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FILM REVIEW

By Jack Kyser

Cry Macho

Read online at:

www.austinfamily.com/films



This month's cover features Presley, a Cover Kid Contest winner and a competitive dancer with a passion for stage performance. She loves singing, art and fashion. Cover photo by Jordan Ashley Photography.



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EDITOR'S NOTE

ANNETTE LUCKSINGER

Lucksinger is a mom of two and author of the guidebook and app Exploring Austin With Kids.

This issue marks my one-year anniversary with Austin Family magazine. Yet, it feels more like celebrating a first birthday. As on that milestone, I look back at how much change can occur in a single year. I reflect on the varied skills that brought me here: teaching young writers as an adjunct college professor, building community through my kids' dual language elementary school, writing a family guidebook to Austin, being a mom.

Parenting requires wide-ranging skills and continued learning. Our children's

constant growth requires that we grow right along with them, and often in ways we did not expect. We become city explorers as we scout out the best parks, playgrounds and libraries for our families. We take on the role of room decorators and organizers. We act as promoters of health, arbiters of screen time and our children's best and constant advocate – until they learn to advocate for themselves.

Sometimes, our kids present us with an unforeseen challenge, such as the discovery of a learning disability, which acts as a growth spurt and accelerates our need to keep up. We seek help from experts and grow even more.

These are the sorts of things we tackle in this month's issue. As we head into fall, we recall, too, all the joy that comes with change.

Keep growing,

austinfamily®

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PUBLISHER

Kaye Kemper Lowak

EDITOR

Annette Lucksinger: editor2003@austinfamily.com

COPY EDITOR

Barb Matijevich

ADVISING EDITORS

Dr. Betty Kehl Richardson, Barb Matijevich

CALENDAR EDITOR

Betty Kemper: calendar2003@austinfamily.com

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Karen Arneson, Cate Berry, Alison Bogle, Beth Eakman, Dr. Benjamin Kramer, Jack Kyser, Dr. Betty Richardson, Brenda Schoolfield

MEDIA RELATIONS

Alison Bogle

GRAPHIC DESIGN

Layout and Ads: Susie Forbes

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Jordan Ashley Photography

ADVERTISING SALES

Kaye Kemper Lowak: kaye2003@austinfamily.com

BUSINESS MANAGER

Greg Lowak

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Austin 

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Play it product recalls SAFE

Government Recalls Teether Rings, Eating Utensils and Shaving Kit Toys



Hallmark has issued a recall for over 15,500 **teether rings**. The recall applies to eleven different styles of round teethers with attachments, including decorative fabric or plush rattles in the shape of animal heads. The wooden ring of these rattles can break into small

parts and pose a choking hazard. The teethers were sold at Hallmark Gold Crown stores, supermarkets, pharmacies and boutique gift shops from June 2015 through June 2021 for between \$10 and \$25. Consumers should check the SKU codes of affected units at hallmark.com and take affected teethers away from children immediately. For compensation, customers may contact Hallmark for a \$25 gift card.



About 17,750 Ryan and Rose children's **eating utensils** have been recalled because the handle of the Cutie Spooovel utensil can break off, releasing small parts that can pose a choking hazard for young children. The utensil sets were sold exclusively at ryanandrose.co from April 2021 through July 2021 for about \$14.

Consumers should take the recalled utensils away from children, dispose of them and contact Ryan and Rose to receive a full refund or a \$20 shop credit. Ryan and Rose is directly notifying all known purchasers of the product recall.



Janod is recalling about 13,600 children's **shaving kit toys** due to elevated levels of a regulated phthalate found in the shaving kit bag's brown trim. Banned phthalates are toxic if ingested by young children and can cause adverse health issues. The recall applies to six batches of shaving

kits. The batch numbers can be found at bit.ly/3kj9WVF. The toys were sold for about \$30 at Nordstrom, Crate and Barrel, and Barnes and Noble stores as well as online at amazon.com, maisonnette.com, nordstrom.com, crateandbarrel.com and bn.com. The kits were also sold at other specialty toy and gift stores nationwide and in select catalogs from July 2020 through July 2021. Consumers should immediately return recalled items to the place of purchase for a full refund.

The US Consumer Products Safety Commission works to protect the public from unreasonable risks of serious injury or death from more than 15,000 types of consumer products.

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AROUND

Austin

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College Tuition Program

Enrollment in the Texas Tuition Promise Fund, the state's prepaid college tuition program, began September 1 and runs through February 28, 2022. The Texas Tuition Promise Fund offers parents and loved ones the chance to prepay a child's future higher education at Texas public colleges and universities at today's prices.



The Texas Tuition Promise Fund allows parents the opportunity to pay current tuition rates for their child's future enrollment in a state college or university.

Participants in the plan purchase "tuition units" that can be used later toward undergraduate resident tuition and required fees at Texas public colleges and universities, with the exception of medical and dental institutions. Prices are currently based on costs for the 2021-22 academic year for state public colleges and universities.

There is a \$25 application fee, and Texas residency requirements apply. An online calculator provides pricing estimates on the type and number of tuition units currently needed for any two- or four-year Texas public college or university. The pay-as-you-go payment option lets participants gradually add more tuition units as the family budget allows.

For more information about the program, including how the plan's transfer value can be used at medical and dental institutions, private and out-of-state colleges and universities, career schools and registered apprenticeship programs, go to tuitionpromise.org.

by the numbers



23% of Austin area residents are kids

Source: census.gov



2,624 number of pounds of the world's heaviest pumpkin

Source: guinnessworldrecords.com



74% of parents admit that they snag some of their kid's Halloween candy

source: yougov.com

Art Scared Halloween Event

The San Marcos Art League, in partnership with the Downtown Association of San Marcos and the San Marcos Main Street Program, will hold its second annual Art Scared Halloween event on the San Marcos Square. The event will take place on October 23 when children will paint and decorate windows of participating downtown businesses for Halloween. Last year, over 50 children participated, and more are expected this year. Volunteers are welcome.

Come join in, or go window shopping afterwards to admire the art. Safety is paramount. So, masks and hand sanitizer will be provided, and social distancing practices will be observed. For more information, visit artleaguesmtx.org.



Young Artists Grant Program

The Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) and the Texas Cultural Trust are accepting applications for the 2022 class of Young Masters. The joint initiative provides exemplary Texas-based art students in grades 8-11 with the financial help they need to pursue advanced study in the areas of visual arts, literary arts, music, theater, dance, musical theater, folk arts and media arts.

The upcoming class of Young Masters will be selected for their artistic excellence, level of commitment and the quality of their proposed plan of study. Recipients of the award will be chosen by a panel of experts and will receive grants of \$5,000 per year to further their studies in their chosen arts disciplines. Since the program's inception in 2002, the Trust and TCA have awarded over one million dollars to aspiring artists.

Applications and required supporting materials must be submitted by November 15. You can find information and guidelines online at tinyurl.com/youngmaster.



Día de los Muertos

The local community is invited by the Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) to share in a celebration of family for Día de los Muertos. Participants can submit a photo, piece of artwork or a message to be included in a collective hanging art installation at the MACC to honor loved ones who have passed away. The deadline to contribute items is October 25. The exhibit will be on display from October 31 through November 7.

All are also invited to create an altar. These will be displayed outside in the MACC's breezeway as part of the Day of the Dead Festival. Creative altar interpretations are welcome. They may be set up on October 29 and 30 by appointment or on October 31 between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. The exhibit will run through November 7.

To learn of additional ways to participate or for details on these events, visit dayofthedeadatx.net.

The local community is invited to build family altars to celebrate Día de los Muertos with the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC). Photo courtesy of the MACC.



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Pollyanna Theatre Company brings theater to children both virtually and in person this season. Photo courtesy of Pollyanna Theatre Company.

Pollyanna Theatre Company's Fall Season

Popular children's theater company Pollyanna will continue to bring theater arts to children this fall by offering a variety of virtual and in-person performances for ages 3-12. "We want to make theater as safe and accessible as possible for our young audiences, whether that's a child on Zoom, a classroom of second graders or a room full of eager six-year-olds in an actual theater," says Judy Matetzschk-Campbell, Pollyanna's founder and artistic director. "Our upcoming season is designed for flexibility in a rapidly changing environment."

Through October 29, Pollyanna will offer two Zoom plays on demand for classrooms: "Edith Wilmans on Her Campaign Tour" for ages 9-12 and "The Missing Dinosaur Adventure" for ages 3-6. "Edith" is an interactive opportunity to learn more about the first woman elected to the Texas State Legislature and meets several Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) requirements. "The Missing Dinosaur Adventure" invites younger children on an interactive quest to rescue a baby dinosaur.

Beginning November 15 and continuing through December 21, Pollyanna will deploy actors to individual classrooms to present the funny "Miss Pempelhouse Is Missing," a Mad Libs style interactive play. Another Zoom option, "Mystery of the Toy Store," will also be available on demand for teachers from December 1 to January 4. The theater company plans to return to in-person performances for the spring.

The Pollyanna Theatre Company historically reaches more than 20,000 school children each year, commissioning playwrights nationwide to create original works for children.

Must-Do This October

1-3 & 8-10
Austin City Limits
Festival
Zilker Park

23
Diwali Festival of Lights
Centennial Plaza, Round Rock

30-31
Texas Teen Book
Festival
texasteenbookfestival.org



Austin Bat Cave Writing Workshops

Austin Bat Cave (ABC) has a full lineup of fall 2021 virtual writing workshops for grades 3-12. The nonprofit organization works with young authors to provide programs in creative writing, journalism, college essay writing, résumé writing, expressive journaling and more.

This month, ABC launches their first ever sports writing program. The workshop introduces writers in grades 7-12 to many different forms of sports writing, from journalism to creative pieces, to team chants and more. Over the final two weeks, participants will work on a piece about the Austin FC match on October 16. The workshop will call on the expertise of professional writers, creative experts, soccer fanatics and representatives from Austin FC. Students' writing will be published online and shared with the team.

Other October workshops include a "Scary Stories: Haunted Objects" workshop for students in grades 3-5 and "Ghost Stories" for grades 5-8. Austin Bat Cave also two hosts Dungeons and Dragons clubs where students can create a D&D character and backstory, then work together in small parties to solve problems, defeat monsters and save the day as they invent fantasy stories and journal about their adventures.

To learn more or register for classes, visit austinbatcave.org.



Local nonprofit Any Baby Can seeks volunteers to make puzzles, puppets and other items to benefit the families they serve.

Volunteer Opportunities

Any Baby Can (ABC) seeks volunteer help with seasonal at-home activities to support their clients. The nonprofit organization promotes family well-being, parent education and child

development programs and services. Their mission is to educate, motivate and empower parents so that families can overcome challenges and children can reach their full potential.

Volunteer opportunities are family friendly and can be completed at home. They include making gifts that will go directly to the families ABC serves, such as lovey blankets for first-time moms, puzzles and puppets for children in early intervention services and sensory bottles to children who need help achieving calm.

Groups and families are welcome to participate. To view a full list of available opportunities, visit the volunteer page at anybabycan.org.



Generally in U.S. school culture, we value “smart chatterboxes” – kids who share what they know, ask lots of questions, pose solution strategies and address adults respectfully but with confidence. We appreciate that fiery energy for learning and knowing. This model of learner is not

culturally universal. Other school cultures place a higher value on deference to adults or encourage group contributions over individual voices. Families who bring other cultural perspectives on learning can have a hard time adjusting to U.S. markers of successful school performance.

You’ll see “smart chatterbox” characters in all PBS Kids programs. The best of these show children how to navigate the tricky balances inherent in being a smart chatterbox: how to be respectful while speaking your mind, how to balance talk with listening to others and how to find your voice in a world of diverse viewpoints. Our newest program, *Alma’s Way*, celebrates Puerto Rican culture and addresses these topics head-on through the eyes of Alma, a 6-year-old making sense of her exciting urban world in the Bronx.

SMART CHATTERBOXES

During this pandemic, we can make two generalizations about youth social life: in-person social activity has gone way down, and screen time has gone way up. With in-person time reduced, kids have had fewer chances to engage in free play, structured schooling and other social experiences that inform and shape their public behaviors. At the same time, we can ask what social models they are picking up from increased screen time. The answer to that depends a lot on the kinds of media they are viewing.



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

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ROOM RE-DO

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Whether you're planning a nursery for a new baby, transitioning your toddler into a Big Kid Room, or redecorating a space for your tween or teen, the task can be daunting. You've studied HGTV, lost heaven-knows-how-many hours clicking through Houzz and made multiple Pinterest boards, but you still aren't sure if you should go with Modern, Transitional or maybe Scandinavian-meets-Japanese. And, for people who already have kids, we know that in real life our little angels will have those sleek, white, spotless rooms looking like crime scenes in about 10 minutes.

So, how can those of us with more inspiration than design skills create spaces that are stylish, functional and reasonably manageable? I asked three pros – a designer, an organizer and an educator – for some sanity-saving tips.

Tip #1: Make Design Choices With an Eye Toward the Future

We all want to make the spaces in our homes look great, so I started by asking Gabrielle Lowrie of the award-winning design studio Bandd Design here in Austin to share some tips for parents. Lowrie loves to use fun, playful paint colors and even wallpaper for kids' rooms, but she adds the caveat that parents might want to aim for "patterns and textures that will work with the space over time." She acknowledges that children's preferences have been known to change and adds that parents "can easily swap out duvet covers, accent pillows, inexpensive wall decor, frames and knick-knacks to fit their ages and interests."

Professional organizer Karie Winfree of OM Organizing recommends thinking ahead and not creating a space that is "too specific" to your child's immediate age or stage. "Ideally," she adds, "you want to create a space your child can grow into." She points to furniture choices, noting that "infants have different storage needs than grade schoolers and teens. So, it's good to pick furniture that can be repurposed without having to completely redecorate every four years."



Photo courtesy of Bandd Design.
Photo credit Molly Culver.



BY BETH EAKMAN

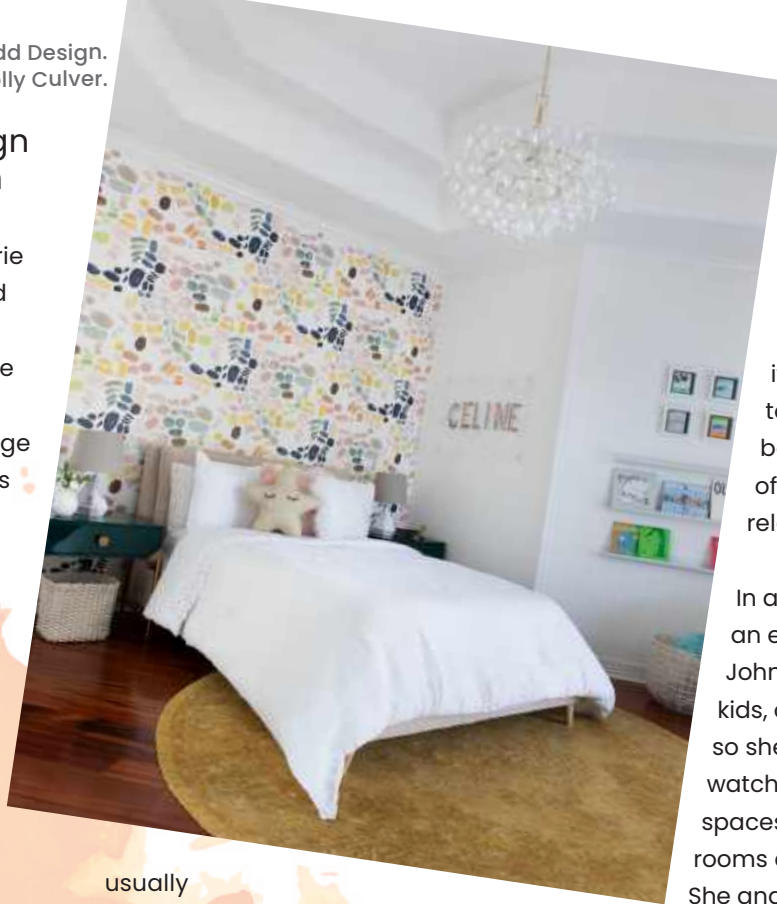
Photo courtesy of Badd Design.
Photo credit Molly Culver.

Tip #2: Make Design Choices With an Eye on Function

When it comes to furniture, Lowrie starts by considering space and storage. In addition to making sure that the pieces fit the space and leave plenty of room for playing, she recommends storage solutions like shelves, bookcases and baskets that keep things both tidy and accessible. Winfree echoes Lowrie's advice on considering storage at the planning stage.

Winfree likes furniture that can function in multiple ways, such as those that contain units for storage, under-bed storage drawers and headboards that double as bookshelves for older kids. These are especially useful in smaller or shared spaces. To keep the stuffies off the floor, she likes "pet nets," those hanging hammock-shaped nets for stuffed animals. She has even been known to stuff them into bean bag covers to save space.

When I asked Winfree what professional organizers think about when planning a space that the rest of us mortals don't, she said that they think about how the space will function and be sustainable. She



usually works directly with the kids at this point in the process and says that they're "often willing to purge more toys and unused items than their parents are!"

Tip #3: Make Design Choices With an Eye on Your Kid

Working with and observing kids in action is something that Dr. Liz Johnson, a certified K-12 teacher educator and education evaluator, prioritizes, too. Echoing Lowrie and Winfree, Johnson recommends

letting the kids be "part of the thinking and preparation process." For the space to feel like their own, she says, it "has to make sense to them too, to fit their bodies and their ways of working, playing, relaxing and socializing."

In addition to her years as an education specialist, Johnson is a mom of four kids, one with a disability, so she recommends watching kids as they use spaces, both their own rooms and shared areas.

She and her husband were planning a kitchen renovation when they observed their daughter, who is of short stature, working in the space. "It help[ed] me see a whole world that I couldn't," she says.

Despite their different areas of expertise, all three professionals mentioned letting the kids lead as much as is reasonable, helping them to feel ownership of the space and making sure the space is easy to maintain. When I asked Winfree how to prevent that freshly decorated and Pinterest-worthy space from looking like a yard sale in real life, she gave me an inspiring answer. You'll want to jot this down.

"Perfection," she said, "is NOT attainable. Those Pinterest 'perfect' spaces were expertly styled and photographed and it's doubtful any kids were allowed to go near them. Spaces are meant to be lived in and enjoyed."

Beth Eakman writes, edits and teaches writing in Austin. Her work has appeared in Brain, Child Magazine, New York Family, AustinMama.com and other cool publications. Read more at betheakmanre.com.



Photo courtesy of OM Organizing.
Photo credit Karie Winfree.

Education Guide



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LIFELINES

BRENDA SCHOOLFIELD

Schoolfield is a freelance medical writer based in Austin.

Combating Negative Effects of Screen Time

"I worry that my son spends too much time in front of screens, but there's not much I can do," laments one Austin dad. "He plays games with his friends on the computer, does homework online and watches YouTube on his tablet. When you consider time spent on social media as well as smartphone use, my son spends almost all of his free time in front of a screen." This parent's concerns are shared by parents throughout the United States. In a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, 71% of parents with children younger than 12 years old responded that they are concerned about too much screen time.

Even though it can feel overwhelming to try to manage a child's use of digital devices, there are steps you can take. Here are four ways to safeguard your child's health and well-being against the negative effects of screen time.

#1. Use Strategies To Prevent Digital Eye Strain

Long periods of uninterrupted screen

time can cause digital eye strain. Looking at a screen requires close-up focus. The eyes can get tired, just as they do from extended periods of reading a book. But what's different about looking at a screen is that we blink less. According to the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO), humans normally blink about 15 times per minute, but we only blink about five to seven times per minute when looking at computers and devices. Blinking helps maintain a stable film of tears on the surface of the eyes and moisturizes them. When you don't blink enough, your eyes dry out. As a result, they can become irritated and your vision blurry. To help avoid these problems, the AAO recommends following the 20-20-20 rule (see below) and making a conscious effort to blink.

Avoid Digital Eye Strain

To prevent digital eye strain, remind your child to:

- Take short breaks from the computer or device. Every 20

minutes, look at least 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds.

- Be aware of blinking and make a conscious effort to blink more often. Blinking helps moisturize the eyes.

#2. Encourage Active Versus Passive Screen-Related Activities

Not all use of computers or devices is bad. During the pandemic when social interaction is limited, online games and social media provide opportunities for much-needed social interaction with a child's peers. Encourage active versus passive computer and device activities. Activities that can provide social engagement and learning include:

- Playing online games, such as Fortnite or Minecraft, with friends
- Having a conversation by text message
- Researching a topic for a school project
- Participating in an online class.

Discourage passive activities that

provide little mental stimulation or social interaction, such as:

- Doomscrolling social media
- Watching YouTube videos of little value
- Binge watching TV shows or movies.

#3. Promote a Balance of Activities

Promote a balance of activities to add variety to your child's life experiences:

- *Physical activity.* Children should get at least one hour of physical activity every day. Adding in opportunities for participation in sports and outdoor exercise will naturally decrease the time your child spends in front of a screen. Make daily physical activity a priority for everyone in the family.
- *Family mealtime.* Try to eat at least one family meal together every day. Everyone, including parents, should keep devices and smartphones

tucked away somewhere else. Turn off or pause the TV. Be sure to engage all family members in conversation. Mealtimes can provide an opportunity for nurturing and building a positive relationship with your child.

- *Alternative activities.* Suggest alternative activities to replace screen time. Help your child break the habit of picking up a device at every opportunity. One idea for younger children is to play games while riding in the car. This will encourage your child to look out the window at the world instead of at a device. Try the game, "Spot it." Start by asking everyone in the car to choose a color. Designate a scorekeeper. Then each passenger looks for a vehicle of their chosen color and calls out when they spot one. The scorekeeper keeps a tally. The passenger who spots the most cars of their chosen color "wins." You

can vary the game by changing the target, depending upon the route. In residential areas, look for dogs, people with umbrellas, mailboxes or flags. On the interstate look for SUVs, vans, trucks, buses or 18-wheelers. Involve your child in choosing the target for the day.

#4. Protect Your Child's Sleep

Blue light from computers and devices can interfere with your child's sleep. This type of light signals the brain to produce less melatonin, a hormone that makes us sleepy. Not only does lack of melatonin interfere with falling asleep, but it may also contribute to interrupted sleep during the night. Protect your child's sleep by establishing a digital curfew. Turn screens off at least one to two hours before bed. This will allow the body to produce melatonin naturally.



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Playgrounds Aren't Simply Child's Play



THE Learning Curve

ALISON BOGLE

Alison 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.

As tired parents of poor sleepers and early risers, my husband and I loved a good playground. We could find a bench, settle our weary bones and watch our kids enjoy being out in the fresh air. We might even occasionally rally to push a swing, accept a make-believe mulch ice cream or cheer on a child who had climbed to the top of the play structure.

It was clear that our kids were delighted – the laughter, bursts of activity and big smiles made that readily apparent. What was less obvious, however, were the physical, social and emotional benefits they were gaining from their playground play.

Head to the Park

Besides having tired out, happy kids, there are additional advantages that come from time spent at the playground.

Physical Perks:

- **Fitness.** The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children ages 3-5 get at least three hours of physical activity per day while children ages 6 and older need 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity on most days of the week.
- **Health.** Regular physical activity decreases the risk of cardiovascular disease, obesity and other chronic diseases, such as juvenile diabetes. Playground play also offers bone-strengthening activities, which are so important as childhood is a critical time for bone development.
- **Sleep.** Being active during the day helps children and teens fall asleep easier and promotes deeper, more restful sleep.
- **Appetite and Digestion.** Movement and exercise stimulate the appetite and help to promote better digestion.
- **Gross Motor Development.** Gross motor skills involve the whole body and playgrounds offer many opportunities to run, jump, climb and stretch.

Social and Emotional Benefits:

- **Mood.** Research shows a strong correlation between physical activity and a reduction in stress and anxiety. Time spent outdoors is also known to reduce stress and anxiety, making playground play the perfect two-for-one.
- **Risk-Taking Behavior.** Children who participate in regular playground play learn to take healthy physical risks as they challenge themselves to jump and climb in a safe environment and naturally learn which physical risks are appropriate.

“Just like a varied diet is good for your health, if possible, aim to include several different playgrounds in your child’s playtime rotation.”

- **Academic Performance.** Being active can have a positive impact on cognitive skills and has been linked to improvements in grades and standardized testing scores.

- **Concentration and Attention.**

Physical activity has been shown to increase a child's ability to focus, both at school and outside of school.

- **Social Skills.** The playground is ripe for opportunities to practice cooperation and sharing as children take turns with the equipment. It also encourages communication practice when they set rules for games or play make-believe. Older children who use the playground for sports or other activities are also afforded opportunities to play and cooperate with children who might not be in their daily social circles.

Aim for Variety

Just like a varied diet is good for your health, if possible, aim to include several different playgrounds in your child's playtime rotation. Visiting multiple playgrounds will help prevent boredom and will encourage continued imaginative play. In addition, the different types of playgrounds offer unique experiences and opportunities for physical and emotional development.

- **Traditional.** These are the playgrounds that we grew up with and are the ones most often found at schools. Consisting of formal play structures, they often have swings, slides and climbing structures. Traditional playgrounds are great for gross motor development as well as physical fitness. The limited play pieces encourage taking turns, cooperation and communication.

- **Nature-Centered.** These playgrounds eschew traditional play equipment for more natural structures such as logs for scrambling over, creeks for wading in and trees for climbing. With its native shrub maze, giant grapevine "birds' nests" and tree stumps to climb on, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center's Luci and Ian Family Garden is an example of this type of playground. Nature-centered playgrounds are excellent not only for physical fitness but for fostering imaginative play. These types of playgrounds are also wonderful for reducing stress and anxiety.

- **Hybrid.** As our society has become more educated about the benefits of incorporating nature into daily life, more hybrid playgrounds are becoming

available. These playgrounds combine traditional playscape pieces with natural elements, providing the best of both worlds. The new downtown Austin Alliance Children's Garden, formerly called Butler Park, is a stunning example of this type of playground. The majority of the play amenities have been integrated into the landscape, and the playground designers were intentional about incorporating as many plants, trees and grassy areas

as possible. Interactive pieces allow for imaginative play. The play structures, as well as several natural elements, encourage healthy risk-taking too.

As you can see, playgrounds aren't simply child's play. They offer myriad benefits for your child. Now you can feel even better about finding that playground bench and sitting down to relax. You'll actually be helping your child to learn and grow!



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FAMILY MATTERS

BETTY RICHARDSON

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

Dealing With Dyslexia

Q Our daughter Olivia struggled with school last year in the first grade. This year was following the same pattern. Recently, her teacher suggested that we have her tested for a learning disability, and we found out that she has dyslexia. I feel terrible that I did not consider this sooner. There will be a meeting at her school soon where we will learn more about the resources they offer. What else can my husband and I do at home to help her succeed, regain confidence and enjoy school?

A Dyslexia is one of a number of learning disabilities. It is a neurological and hereditary condition that affects one in five people. Often there are other family members who have dyslexia, although they are not always diagnosed.

In fact, children with dyslexia form the largest group of students receiving special education in schools. The International Dyslexia Association (IDA) tells us that dyslexia can show itself in a child's struggles with "word recognition... poor spelling and decoding abilities" as well as problems with reading comprehension and some aspects of math. If children with dyslexia are not given help, they often fall behind in school. It's important to help your child get the resources she needs as early as possible,

which it sounds like you and your husband are doing.

You asked for additional tips on how to support your daughter. There's no one learning plan for helping a child with dyslexia. So, try some of these suggestions at home and keep those that work best.

Tips for working with a child with dyslexia:

Learn all that you can about the learning disability. Talk with other parents of children with dyslexia. Join a support group, or start one. Read information from state (ldatx.org) and national (nclid.org) learning disabilities associations. Turn to your state's special education resources (spedtex.org for Texas). Work with your child's teacher and the school learning disability specialist.

Read aloud the Hank Zipzer Collection by Lin Oliver and actor Henry Winkler, who struggled with dyslexia. The series features a main character with learning differences. Hank's character not only normalizes dyslexia, but his entertaining antics and problem-solving can also inspire an interest in reading.

Praise your child often to build her self-esteem. This will give her the confidence to try to succeed even when she is frustrated.

Don't compare the work of a child with dyslexia to that of a sibling or another

child. Kids with dyslexia struggle to succeed and are very sensitive to criticism.

Set routines and have checklists. Pack school bags the night before and have them ready to go with a homework folder in them. Don't get upset when your child forgets to turn in homework or doesn't remember the teacher's verbal instructions. Such actions can be a result of dyslexia.

Experiment with a variety of ways of learning. Check out "The Big Book of Dyslexia: Activities for Kids and Teens." It includes more than 100 fun and multi-sensory ideas to strengthen your child's skills.

Support your child by working in collaboration with the school to learn specific strategies that will set her up for success. For example, drawing a picture by a word helps some children to remember it. Discuss with your child what they have read to help them with recall. Or you might read for a short while and take regular breaks. You might ask the school to accept computer-generated homework rather than handwritten. Implement good strategies at home that can carry over to help your child at school.

Thank you for sharing this question as many readers may also have children who are struggling with dyslexia and don't realize it.



2021 YOUNG WRITERS CONTEST

This year's topic: You win a prize to travel anywhere in the universe.

Students in fourth and fifth grades are invited to write 75- to 300-word essays on the topic for a chance to **WIN** some great prizes! In addition, both Winner and Runner-up will have their essays published in the December 2021 issue of Austin Family Magazine!

1st Place, 4th and 5th Grader Receives:

- \$75 Gift card, plus plaque
- Winner's plaque presented at his/her school
- Essay published in December issue of Austin Family magazine

1st Runner-up, 4th and 5th Grader Receives:

- Plaque presented at his/her school
- Essay published in December issue of Austin Family magazine

It's **FREE** to enter! Go to www.austinfamily.com for complete rules.

Judges:



Carmen Oliver

Carmen is author of a picture book series and has a new book release in Fall 2022. She founded the Booking Biz, a boutique-style agency that brings award-winning children's authors and illustrators to schools, libraries and special events.



Bethany Hegedus

Bethany has an award-winning picture book and she is also the Founder and Creative Director of The Writing Barn in Austin and host of The Porchlight podcast, which include writing craft and creativity interviews as well as the popular Courage to Create series.

Contest Rules:

- Essays must be 75 to 300 words
- Contest date: August 14 to October 15, 2021
- Essays must be received by 5 p.m. on October 15
- Writers must be in the fourth or fifth grade
- FOR RULES, visit: www.austinfamily.com

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calendar

Please check austinfamily.com for daily updates to the calendar.

Any family-friendly events can be posted at austinfamily.com and will be made live once approved. Certain restrictions apply.

Fri 1
Fall Youth Fishing Tournament 2021. For ages 17 and under. Trophies and prizes will be awarded for our Biggest Caught, Smallest Caught and Most Caught categories. We will have a limited supply of poles, hooks and bait for those anglers who don't have one. 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Mills Pond Park, 15108 Wells Port Dr., wellsbranchmud.com/parks-a-recreation/events/2467.

Round Rock Chalk Walk. The Round Rock Chalk Walk Arts Festival is Round Rock area's largest and most prestigious festival, drawing over 60,000 people annually. The focal point of the festival is chalk mural artists creating street paintings. There will be hundreds of artists, vendors, local and regional musicians, theatrical performances, food, drinks and a children's area with performances too. 2 to 9 p.m. Round Dell Diamond, 3400 E. Palm Valley Blvd. FREE. roundrocktexas.gov.

POPtoberfest. Celebrate on the most beautiful town square in Texas. The festival, this year's rescheduled Red Poppy Festival, kicks off at 6 p.m. Friday and runs through 5 p.m. Sunday with three days of music, entertainment, family fun and more than 75 arts and craft vendors. Downtown Georgetown. FREE. bit.ly/2XuLGHg.

Sat 2
Birding With a Ranger. Come see the wonderful variety of resident and migratory birds McKinney Falls State Park has to offer. Learn helpful tips on how to identify birds by sight and sound. Bring binoculars (limited supply provided by the park), water and close-toed shoes. Parents must accompany all minors. Recommended for ages 10 and up. 9 a.m. to noon. McKinney Falls State Park Amphitheater, 5808 McKinney Falls Pkwy. \$6 adults; free for children 12 and under. naturerocksaustin.org/activity/birding-ranger-24.

Pumpkin Carving Festival. Join us for a fabulous celebration of everything pumpkin. There will be lawn games with prizes, Halloween music, pumpkins for painting and \$5 carving pumpkins. Be sure to register ahead (see link below). 4 to 7 p.m. Elgin Recreational Center, 361 N. Highway 95, Elgin. FREE. bit.ly/2W288qK.

CONTINUED: Round Rock Chalk Walk, see Fri 1; POPtoberfest, see Fri 1.

Sun 3
Drop In and Create! We're bringing out special hands-on art activities for all ages every Sunday at the Jones Center. The whole family can dig

into the art, ideas and materials you'll see in the current exhibitions. Depending on the weather, the event will take place inside the galleries or up on the rooftop. 12 to 2 p.m. The Jones Center, 700 Congress Ave. FREE with admission. thecontemporaryaustin.org.

Bow Wow Reading. With The Dog Alliance, Bow Wow Reading allows children to practice reading to a dog. Please sign up in advance. 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. Lake Travis Community Library, 1938 Lohmans Crossing. FREE. laketravislibrary.org.

Community Night Hours. Our expanded summer schedule includes the return of weekly Community Night hours, which provide visitors the opportunity to enter the museum free of charge. 3 to 5 p.m. Thinkery, 1830 Simond Ave. thinkeryaustin.org.

CONTINUED: POPtoberfest, see Fri 1.

Mon 4
Storytime Craft To Go. Crafts for young children up to age 5 will be available to pick up first come, first served each Monday morning in the Kids Room or at curbside pickup while supplies last. 10 to 11 a.m. Pflugerville Public Library, 1008 W. Pflugerville St., Pflugerville. library.pflugervilletx.gov.

Tue 5
Music Under the Oak Tree Series. The University Oaks Shopping Center is hosting a free Music Under the Oak Tree Series taking place by the trees near Chipotle. 6 to 8 p.m. The University Oaks Shopping Center, 201 University Oaks Blvd., Round Rock. FREE. bit.ly/2XBogzR.

Round Rock National Night Out. National Night Out is an annual community-building campaign that promotes police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie to make our neighborhoods safer, better places to live. 6 to 9 p.m. roundrocktexas.gov.

Wed 6
Sprouts Storytime. Little ones ages 5 and younger are invited to outdoor nature-themed storytimes at the Family Garden

Pavilion. A new seasonal, age-appropriate story is featured each week. Space is limited, so please arrive early and make a reservation (up to seven days in advance). 10 to 10:30 a.m. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, 4801 La Cross Ave. FREE with regular garden admission. wildflower.org/events.

Thu 7
Starry Night at Girlstart. In-person Starry Nights are returning for Fall 2021. Girlstart's STEM studio and mini-planetarium is a unique space for families to explore astronomy. 5 to 7 p.m. Girlstart, 1400 W. Anderson Ln. FREE. girlstart.org.

CONTINUED: Sprouts Storytime, see Wed 6.

Sat 9
Octoberfest. Brought to you by German Texans High School, this event will be kid-friendly until 7 p.m. at which time it will move to a new venue. 12 to 7 p.m. 507 E. 10th St. \$15 in advance. germantexans.org/events/oktoberfest.

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AUSTIN FAMILY 2021 30 YEAR ANNIVERSARY Readers' Poll Favorite

Sun 10

CONTINUED: Community Night Hours, see Sun 3; Drop In and Create!, see Sun 3.

Mon 11

Columbus Day; Indigenous People's Day

CONTINUED: Storytime Craft To Go, see Mon 4.

Tue 12

CONTINUED: Music Under the Oak Tree Series, see Tue 5.

Wed 13

CONTINUED: Sprouts Storytime, see Wed 6.

Thu 14

CONTINUED: Sprouts Storytime, see Wed 6.

Fri 15

Halloween Movie at the Lake. Tents and tables will be set up at City "Scare" Park to provide a fun and safe opportunity for trick-or-treating. We invite all "ghosts" and "goblins," young and old, to come out to our Treat Trail for treats and a costume contest. 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Lake Kyle, 700 Lehman Rd., Kyle. FREE. cityofkyle.com.

TGIF Movie With Popcorn. Family-friendly classic movie with popcorn. Bring a drink. 1 to 3:30 p.m. Elgin Public Library, 404 N. Main St., Elgin. FREE. elgintx.com.

Sat 16

Hutto Olde Tyme Days. Kid activities, food trucks, vendors and lots of fun. 10 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. East and Farley Streets downtown. FREE. cm.huttochamber.com/events.

Floating Pumpkin Patch. Participants can either jump into the pool to choose a pumpkin

or scoop it out with the provided nets. After that, enjoy making your pumpkin into a work of art with paints, sequins, glitter and other fun embellishments. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Robin Bledsoe Pool, 601 Bagdad Rd., Leander. \$8 for large pumpkin, \$5 for medium and free minis for little ones while they last. leandertx.gov.

Hairy Man Halloween Trail of Fun. Two event times are offered so younger children can walk before dark. Wear your favorite Halloween costume and walk along the decorated Community Trail. Enjoy fun activities for all ages, pre-packaged treats and giveaways. 5 to 7 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m. Brushy Creek Recreation Center, 16318 Great Oaks Dr., Round Rock. FREE. bcmud.org/hairyman.

Sun 17

Deutschen Pfest Pfun Run & Health Pfair. This year's pfun run will be held as part of our Hanz Health Day. We'll be running a new route this year, with even more mileage on Pflugerville trails. 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Pfennig Park, deutschenpfest.com.

CONTINUED: Community Night Hours, see Sun 3.

Mon 18

CONTINUED: Storytime Craft To Go, see Mon 4.

Tue 19

La Belle - The Ship That Changed History. Connect with the Bullock Museum over videoconference during this live presentation. 10 to 11 a.m. Bullock Texas State History Museum, 1800 Congress Ave. FREE. thestoryoftexas.com.

CONTINUED: Parent and Toddler Yoga, see Tue 5.

Wed 20

CONTINUED: Sprouts Storytime, see Wed 6.

Thu 21

CONTINUED: Sprouts Storytime, see Wed 6.

Fri 22

Hogeye Festival Street Dance. The Friday Night free street dance features live music, food, drinks and a carnival from 6 to 10 p.m. Depot Street and Veteran's Memorial Park, hogeyefestival.com.

Sat 23

BARKtacular HOWLoween Dog Festival. Get ready to PAWDY. Bring your pup(s) and the family. This event welcomes friendly, leashed dogs for trick-or-treating, costume contest, a lookalike contest, vendors and more. 8 to 10 a.m. Round Rock Dog Depot, 800 Deerfoot Dr. \$5 per dog. roundrocktexas.gov/event/barktacular-howlalloween-dog-festival-3.

Run for the Hills 5K/10K. Come for the run and stay for the festival. Please see the official race page for all details, including volunteer opportunities. 8 to 11 a.m. Hays Hills Baptist Church, 1401 N. Farm-to-Market 1626, Buda. \$15. runsignup.com/race/tx/buda/runforthehillsbuda.

Round Rock Diwali Festival. Celebration of lights. Bring your friends to enjoy beautiful street lights, savory food, music, cultural dance, beautiful rangoli (sand art) and a fashion show. 3 to 10 p.m. Centennial Plaza, 301 W. Bagdad Rd., Round Rock. FREE. rrdiwalifest.com.

Boo and Brew. Join in for the annual Halloween celebration at Wolf Ranch Town Center. Event activities include candy crawl trick-or-treating, spooooky entertainers, creepy crawly critters, kids crafts and more. It'll be skele-TONS of fun for all ages. 4 to 7 p.m. Wolf Ranch, near Ross Dress For Less, Georgetown. FREE. wolfranchtowncenter.com/events-news.



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Drive-Thru Trunk or Treat. Stay in your car, view the trunks and receive candy. You can make donations to Blue Santa. 4 to 8 p.m. 2801 N. Mays St., Round Rock. FREE. roundrocktexas.gov.

Halloween at the Y. There will be trick-or-treating, games, bounce houses, train rides, costume parade, boos and beats dance party, spinner rides, t-shirt tie dying, giveaways and more for the whole family. This event is outside. 5:30 p.m. 204 E. Little Elm, Cedar Park. FREE. ymcagwc.org.

Sun 24
Día de los Muertos Altar Box. Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) is a time to remember our loved ones who have died. Learn about the history of this holiday while creating a unique and colorful altar box to take home. This workshop is appropriate for 6-year-olds and up. Minors must

be accompanied by a ticketed adult. 2 to 4 p.m. Austin Creative Reuse, 2005 Wheelless Ln. \$10. austincreativereuse.org.

Austin Symphony Orchestra Presents: Halloween Children's Concert. This exciting concert features frightfully fun symphonic music that is stimulating for young eyes and ears (ages 2-10). The entire family is invited to dress up in their favorite costumes and enjoy "boo-tiful" music with the Austin Symphony Orchestra. 3 p.m. Long Center Dell Hall. \$10. my.austinsymphony.org/839/840.

CONTINUED: Community Night Hours, see Sun 3.

Mon 25
CONTINUED: Storytime Craft To Go, see Mon. 4.

Wed 27
CONTINUED: Sprouts Storytime, see Wed 6.

Thu 28
CONTINUED: Sprouts Storytime, see Wed 6.

Sat 30
10th Annual Lake Travis Public Safety Day. This day gives the public a chance to interact with first responders on a level that does not involve an emergency situation and to learn about what they do and the tools and resources they use to keep you, your family, your pets and your property safe. Hosted by Lake Travis Fire Rescue, Lakeway Police Department and Bee Cave Police Department along with the Lakeway Police Academy Alumni Association. 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Lake Travis Elementary, 15303 Kollmeyer Dr., Lakeway. lakeway-tx.gov/529/Public-Safety-Day.

BOO! Hole Halloween. There will be trick-or-treating, games, haunted hayrides, costume contest, creepy animal exhibits, s'mores, a showing of Hocus Pocus and more for the whole family. 4 to 10 p.m. Blue Hole Regional Park, 100 Blue Hole Ln., Wimberly. FREE. cityofwimberly.com.

Movie in the Park: Trick-and-Treats Spectacular. We encourage you to bring your lawn chairs, blankets and a picnic dinner. Dusk. Mason Homestead, 1101 S. Bagdad Rd., Leander. FREE. leandertx.gov/parksrec/page/movies-park.

Sun 31
Halloween

Smithville Halloween Spooktacular. There will be free ghost tours at 6 and 7:30 p.m., a haunted house and candy at all the participating merchant shops. 5 to 7:30 p.m. Downtown Main Street, Smithville. FREE. business.smithvilletx.org/events/calendar/2021-10-01.

Halloween Trunk-or-Treat 2021. If you are spooky, scary, creepy-crawly or glittery, then the Wells Branch Trunk-or-Treat is the place to be on Halloween. It's a fun-filled evening for tricking-or-treating in a safe and controlled environment. Car trunks and truck beds are quite the sight on this night, passing out tasty treats to all they greet. 6 to 8 p.m. Katherine Fleisher Park, 2106 Klattenhoff Dr., Round Rock. FREE. wellsbranchmud.com/parks-a-recreation/events.

CONTINUED: Community Night Hours, see Wed 3.

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A Tour of Local Libraries

BY KAREN ARNESON

No matter where you live in the Austin area, there are many amazing libraries to explore. Not only will you find countless books, media, music and resources but also a variety of in-person and online events to engage the entire family. Some general highlights found at most Austin Public Libraries (APL) include reading programs, book clubs, dual language story times and more. Plus, with each library card, APL allows you to check out up to 50 items!

Libraries To Check Out

Each of these libraries offers something unique and kid-friendly:

Central Library

710 W. César Chávez St.

www.library.austintexas.gov/central/about



You and the family can start your library adventures at Austin's downtown Central Library. Admire the world-class architecture and spectacular views of Lady Bird Lake. This six-story location covers over 200,000 square feet that includes floors of books as well as an art gallery, a rooftop butterfly garden, reading porches plus a gift shop and café. A space exclusively for teens

contains YA books, computers, comfy furniture and board games. The children's section has a giant chess board outside the entrance with an air hockey table and rows of kid-level bookshelves inside.

Ruiz Library

1600 Grove Blvd.

www.library.austintexas.gov/ruiz-branch



This branch is the largest APL location outside of the Austin Central Library. Local artwork can be found throughout the building, and the selection of bilingual children's books is expansive. The Ruiz library partners with the non-profit

organization Latinitas to empower girls through the use of media and technology skills and with Austin ISD to offer their Victory tutoring program.

Carver Library

1161 Angelina St.

www.library.austintexas.gov/carver-branch



The Carver branch was built after the local Black community advocated for it. In 1933, it became Austin's first branch library. It is known for the stunning outdoor mural "Voyage to Souville" created by local artist John Fisher. African-American artwork fills the interior walls as well. This branch contains close to 60,000 books and media for all ages. Students can use computers, get tutoring help on

homework and participate in social events in the "Wired for Kids" section of the library.

Windsor Park Library

5833 Westminster Dr.

www.library.austintexas.gov/windsor-park-branch



Visitors will be drawn to this library to visit the impressive Leroy the Lion statue at the front entrance. An event you can't miss is story time with Van, the APL puppet. You will find yourself learning and laughing! When checking out, ask for a packet of seeds to

plant when you get home where the growing can continue.

Georgetown Library

402 W. Eighth St., Georgetown

www.library.georgetown.org



Polish off your journey north of Austin at the charming Georgetown Library. As you select your books, admire the array of sculptures and stained glass throughout the space. On the second floor, there is an area with "books for sale," priced by donation. This library offers children and teen activities, plus art and music programs, as well as a book mobile that circulates to destinations around Georgetown.

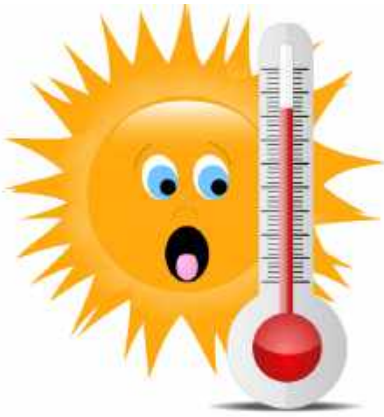
An Austin resident since 1991, Karen Arneson is mom to two boys. She enjoys coloring outside the lines, hiking and writing poetry.



JUST FOR GRINS

CATE BERRY

Berry is an Austin-based children's book author and mother of two. She also teaches writing workshops for young people at cateberry.com.



Planet Denial

Fun fact. When Texans move back home after living abroad (abroad meaning anywhere but Texas), we often forget our main reason for leaving: the heat. When I moved back, lo 20+ years ago, I, too, had forgotten. So in early September, my boss attempted to comfort me. "Don't worry, we always get relief the second weekend in October."

I paused. October? I had been living on the east coast. Sweaters were already in the Gap. My L.L. Bean catalog presented ski boots. So surely, waiting for "relief the second weekend of October" was laughable. I pressed him to retract.

"Nope," he remained firm. "Second weekend in October, we'll get a bit of cool." Cool meant cool front, surely. As in, from Canada or one of those geese-departing places. I pressured him again, but my confidence was melting. Texans start to remember at this point. The fifth level of hell: hot fall.

"Nope," his truth rang out. "October." Now I was desperate for Planet Denial. I heard myself beg, "Okay, but it'll be a cool front in the 50s, at least, right? Like, we could wear socks again, right?"

"Nope. Hope for the 80s." I gaped. "But don't worry," he smiled, as I suffered a mini-stroke inside. "You can *really* feel the difference between 100 and 90 in October." And with the joy of St. Nick, he trotted away in flip-flops and a muscle tee.

And so, every year as we slog closer to the second weekend of October (my favorite holiday), I try and hold out hope. Hope for a good school year. Hope for an easy ride through the holiday season. Hope for more Reese's than Skittles in my kids' (mandatory-sharing) Halloween loot.

And hope for an October "cool front" below 100.



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