

### Does the tutor have experience with different learning and teaching styles?

Inexperienced tutors often teach the way they learn, which may not be the best fit for your child. Ask your tutor how they might tailor their sessions to a kinesthetic (hands-on) learner, or how they might approach a session with a student who is very visual.

— Kirsten O'Malley



**Upcoming Open Houses**  
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### Redmond Campus

January 16th 10 am – 12 pm  
(Preprimary only)

January 28th 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm  
(Kindergarten only)

### Kirkland Campus

January 30th 10 am – 12 pm  
(Preprimary only)

January 28th 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm  
(Kindergarten only)

### Bellewood Campus

January 16th 11 am – 1 pm  
(Preprimary only)

January 23th 10 am – 12 pm  
February 4th 9 am  
(Elementary only)

### Park Highland Campus

February 6th 10 am – 12 pm  
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# An Elf's Tale



*The number of kids on Santa's Naughty List grows every year, and no Elf wants the job of giving out coal. Zippity is different from all the other Elves at the North Pole, but does he have what it takes to save Christmas and get rid of the Naughty List for good?*

*"An Elf's Tale" is an original musical filled with holiday spirit that will be fun for the whole family!*

Friday	<b>December 4</b>	<b>7 pm</b>
Saturday	<b>December 5</b> \$5 show	<b>7 pm</b>
Sunday	<b>December 6</b>	<b>2 pm</b>
Friday	<b>December 11</b>	<b>7 pm</b>
Saturday	<b>December 12</b> \$5 show	<b>2 pm</b>
Saturday	<b>December 12</b>	<b>7 pm</b>
Sunday	<b>December 13</b>	<b>2 pm</b>



**Performances at the**  
**Bellevue Youth Theatre-Crossroads**  
**16051 NE 10th Street, Bellevue**

Tickets are \$10 each if you purchase them in advance. If purchased after tech week begins, the ticket prices go up to \$12 each. For An Elf's Tale, tech week begins Monday, November 30.

All seats are reserved and we do sell out. Buying your tickets early is highly recommended.

For show information or tickets, call **Sheila Framke** at the Bellevue Youth Theatre Box Office, **425-452-7155**.

*someone you should know*





# Shaye Whitmer, Jedi master and light-saber smith

By Tiffany Pitts • Photograph by Will Austin

Lots of people like *Star Wars*. And many would like to be Jedi masters. But one Shoreline teacher and father of two has gone far beyond fandom and become just that: an actual Jedi master. Meet Shaye Whitmer, dad and super awesome teacher at The Evergreen School — when he's not fighting the Empire or making his own light sabers. Through camps and after-school classes, Whitmer shares his skills with the up-and-coming generation of *Star Wars* fanatics. With *The Force Awakens* hitting theaters in December, his Force-channeling skills should be in even higher demand.

## How did you find yourself on the Jedi path?

I have always enjoyed swords and such. Pretty much if I could swing it, I was game. When I was younger, I learned to fence. After 15 years of doing that, I learned some kendo (and some other miscellaneous arts in the interim). Between fencing and kendo, I felt pretty well grounded. I learned to smith swords as an apprentice to a Japanese blade smith and a traditional iron smith/farrier.

I learned to make light sabers mostly because I got tired of throwing money at someone for something that I could do myself. Basically, I wanted a fun project to teach myself electronics, and I thought a light saber would be a good thing. They are way more interesting than what you can buy.

## Other than how to fight the Empire, what do you teach?

I teach sixth-grade science (basic chemistry, tectonics and astronomy) and fine arts. This is my ninth year at The Evergreen School. Some of the art classes that I teach are Board Game Theory and Design, Spring Fling (catapult construction class) and Wired for Art, where I teach the kids basic electronics: soldering, how to do basic (and some not so basic) circuits.

## I hear you teach some pretty sweet summer camps, too.

I do three summer camps. [One is the] Jedi Academy course (probably going to be renamed Saber Academy), where the kids learn some basic forms, footwork, light dueling and a bit of choreography. I also teach advanced Saber/Jedi Academy, where the kids learn to make light sabers from scratch.

## What sort of sorcery is this? Do you really teach kids how to make light sabers? Can they defeat the Dark Side?

Week two of Jedi camp has a construction component where kids build their own light sabers. They learn the basic wiring behind it, working with LEDs and different circuit types. Making them is relatively easy if you have a basic design. The wiring is pretty straightforward. There are some tricky parts that I take care of, but nothing that they couldn't do on their own with guidance.

## After kids make these, they just hang them on the wall and stare at them, right?

That's completely right . . . until I give them lessons on forms and light dueling, which come the day they are finished.

## What exactly do you mean by "light dueling"? No one is getting their hand cut off by Darth Vader, are they?

Light contact to the helmet and heavily padded hands. Places where all the safety gear is. I also teach a camp called Scenes from *Star Wars*, where the students spend some time learning the forms to create realistic fight choreography and light saber battles. All staged, all safe. They work on the delivery of lines, diction and proper emoting as well.

## Is this just about weapons or are there greater lessons that they're learning?

Play fighting is something that all kids will do. This class teaches technique, form, control and discipline. Even though it is largely fictional, the techniques are drawn from other martial traditions. It's an excellent way to work on hand-eye (and feet) coordination.

The maker component is also important. Kids get to learn basic electronics, volts, amps, battery solutions, how to solder, and how to troubleshoot and problem solve. They get the chance to make a unique tool for themselves. For a while, kids lost their way when it came to making things. The maker movement has brought the idea back into the student's hands. This is a great way to embrace it.

## Have your kids watched the entire *Star Wars* series? And will you be standing in line with your family on Dec. 18?

The boys have seen the movies. We watched them in order at first (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6), then we tried it in machete order (4, 5, 2, 3, 6). Now we tend

to watch the phantom edit, which takes all three prequel movies and squishes them into 1.5 hours and cuts out the unnecessary stuff. It's based on Topher Grace's *Star Wars* edit. It's out on YouTube and is waaaaaaay better. We will see the new movie. We aren't the got-to-see-the-midnight-showing-type folk. I'll be content to wait a while. ■

## Lights, saber, action

Find info on Whitmer's upcoming camps and classes at [shayewhitmer.wix.com/saberfit](http://shayewhitmer.wix.com/saberfit).



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