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# December 2022

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## TUNE IN



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

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*Brothers, Luka and Lian. Luka enjoys soccer, pickleball, fishing and singing karaoke. Lian enjoys protecting his mom by fighting*

*bad guys with his sword. Photo by Jordan-Ashley Photography.*

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We are dedicated to serving the Greater Austin area by providing up-to-date information and ideas that promote smart parenting and healthy homes. We promote our clients' businesses by increasing their customer bases and enhancing their public images.

Austin Family is published monthly by KKKemper, Inc.  
Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 7559, Round Rock, Texas 78683-7559  
Phone Number: 512-733-0038  
On the web at: www.austinfamily.com

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

JESS ARCHER

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

Renew and Restore. Two great words. Both words have to do with fixing something that's been broken or damaged. If incorporated into your mindset, both words can lead to better relationships, a better outlook on the day or even a better year to come. So, it's fitting that for our last issue of 2022, Austin Family has chosen to talk about renewing a spirit of charity and restoring family relationships.

Our feature article this month is all about renewing a spirit of giving. In it we highlight 5 great Austin donation centers where you and your family can thoughtfully donate money and gently used home goods. Talk with your family about what you can donate and where you think your resources can best be used. Allow a spirit of giving to renew your joy this holiday season.

Read on in this month's issue for some real, honest advice from Dr. Betty Richardson for restoring family relationships that have been damaged by tensions during the COVID-19 pandemic. For many families, this holiday season will be the first time they've resumed get-togethers since before the pandemic began in 2020. A lot has transpired in the last two years that has caused friction in families. This month's column encourages readers to work at restoring those family relationships.

In addition, our December issue is stuffed like a Christmas stocking with information on all kinds of exciting holiday events. Pick the ones that best suit your family and go make some holiday cheer. See you in 2023, Austin!

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# Austin IN ACTION

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## Chess Champions

Making Round Rock ISD proud, competitors Tanvi Reddy and Kalia Wang won some top prizes at the Texas Girls' State Chess Championship this October. The competition was held at the University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV).

Together, the girls took home the second place title in the High School Team category. At the individual level, the girls were each awarded the title of co-champion in the High School category. To win this title both girls scored a 4.5 by the end of the tournament. In addition, Kalia was also awarded a \$3,000 scholarship to UTRGV.

Said Tanvi, "It felt really wonderful for us to win and share the title as well as win second place in the teams, and we were proud of how we represented Westwood."

The girls will continue to compete at chess this year and hope to participate in the Texas Super State Scholarship Chess Championships in March, 2023.



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

If you know a young person deserving of recognition or a youth group working to positively impact our community, let us hear about it. They just might end up in next month's "Austin in Action" section of Austin Family magazine! Send details and a photo to [editor2003@austinfamily.com](mailto:editor2003@austinfamily.com).

## Voters Approve AISD Bond Package



On November 8 Austin voters approved \$2.44 billion in bond funding for Austin ISD, making it the largest bond package ever to pass in central Texas. The money will be used for security upgrades at every Austin ISD school which will include secure entry vestibules, fencing and new doors and locks. In addition, the bond will enable districtwide improvements to heating and A/C, upgraded athletic facilities, buses and technology equipment. Lastly, the funds will go to modernizing 25 aging facilities in Austin ISD through full or phased-in renovations.

"Austin ISD is ready to hit the ground running, building on the valuable experience gained and systems put in place during our work for the 2017 Bond," said Geronimo Rodriguez, Board of Trustees President. "We appreciate the trust that the community has again placed in us, and we will continue to act with transparency and provide regular updates on our progress as we move forward."

## The Yellow Bike Project



Austin continues to become a more bike friendly city with new and expanded bicycle lanes. With that in mind, The Yellow Bike Project is here to help you and your family get moving on two wheels. Throughout November and December, the Yellow Bike Project will hold free classes and workshops to the public. Bring your bike and learn all about bike maintenance and develop new skills.

Yellow Bike Project (YBP) is a non-profit organization that has been working since 1997 to reuse bicycles and to provide tools, workspace and guidance for all. It is a bicycle recycling facility that provides free bikes to those who would not otherwise have access.

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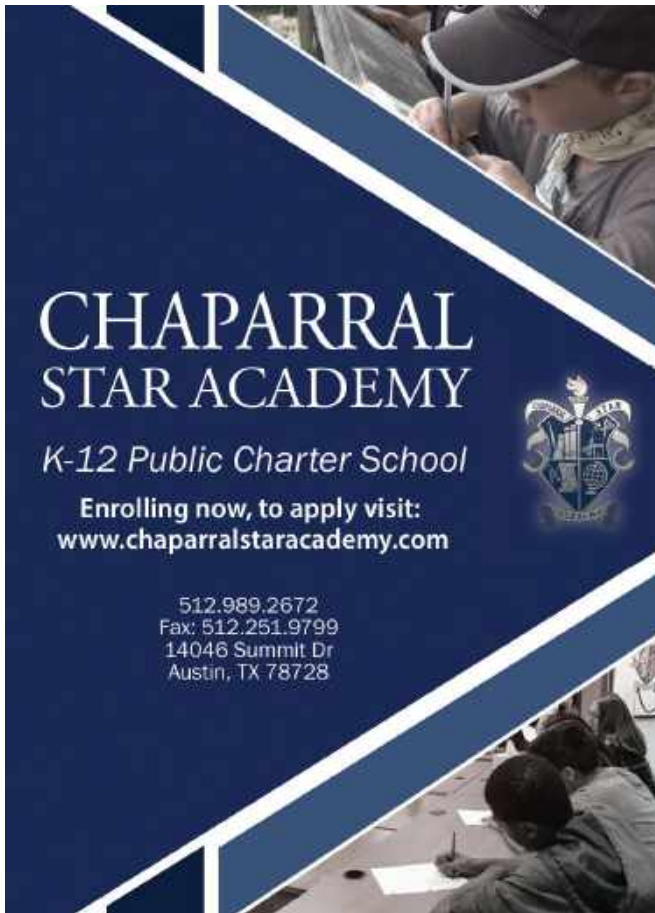


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## Be Sure To Include Yourself During This Season Of Giving

Self-care is important to practice all year long. But it can be especially beneficial during the hectic holiday season. The end of year is a popular time for people to give their time and talents to friends, family and fellow community members. This busy season can also be a time that self-care practices take a back seat. But it doesn't have to be that way.

What is self-care?

"Self-care" can take on many meanings, but these days we commonly refer to it as the practice of taking an active role in protecting our own wellbeing and happiness, in particular during periods of stress. Goodness knows, we've had no shortage of stress lately. According to the World Health Organization, self-care might include:

- Hygiene
- Nutrition
- Lifestyle (exercise, leisure, etc.)
- Environmental factors (social habits, etc.)
- Socioeconomic factors (income, cultural beliefs, etc.)
- Self-medication

"Self-care isn't just a quick fix," says Dr. Mariana Gonzalez, Associate Vice President of Health & Wellness for the YMCA of Austin. "It promotes your physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social wellbeing. It takes practice and should be integrated in your daily life."

Some examples of self-care activities include:

- Moving your body
- Participating in a wellbeing therapy
- Practicing a restorative activity like yoga or meditation
- Immersing yourself in nature
- Making a tasty, nutritious snack or meal
- Engaging in a creative activity
- Visiting a place of worship

### How to make time for self-care

One of the biggest mistakes we make is viewing self-care as an all-or-nothing exercise. The truth is, we can realize significant benefits from even the briefest, smallest acts—even in just a few minutes. In fact, you might even strive to integrate self-care throughout the day by finding moments you can be present with sensations.

For suggestions on implementing a self-care plan that works for you go to [www.austinfamily.com/Be-Sure-To-Include-Yourself-During-this-Season-of-Giving/](http://www.austinfamily.com/Be-Sure-To-Include-Yourself-During-this-Season-of-Giving/).

YMCA of Austin is a community resource to help you develop or deepen your self-care practice. Find details at [www.austinyymca.org](http://www.austinyymca.org)

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# Renew a Spirit of Giving: 5 Great Donation Centers in Austin



JESS ARCHER

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

For most parents and families, the holidays are a wonderful time to renew a sense of charity. We consider what gifts to give family members and friends and how that gift will bring them joy. The holidays are also an opportunity for parents to teach their kids about giving to people who are in different circumstances than themselves. Inflation, unemployment, loss of home and health can all put people in difficult financial circumstances and the holidays are a time to help our kids truly see and attend to their neighbors in need.

One great way for kids to give a helping hand this holiday season is through giving charitable donations. Austin is blessed with many great organizations that exist to meet the needs of people that have fallen on hard time. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic many of our city's donation centers were closed and not taking donations due to increased sanitation precautions, but now these centers are back up and running and in need of your gifts now more than ever.

You may decide to have your kids pick out gifts at the store and take them to donation centers. Or you can help your kids realize their own abundance by having them sort through their own toys and pick out a few good ones for a child around their age. Many of the organizations listed below also have Amazon

wish lists that you can access. You can give before the holiday season or afterwards. There are so many options and ways to give to donation centers. However you approach it, teaching your child to be charitable and compassionate, especially around the holidays, is a beautiful thing. Read on for five donation centers in Austin that will be ready and grateful to receive your gifts.

## **The Settlement Home for Children**

1600 Payton Gin Road  
Austin, TX  
[www.settlementhome.org](http://www.settlementhome.org)

**Who it serves:** The Settlement Home for Children is a non-profit organization that serves individuals who have experienced severe emotional trauma, abuse and neglect. They provide children in the foster care system the materials and support they need.

**What you can give:** The Settlement Home for Children always accepts financial donations, but they also have an Amazon wish list that is accessible through their website. Look over it with your family and consider purchasing one of their wish list items. On it you'll find all kinds of things that kids want and need, including Halloween costumes, room décor and various toys.

## **Austin Creative Reuse**

2005 Wheless Lane  
Austin, TX 78723  
[www.austincreativereuse.org](http://www.austincreativereuse.org)

**Who it serves:** Austin Creative Reuse is located in the Windsor Park area of east Austin. They sell gently used creative materials at an affordable price to those in need.

**What you can give:** Austin Creative Reuse is one of the only donation centers in Austin that accepts gently used arts and craft supplies. With



your kids' help, sort through their art bins and create a donate pile. Make sure those supplies are clean and in good working order. Through your donations, Austin Creative Reuse has been able to keep more than one million pounds of reusable materials out of landfills.

### **SAFE Donation Warehouse**

1513 Grove Blvd  
Austin, TX  
[www.safeaustin.org](http://www.safeaustin.org)

**Who it serves:** The SAFE Alliance is a merger of Austin Children's Shelter and SafePlace. SAFE serves survivors of child abuse, sexual assault and exploitation and domestic violence.

**What you can give:** SAFE welcomes in-kind donations at their warehouse location throughout the year but check their website for details on specific days and times to donate. Individuals, families, groups and churches can assemble seasonal kits to donate to SAFE. In addition, they are always in need of home furniture as well as personal hygiene items. For the comprehensive wish list, visit SAFE's website.

**Donate This Recycle That**  
Various locations throughout the Austin, TX area  
[www.donatethisrecyclethat.com](http://www.donatethisrecyclethat.com)

**Who it serves:** This unique organization can assist you with donating your gently used items to three important charities: Arms of Hope, AMVETS NSF and The National Children's Cancer Society. Donate This Recycle That has donation drop-off locations all throughout Austin.

**What you can give:** Schedule online to donate your household items and gently used clothing. Your children will feel good knowing they're helping keep clothing out of landfills.

### **Society of St. Vincent De Paul Thrift Store**

901 W. Braker Lane  
Austin, TX  
[www.ssvdp.org](http://www.ssvdp.org)

**Who it serves:** The Society of St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Stores provide clothes, electronic, housewares and toys at very affordable prices to all kinds of people in the Austin area.

**What you can give:** Have your kids sort through their toys, games and clothes. Decide what doesn't fit any longer and what toys they've

outgrown. Encourage your kids to clean and then box up these items and together take them to the St. Vincent De Paul store. Your kids will feel great for helping others in need.



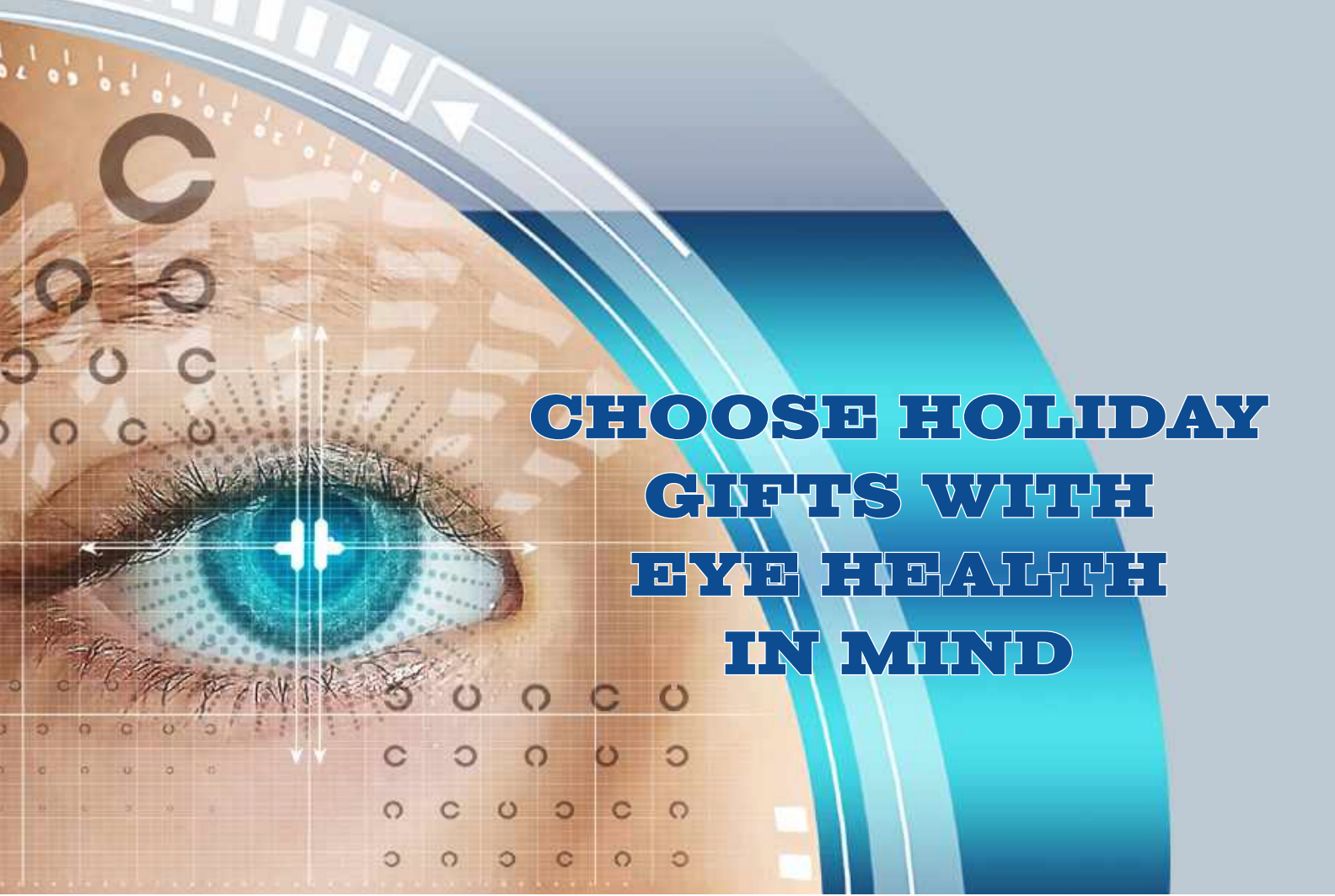
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# CHOOSE HOLIDAY GIFTS WITH EYE HEALTH IN MIND

## LIFELINES

BRENDA SCHOOLFIELD

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

Make eye health a priority when choosing holiday gifts for your child. Some toys have the potential to cause serious eye injury and permanent vision loss. According to the National Library Science of Medicine, over a 23-year period about 1.5 million children were treated in the emergency department for eye injuries related to consumer products. Before toy shopping, become informed about the risks that air guns and projectile toys pose to eye health. Combat the effects of screen time by choosing toys that encourage outdoor activity.

### What You Need to Know About Air Guns

Many parents don't think twice about

letting their child play with a non-powder firearm. These guns are powered by compressed air (or other methods) instead of gun powder. They include BB guns, pellet guns, paintball guns and airsoft guns. In the United States there no federal laws that regulate this type of firearm or require safety protection.

In their online article from October 2021 The American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) warns that "air guns are a notorious threat to the eyes." Eye damage from air guns can last a lifetime. The most common types of injury are bleeding inside the eye, corneal abrasion (scrapes on the surface of the eye) detached retina, dislocated lens and rupture of the eyeball. Children with eye injury from air guns have the highest hospital admission rates, which indicates that their injuries are more serious.

Most air gun eye injuries happen to children who aren't wearing eye

protection. If your child does use air guns, make sure he or she and those around them wear appropriate goggles. Not any random goggles or eyewear will do. Goggles and sunglasses designed for sports or yard work are not safe and can shatter, causing serious injury to the eye. Choose ballistic safety eyewear that meets Military Ballistic Standards. The AAO says that it is important this eyewear covers the eyes completely and is designed to wrap around the eye area. To be sure your child is protected, talk to your eye care provider before you buy.

### What You Need to Know About Projectile Toys

Projectile-firing toys include toy guns, nerf darts, and crossbows. Even though nerf bullets and nerf darts are soft, they can cause eye injury. The AAO warns that corneal abrasion, bleeding, increased eye pressure, and permanent vision loss are possible. Crossbows that can shoot plastic or foam arrows long distances are particularly hazardous



at close range. These can cause eye injuries that permanently affect vision. The AAO recommends against buying projectile toys. See the sidebar for AAO Guidance on Projectile Toys.

#### AAO Guidance on Projectile Toys

Projectile toys aren't safe. Make sure you understand the risks to your child's vision. But if you do decide to allow these toys, do the following:

- Supervise children while they play with projectile toys.
- Adhere to manufacturer age guidelines and warnings.
- Everyone, even adults, in the area where children are playing with projectile toys should wear eye protection.

#### What You Need to Know About Screens and Eye Health

Hours spent in front of screens is hard work for the eyes. Prolonged screen time can cause digital eye strain—blurry vision, dry eyes, and neck or shoulder pain. Writing in the Washington Post, Dr. Zhong-Lin Lu, scientist who studies the visual system, explains how our eyes aren't built to read on a screen. Our eyes must work harder because there is less contrast between the letters and the background than the printed page. Viewing the screen from different angles as well as reflection and glare contribute to the problem.

More screen time and less outdoor time may be associated with the risk of developing myopia (nearsightedness). Myopia is not a condition to dismiss. People with myopia need corrective lenses and regular eye exams. Those with severe myopia are more likely to develop conditions which can lead to vision impairment if left untreated.

A commonly recommended way to relieve the eyes is the 20-20-20 remedy. Every 20 minutes, remind your child to look into the distance at least 20 feet away for 20 seconds. In addition to this remedy, Dr. Lu recommends sending your child outside. "The outdoor environment provides bright and full-spectral light, rich spatial patterns across a wide range of scales, and sharp images of distant objects."

The American Academy of Pediatrics emphasizes the importance of 1 hour of physical activity per day and time away from media. Time outdoors helps accomplish both. This holiday season you can encourage outdoor activity by thoughtful gift selection. Here are a few ideas for younger children:

- Sidewalk chalk
- Outdoor playhouse
- Inexpensive tent or fort to assemble in back yard
- Jump rope
- Tetherball set

- Sandbox and toys
- Rope swing
- Tricycle, riding toys

#### Older children may enjoy these gifts to promote time outside:

- Camera
- Binoculars
- Fitness tracker
- Roller blades and pads
- Skateboard and safety equipment
- Metal detector
- Bicycle and helmet
- Soccer net

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# WINNERS ANNOUNCED



## 5th Grade Winner

**Valor South Austin  
BETHLEHEM DOLLAHON**

If I ruled the world, I would focus on helping kids find families through international adoption. Adoption is very close to my heart, because I was adopted. Until I was two years old, I lived in an orphanage in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The orphanage was full of toddlers who needed families. Meanwhile, in Austin,



## 4th Grade Winner

**Brentwood Elementary School  
AVERY STUART**

Have you ever wanted to help with inequality or racism? If I ruled the world, nobody would be rejected. Nobody would be alone with nothing to become. Everyone would have a purpose in our world. No matter race, religion, clothing, wealth, or gender, everyone would be the same, but different in beautiful ways. Everyone accepts everyone. Everyone would have



## 5th Grade Runner Up

**Harmony School of Science  
RANI UPRETI**

If I ruled the world I would sail through the seas. I would make sure that I'm putting others before myself after all that's what being a ruler is about. Being a ruler is also like being a leader, but you've got to be very cautious and loyal to the people and even the animals. If I ruled the world I'd be a leader and put others before myself and care for the people and the animals because



## 4th Grade Runner Up

**Elsa England Elementary School  
AALIYANA ABDULLAH**

A dolphin beached on the surface. An abandoned forest filled with nothing but tree stumps. A green lake with bottles and other litter floating in it. This is today. Now imagine a future where this gets worse. If I was in charge, I would make the world a better place for those without voice--the animals!



# 2022 Young Writers Contest Winners

## This year's topic: If I Ruled the World

Texas, there was a family that wanted another kid. They decided to adopt me, and now I have a fun, big, loud, loving family. There are still millions of kids worldwide who need loving families! It broke my heart when I figured that out because I want everyone to have a good, fun life.

When my parents were adopting me, it was so expensive! So, if I ruled the world, I would put down the prices so more families can afford to adopt kids.

Then I would work on ending corruption in international adoption. Corruption is when people make money off of something they're not supposed to. You might be thinking, what will I do? I would promote good ethics in the adoption center where families adopt and where the kids live.

Right now, every country has different paperwork and rules to adopt. The last action I'll do is to streamline all the rules and paperwork. Then, it will be easier

and faster for the kids to find their loving, forever families.

There are so many things you could do if you ruled the world but this is what I'll do; fix international adoption, because it's amazing to be in a family that loves you and supports you, and every kid in the world should have that.

someone to go to. To rely on. To look to in times of need. In times of sorrow. Someone who doesn't care what you look like. Who you are.

If I ruled the world, this is what one day would be like in a world with equality. I'd wake up in a house, not a mansion, or a castle, because I don't need such a thing. I get dressed in a blue Art Class shirt with ruffled sleeves and jean shorts with white lace on them. I know it doesn't sound as

glamorous as you would imagine, but even if you do rule the world, you don't have to live a life with three thousand beautiful gowns, and a mansion all to yourself. You can live a regular life. I would live a pretty ordinary life, except for one thing. That little thing that isn't in our world right now is equality. That would change in my world.

If I ruled the world, I would have no people on the street, no dogs in a shelter. No cats

getting lost in the winter, and no people getting lost and losing their way back. No rabbit getting trapped in a pen, no human trapped doing work for nothing. No horse left hungry, no human with no food.

If I ruled the world, everyone and everything would be welcome. And it would be my world to create.

animals are like humans they eat, sleep, and they also have feelings and that's what's most important about being a leader you've got to think about how others will feel.

If I ruled the world I would run through the meadows and see the view from the valley watching the town's people laughing and sharing moments with one another. If I ruled the world I'd open a variety of schools and each one of them

would be different. One school would be for kids who are deaf, mute, and blind.

If I ruled the world I'd be an example to kids because being a ruler is like being a leader, but you rule the world and you're not just leading the kids, but the adults. If I ruled the world I wouldn't judge someone based on how they look but how they act towards others and how they treat their loved ones. If I ruled the world I'd make a place called the new generation where

young kids can go and see how the world was like decades ago. If I ruled the world I'd live in the countryside in a 2-story house near the valley.

If I ruled the world I'd show everyone that there's always light in the dark, remember that.

Bees help plants grow and are responsible for 80% of all the plant pollination but they are disappearing fast due to human activity. Without bees the food chain could become unbalanced. The loss of plants would affect the wildlife too since that is their food source. To prevent that, I will make laws to plant more bee gardens and homes and use less chemicals.

Did you know that every day 12 species go extinct and every 22 hours a rhino is

killed? Hunting, deforestation, climate change, and littering all cause such problems. I would build safe habitats for the endangered animals and give funds to zoos to take care of them.

Boating, overfishing, and pollution endanger the lives of sea animals. I will create separate lakes just for boating purposes, and make rules to reduce the use of gas, water, and energy. Chopping down trees leads to habitat loss—one of the main reasons why animals are

endangered. Trees are also a source of oxygen. Losing them will hurt our planet. With 50% of our earth's trees gone, I would plant more trees and encourage people to do the same. I will also put rules in place to grow native plants that help the wildlife.

If I ruled the world, my days would be spent in helping animals and getting rid of the earth's waste. I want to live and breathe in a world which is safe for both man and wildlife.

# Holiday Events



## GAYLORD RESORT "SO. MUCH. CHRISTMAS"

**Nov 11-Jan 1**

Grapevine, TX

[www.christmasatgaylordtexas.com](http://www.christmasatgaylordtexas.com)

## CAMERON PARK ZOO WILD LIGHTS

**Nov 25-Dec 31**

Waco

[www.cameronparkzoo.com/  
special-events/wild-lights](http://www.cameronparkzoo.com/special-events/wild-lights)

## AUSTIN 58TH ANNUAL TRAIL OF LIGHTS

**Dec 8-23**

(closed Mondays)

Zilker Park

[www.austintrailoflights.org/](http://www.austintrailoflights.org/)

## TIME TO SHINE

**Dec 3**

Elgin Public Library  
[www.elgintexas.gov](http://www.elgintexas.gov)

## Christmas Dreams & Sensory Things

**Dec 10**

CHASCO Family YMCA

[www.ymcatx.org](http://www.ymcatx.org)

## ELF IN CONCERT AUSTIN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

**Dec 15**

Bass Concert Hall  
[www.TheLongCenter.Org/  
Events/Elf-In-Concert/](http://www.TheLongCenter.Org/Events/Elf-In-Concert/)

## WINTER BREAK SKATE @ PLAYLAND SKATE

**Dec 20-Jan**

North Austin

[www.playlandskatecenter.net](http://www.playlandskatecenter.net)

## NEW YEAR'S EVE BALLOON DROP @ PLAYLAND SKATE

**Dec 31**

North Austin

[www.playlandskatecenter.net](http://www.playlandskatecenter.net)



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512-288-8220  
www.countryhomelearningcenter.com

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*and  
Camp Guide*

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www.idealabkids.com/  
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www.kidsactingstudio.com

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512-236-9622  
www.austinyymca.org/  
programs/holiday-camp

**YMCA WINTER CAMP!**

Georgetown, Highland Lakes, Hutto, Round Rock, Twin Lakes  
512-246-9622  
www.ymcactx.org/  
programs/youth-camps/

**CAMP HEART O' HILLS (girls only)**

Located on the Guadalupe River near Kerrville  
830-238-4650  
www.hohcamp.com

**CAMP STEWART (boys only)**

Located on the Guadalupe River near Kerrville  
830-238-4670  
www.campstewart.com

**SUMMER CAMP ONLY**

# Ways to Support your Child's Interest in Theater Arts



## THE LEARNING CURVE

ALISON BOGLE

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

My youngest has always had a flair for the dramatic, so when she asked to try a well-known acting camp last summer, I signed her up. The good news was, she loved it! This got me thinking about ways to support her new experience and interest in theater arts.

### At-School Resources

If your child is in middle or high

school, chances are his or her school offers theater arts classes during the school day and may also offer a club that meets outside of school hours. Encourage your child to speak with the counselor to discover what is available.

Most elementary schools do not offer theater arts classes during the school day, but many do provide after school enrichment, which may include a theater class. A quick search of my daughter's online school catalog found a weekly, hour-long class "teaching songs, scenes and dances from Broadway blockbusters focusing on basic vocal technique, acting skills, dance and stagecraft." Fabulous! The only problem was I hadn't heard about it in time to enroll her. You may have to proactively reach out to your child's school to learn about after school offerings.

### See a Show

Austin is a talent-filled city and there are numerous low-cost and free shows around town of which to take advantage. Children can learn a lot just by watching others perform and there is nothing quite as inspiring as a live show. It's how I found myself fantasizing about joining Cirque du Soleil even though I'd be hard pressed to do 50 crunches in a row. Spending time together watching a live performance offers a chance to bond with your child and demonstrates that you are invested in supporting his or her passion.

### Community theater

There are a number of community theater groups in the greater Austin area. If your child already has theater experience, he or she could audition



for a role. However, many theaters rely on volunteer help and have several tasks available. If your child is old enough and mature enough to volunteer, it can be a great way to be exposed to the theater and to learn by helping and observing.

### Library resources

Libraries are magical places. It seems that any time I'd like to broaden my children's horizons, the library has a resource for that. They also tend to be staffed by the most helpful people one could encounter. By using Austin Public Library's easy, online chat feature, in a few short minutes I had a list in hand (well, on screen) of more theater-related books than my kids and I could read in a lifetime. Involve your child in the search and let him or her pick out the book that appeals most.

### Online classes

Zoom school is mostly a thing of the past, (thankfully) but that doesn't mean that we can't use online learning to our advantage. There are a number of companies offering online enrichment classes and these are a great way to help your child take a deeper dive into his or her favorite subjects. Classes can be pre-recorded or can be offered live. Live classes are typically hosted in small groups and are designed to be interactive and engaging to keep kids' attention. You can enroll in single classes or sign up for a class series. Single classes can be more flexible as you can fit them around your family's schedule, however, a class series offers the benefit of your child becoming comfortable and developing friendships with his or her fellow thespians.

### YMCA

The YMCA of Austin has a number of locations around Austin and the surrounding areas. It is a nonprofit organization "committed to strengthening community by connecting all people to their potential, purpose and each other." One way the YMCA works to achieve its mission is by offering a wide range of classes and other programming, including

classes in the arts. Class fees tend to be much lower than those of for-profit businesses and YMCA members as well as non-members are welcome to enroll.

Readers, we are lucky to live in such a talented community and to be able to access so many theater-related resources. My search to discover

how to support my daughter's love of theater other than writing large checks turned up so many exciting new things to try! We're looking forward to seeing shows together, checking out books to read and signing her up for a few new classes. To her, and to all of the other budding young Austin actors out there, I say "Break a leg!" Well, not actually.



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# Restoring Family Relationships Post Pandemic

## FAMILY MATTERS

DR. BETTY RICHARDSON

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

**Q** Both my husband and I have extended family coming to our house to celebrate Christmas and New Year's. It's been a long time, since before the COVID-19 shutdown that we've all gotten together. We want to make our family gathering special for our three children ages 5, 8, and 14. We want the children to know and interact with their relatives. One big concern is that our families have become very divided over several issues such as: COVID-19 protective measures, prejudices, religion and political issues from the past two years. There are lots of things we could argue about. What ideas do you have for us to make sure our days spent with relatives are peaceful?

**A** My overall tip to you is to keep everyone busy so they don't have time to argue. Instead, enjoy working and playing with each other. The following suggestions will help you do this.



1. Give everyone jobs to do to help with the dinner and with the day. You could have a jobs jar for adults and one for kids with job slips inside for guests to choose from. Praise and thank everyone for their help.
  2. Think of one compliment you can give each guest and say it to them sincerely.
  3. Advise all family members that some topics are off limits. For example, politics, COVID-19 and religion. (In my family it was best to avoid all talk about the country my uncle had fought against in a war.) All families have hot topics to avoid.
  4. Bring up and share happy memories. You could have everyone bring old family photos and display them. Or have everyone with a cell phone choose their favorite photos from the past couple of years and share them with the whole group. Give everyone time to talk about what makes that memory special.
  5. Use empathy and forgiveness. Put yourself in the other person's place and try to understand their behaviors. If a family member hurt your feelings in the past, do your best to forgive them and move on.
  6. If someone tries to push your buttons and upset you, excuse yourself and take a walk. Another option is to say something like "You're hurting my feelings (or upsetting me) but I can't imagine that's your intention."
  7. Plan games to involve everyone. Ideas include Pictionary, two truths and a lie (everyone guesses the true statement) or a white elephant gift exchange.
- If you can keep all your guests busy, I think your holidays with them will be not only peaceful but fun for everyone.

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# SMART SCREEN TIME

DR. BENJAMIN KRAMER

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



## Presents and Presence

Readers responded positively to this information from last year, so I'm repeating it as my own holiday special!

It's the time of year for amazing, heartwarming holiday programs. It's also the time of year for tons of commercials aimed at kids, and on nearly all the platforms they use. The commercials themselves are often part of the fun - I vividly recall specific toy commercials and that moment when the actual item was in my hands. (You know I'm talking about you, Lone Ranger Action Figure.) However, the abundance of marketing directed at children can create difficulties for parents when a kid starts to ask for something that you know is not a good idea or is out of your price range. With that in mind, here are some things to think and talk about with your kids, with help from the wise minds at Common Sense Media:

1. Once kids get to eight years or so, they can distinguish that an ad has a specific aim: to convince someone to buy an item. That means that you can talk to kids about how the ads may be using language and images to make the product seem more magical than it may be in real life.

2. If your kids are not yet ready for that conversation, ask them about why they like something they have just seen. Sometimes it's similar to something they already have and love, and they just need a reminder. If the toy is a great addition to a collection, or if it's truly new to them, put it on your list for consideration.

3. Lastly, advertisers put a ton of emotion and excitement in ads for kids - their aim is to have children feed off of that energy and say, "I

WANT THAT!" You know your kids, so try to look through the hype and ask yourself, "Will this toy really work for my kid? How long will the interest (or the toy itself) last?"

If you are looking for non-commercial holiday programs spanning a range of cultures and ages, check out the lineup at [www.austinpbs.org/holidays](http://www.austinpbs.org/holidays). For holiday family activities and crafts for kids of all ages, go to [www.pbsparents.org](http://www.pbsparents.org).

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# December 2022 Calendar

Go to [austinfamily.com](http://austinfamily.com) for expanded listings.

Check our calendar online which is updated daily. Any family-friendly events can be posted at [austinfamily.com](http://austinfamily.com) and will be made live once approved. Certain restrictions apply.

**Thu 1 Letters to Santa.** 10 a.m. Visit the NORTHSIDE Santa House between Culinary Dropout and Valencia's Tex-Mex. Drop off your Letters to Santa. The Domain Northside, 11821 Rock Rose Ave. FREE. [www.domainnorthside.com](http://www.domainnorthside.com).

**Bee Cave on Ice.** 10 a.m. Enjoy ice skating. Ticket includes a skate rental and a 75-minute skate session. Hill Country Galleria, 12700 Hill Country Blvd. \$15. [www.hillcountrygalleria.com](http://www.hillcountrygalleria.com).

**Girlstart Starry Night.** 5:30 - 7 p.m. Girlstart's STEM Studio and Mini-Planetarium is a unique space for families to explore astronomy. Girlstart STEM Center, 1400 W. Anderson Ln. FREE.

**Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo.** 6 - 9 p.m. Download the Goosechase App on your phone and participate in our FREE scavenger hunt. Login information will be in the front plaza of the Zoo. Cameron Park Zoo, 1701 N 4th St. \$0 - \$15. [www.cameronparkzoo.com](http://www.cameronparkzoo.com).

**Fri 2 Community First! Village of Lights and Holiday Market.** 5:30 - 9 p.m. Village of Lights boasts more than 250,000 lights choreographed to holiday music and is one of the biggest Christmas light displays in Central Texas. Community First Village, 9301 Hog Eye Rd. FREE. [www.mlf.org](http://www.mlf.org).

**Lights On!** 6 - 8 p.m. Kick off the holiday season with Lakeway Parks & Recreation at Lights On! City Hall, 1102 Lohman's Crossing Rd. [www.lakeway-tx.gov](http://www.lakeway-tx.gov).

**CONTINUED:** Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo, see Sat 1; Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1.

**Sat 3 Old Town Christmas Festival.** 9:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Old Town comes alive with Christmas joy. 105 N. Brushy St. [www.leandertx.gov](http://www.leandertx.gov).

**Time to Shine.** 11 a.m. - 9:30 p.m. Elgin Public Library, 404 N. Main St.

**Tis the season.** For FREE holiday themed children's activities, Santa's reindeer games, holiday music, and festive food trucks! [www.elgintexas.gov/calendar](http://www.elgintexas.gov/calendar)

**Junie B in Jingle Bells Batman Smells.** 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. First grader, Junie B. Jones is super-excited about the upcoming holiday sing-along and secret Santa gift exchange at her school. Austin Scottish Rite Theater, 207 W 18th St. \$15 - \$20. [www.scottishritetheater.org](http://www.scottishritetheater.org).

**Cenicienta.** 2 - 4 p.m. ZACH Theatre presents Glass Half Full's production about ten-year-old Belinda who loves to tell stories. The Kleberg at ZACH, 202 South Lamar. \$16. [www.tickets.zachtheatre.org](http://www.tickets.zachtheatre.org).

**Ballet Austin's 60th Annual Production of The Nutcracker.** 2 - 7:30 p.m. Celebrate the holiday season with glittering sets, beautiful costumes and live orchestra. The Long Center for Performing Arts, 701 W Riverside Dr. \$15 - \$125. [www.balletaustin.org](http://www.balletaustin.org).

**Home for the Holidays & Hot Cocoa Stroll.** Elgin is home for the holidays by the tracks. Enjoy the hot cocoa stroll, pictures with Santa, shopping and more in Historic Downtown Elgin. Downtown Elgin, 109 Depot St. [www.elgintx.com](http://www.elgintx.com).

**CONTINUED:** Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo, see Sat 1; Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1; Community First! Village of Lights and Holiday Market, see Fri 2.

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**Sun 4**  
**The Muppet Christmas Carol.** 10:30 a.m. Join us for a special winter holiday, multisensory screening. Bullock Texas State History Museum, 1800 Congress Ave. \$8-12. [www.thestoryoftexas.com](http://www.thestoryoftexas.com).

**CONTINUED:** Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo, see Sat 1; Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1; Ballet Austin's 60th Annual Production of The Nutcracker see Sat 3; Junie B in Jingle Bells Batman Smells, see Sat 3.

**Mon 5**  
**CONTINUED:** Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1.

**Tue 6**  
**Pfestive Pfarmers Market.** 3 - 7 p.m. This will be an expansion of the usual market with seasonal offerings and live music. Heritage Park, 901 Old Austin-Hutto Rd. FREE. [www.pflugervilletx.gov](http://www.pflugervilletx.gov).

**Handel's Messiah.** 8 - 10 p.m. The Austin Symphony Orchestra presents its Christmas holiday tradition, Handel's Messiah, accompanied by Chorus Austin for you and your family. Riverbend Centre, 4214 N Capital of Texas Highway. \$15 - \$60. [www.my.austinsymphony.org](http://www.my.austinsymphony.org).

**CONTINUED:** Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1.

**Wed 7**  
**Here Comes Signing Santa Claus.** 3:30 - 8 p.m. Signing Santa visits Central Texas kids who are deaf and hard of hearing. Texas School Barton Creek Square,

2901 S Capital of Texas Hwy. FREE. [www.tsd.state.tx.us](http://www.tsd.state.tx.us).

**CONTINUED:** Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo, see Sat 1; Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1.

**Thu 8**  
**Southern Lights: A Winter Solstice Celebration at Pease Park.** 2 - 10 p.m. Bring the whole family for winter fun in Pease Park. Pease Park, 1100 Kingsbury St. FREE. [www.peasepark.org](http://www.peasepark.org).

**Austin Trail of Lights** 6 - 10 p.m. Experience the magic. Enjoy more than 2 million lights, 70 displays and lighted tunnels, 90 lighted holiday trees, nightly entertainment, Austin's famous food trucks, and magical holiday activities! Zilker Park, Barton Springs Rd. \$20 and up. Closed Mondays. [www.austin-trail-of-lights-2022](http://www.austin-trail-of-lights-2022).

**CONTINUED:** Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo, see Sat 1; Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1.

**Fri 9**  
**Adaptive & Inclusive Winter Wonderland.** 6 - 8 p.m. Join Round Rock Parks & Recreation Rabb House, 151 North A.W. Grimes Blvd. \$5. [www.roundrocktexas.gov](http://www.roundrocktexas.gov).

**Christmas on Main Street: The Twelve Tales of Christmas.** 7:30 p.m. While preparing for her annual family party, Christmas-obsessed Merry wishes that her life were more like one of her favorite holiday stories. Inspired Minds Art Theatre, 121 Main St. \$5 - \$10. [www.inspiredminds.art](http://www.inspiredminds.art).

**CONTINUED:** Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo, see Sat 1; Bee Cave On Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1; Community First! Village of Lights and Holiday Market, see Fri 2; Christmas on Main Street: The Twelve Tales of Christmas, see Fri 9; Junie B in Jingle Bells Batman Smells, see Sat 3; Austin Trail of Lights, see Thu 8.

**Sat 10**  
**Pancakes & PJ's.** 8 - 11:30 a.m. Show off those Christmas jammies at this fun event at the Leander Activity Center. 11880 Hero Way West Ste. 600. [www.leandertx.gov](http://www.leandertx.gov).

**Winter Wonderland Candyland Extravaganza.** 1 p.m. Celebrate the holidays with the library. Little Walnut Creek Branch, 5500 Menchaca Rd. FREE. [www.library.austintexas.gov](http://www.library.austintexas.gov).

**Christmas Dreams and Snowy Things.** 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Real snow activities. Giant slide, games and more! [www.YMCAtx.org](http://www.YMCAtx.org)

**CONTINUED:** Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo, see Sat 1; Bee Cave On Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1; Ballet Austin's 60th Annual Production of The Nutcracker see Sat 3; Community First! Village of Lights and Holiday Market, see Fri 2; Christmas on Main Street: The Twelve Tales of Christmas, see Fri 9; Junie B in Jingle Bells Batman Smells, see Sat 3; Austin Trail of Lights, see Thu 8. Southern Lights: A Winter Solstice Celebration at Pease Park, see Thu 8.

**Sun 11**  
**CONTINUED:** Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo, see Sat 1; Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1;



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



**NOW OPEN!**

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

**Treasures Charity Resale Shop & Boutique**  
 Stores are open to the public, with clothing and furniture available to clients by voucher. All sales revenues support the food pantry and services.

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



Letters to Santa, see Sat 1; Ballet Austin's 60th Annual Production of The Nutcracker see Sat 3; Junie B in Jingle Bells Batman Smells, see Sat 3; Christmas on Main Street: The Twelve Tales of Christmas, see Sat 10; Austin Trail of Lights, see Thu 8. Mon 12

**CONTINUED:** Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1.

**Tue 13**

**CONTINUED:** Bee Cave On Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1; Austin Trail of Lights, see Thu 8.

**Wed 14**

**White Christmas.** 7:30 p.m. The Paramount Theatre, 713 Congress Ave. [www.tickets.austintheatre.org](http://www.tickets.austintheatre.org).

**CONTINUED:** Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo, see Sat 1; Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1; Austin Trail of Lights, see Thu 8.

**Thu 15**

**Elf Film in Concert with Orchestra.** 8 - 10 p.m. Buddy was accidentally transported to the North Pole as a toddler and raised to adulthood among Santa's elves. Long Center, 701 W Riverside Dr. \$19 and up. [www.my.austinsymphony.org](http://www.my.austinsymphony.org).

**CONTINUED:** Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo, see Sat 1; Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1; Austin Trail of Lights, see Thu 8.

**Fri 16**

**CONTINUED:** Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo, see Sat 1; Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1;

Letters to Santa, see Sat 1; Ballet Austin's 60th Annual Production of The Nutcracker see Sat 3; Christmas on Main Street: The Twelve Tales of Christmas, see Sat 10; Austin Trail of Lights, see Thu 8.

**Sat 17**

**CONTINUED:** Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo, see Sat 1; Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1; Ballet Austin's 60th Annual Production of The Nutcracker see Sat 3; Junie B in Jingle Bells Batman Smells, see Sat 3; Christmas on Main Street: The Twelve Tales of Christmas, see Sat 10; Austin Trail of Lights, see Thu 8.

**Sun 18**

**Hanukkah Begins Music of the Beatles for Kids Holiday Party.** 11 a.m. A concert of the Beatles music for kids and families with a new generation of music lovers. Not associated with Mohawk. Mohawk Austin, 912 Red River St. \$12 - \$15. [www.mohawkaustin.com](http://www.mohawkaustin.com).

**CONTINUED:** Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo, see Sat 1; Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1; Ballet Austin's 60th Annual Production of The Nutcracker see Sat 3; Junie B in Jingle Bells Batman Smells, see Sat 3; Christmas on Main Street: The Twelve Tales of Christmas, see Sat 10; Austin Trail of Lights, see Thu 8.

**Mon 19**

**CONTINUED:** Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1.

**Tue 20**

**CONTINUED:** Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1; Ballet Austin's 60th Annual Production of The Nutcracker see Sat 3; Austin Trail of Lights, see Thu 8.

**Wed 21**

**CONTINUED:** Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo, see Sat 1; Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1; Ballet Austin's 60th Annual Production of The Nutcracker see Sat 3; Austin Trail of Lights, see Thu 8. Thu 22

**CONTINUED:** Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo, see Sat 1; Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1; Ballet Austin's 60th Annual Production of The Nutcracker see Sat 3; Austin Trail of Lights, see Thu 8.

**Fri 23**

**CONTINUED:** Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo, see Sat 1; Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1; Ballet Austin's 60th Annual Production of The Nutcracker see Sat 3; Austin Trail of Lights, see Thu 8.

**Sat 24**

**CONTINUED:** Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1; Letters to Santa, see Sat 1.

**Sun 25 Christmas Day**

**CONTINUED:** Bee Cave on Ice, see Sat 1.

**Mon 26 - Fri 30**

**CONTINUED:** Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo, see Sat 1; Bee Cave On Ice, see Sat 1.

**Sat 31**

**New Year's Eve Austin New Year's Eve (ANY)** 3 p.m. Starts with live music, then fireworks. Auditorium Shores. FREE [www.newyearsevelive.net/cities/austin-tx.html](http://www.newyearsevelive.net/cities/austin-tx.html)

**CONTINUED:** Wild Lights at Cameron Park Zoo, see Sat 1; Bee Cave On Ice, see Sat 1;

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## Here are Two New Books by Local Authors

DOROTHY BENNETT

*Bennett is a writer and artist in Austin, TX where she runs a creative agency with her husband. Connect with her on Instagram @Dorothy.Megan*

Put down that children's book with the worn pages and tired rhymes that you've read to your child over and over again. Here are two new books by local authors to enjoy with your family this December.



**Just Try One Bite** By Adam Mansbach and Camila Alves McConaughey. Illustrated by Mike Boldt

For kids with a sense of satire and skepticism of spinach, Adam Mansbach and Camila Alves McConaughey have written an entertaining comedy about eating better. In "Just Try One Bite," three

kids are on a mission to convince their parents about the merits of broccoli, peas and apples. This role reversal is bound to make children laugh. The reluctant parents and responsible toddlers get up to very relatable antics during their conversation. With engaging illustrations by Mike Boldt - a charming bi-racial family and pages bursting with delicious-looking food - it's a guaranteed laugh. And is that dad meant to look like Matthew McConaughey?




**Building an Orchestra of Hope** By Carmen Oliver. Illustrated by Luisa Uribe

Finally, Carmen Oliver's "Building an Orchestra of Hope" is for kids who are gaining a deeper understanding of the world and how to make it a better place. Based on Oliver's correspondence with the main character, Favio Chávez, the

book reveals how Chávez created a children's orchestra in Cateura, Paraguay, and built instruments out of trash from the landfills that surrounded the village. Luisa Uribe's illustrations are full of rich detail and intricate pencil work - they are a pleasure to look at on their own. The story of the Recycled Orchestra of Cateura is an inspiring example of problem-solving and community-building that should absolutely be shared with our next generation.


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