

40 YEARS WASHINGTON Parent™

SEPTEMBER 2025

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**FAMILY-FRIENDLY
TIPS FOR A
WASHINGTON
COMMANDERS GAME**

**DMV'S MOST
OVER-THE-TOP
MILKSHAKES**

**PLANTING
SEEDS OF
GROWTH**

**HELICOPTER PARENTING
VS. HUMMINGBIRD
PARENTING**



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What's Inside This Issue:

5 THINGS

YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS

Whether you're planning a family outing, reflecting on your parenting style or looking for a sweet treat that's big enough to share, this month's issue is packed with stories to inspire your next adventure. From stadium playbooks to historical quirks, here are five can't-miss reads.



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WHY THERE'S NO J STREET IN WASHINGTON, DC

It's one of DC's quirks: there's no J Street between I and K. Discover the history behind the omission — and get tips for nearby family-friendly museums, parks and cafés to enjoy while you're in the neighborhood.



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FAMILY-FRIENDLY TIPS FOR A WASHINGTON COMMANDERS GAME

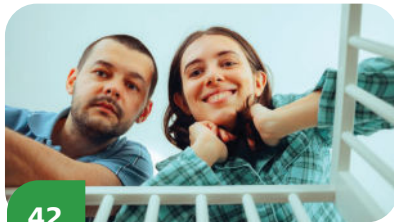
Touchdowns, cheers and... stress-free game days? Yes, it's possible. This guide covers everything you need to know about taking kids to a Commanders game — from the best seats and parking hacks to family amenities and kid-approved eats.



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PLANTING SEEDS OF GROWTH

Through the lens of both therapist and parent, an occupational therapy assistant shares a sensory-based metaphor that's changing the way caregivers and educators connect with neurodivergent children.



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HELICOPTER PARENTING VS. HUMMINGBIRD PARENTING

Parenting styles are shifting. Learn why more families are trading constant supervision for strategic support, and how striking the right balance can help raise confident, resilient kids.



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DMV'S MOST OVER-THE-TOP MILKSHAKES

Towering creations topped with cookies, cupcakes and even doughnuts — these six milkshake spots in DC, Maryland and Virginia serve desserts that are part treat, part work of art. Perfect for a family outing (and your Instagram feed).



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Joanie Leeds

Grammy® Award-winning singer Joanie Leeds shares a joyful family concert filled with stories and songs that resound with all ages. Joanie's songs traverse an eclectic spectrum of genres—folk, rock, pop, and hip hop—and cover topics both lighthearted and profound.

Oct. 4 | Family Theater

MOST ENJOYED BY AGES 5+



Super Cello!

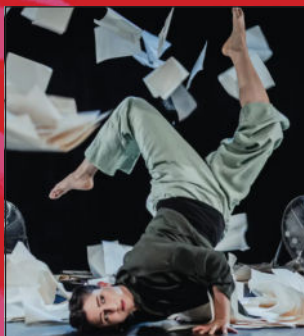
NSO Music for Young Audiences

Super Cello uses the power of music to save the day! Featuring National Symphony Orchestra cellist David Teie, this exciting tale includes puppets, props, and original music.

Collaboration with Teller Productions of Atlanta, GA

Oct. 18 & 19 | Family Theater

MOST ENJOYED BY AGES 5+



Little Murmur

This solo dance theater show for young audiences uses projections, an extraordinary soundscape, moving choreography, and sprinkles of humor to explore the trials of living with dyslexia.

Presented by Aakash Odedra Company, Lewis Major Projects, and Spark Arts for Children

Oct. 25 & 26 | Family Theater

MOST ENJOYED BY AGES 8+



Halloween Spooktacular

NSO Family Concert

Join the fun of this Halloween celebration concert featuring ghoulishly attired National Symphony Orchestra musicians performing spooky fun classics—new and old.

Oct. 26 | Concert Hall

MOST ENJOYED BY AGES 5+



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EXPLORE THE O MUSEUM IN DC

Learn about the O Museum in Washington, DC, featuring a maze of rooms and secret doors, housing a vast collection of art, books, memorabilia and trinkets.

By Seth Hagler

O Museum in The Mansion, often shortened to the O Museum, is a different kind of museum experience in Washington, DC. You could think of it like an escape room, minus the goal of solving puzzles to escape – rather, you simply focus on discovering all of the secrets and interesting finds the museum has to offer.

The O Museum is contained within a historic, four-story brownstone mansion, which today functions as a boutique hotel and an art gallery treasure hunt. Inside, guests are welcomed to a self-guided tour through more than 100 themed rooms and 80 secret doors. Visitors can spend hours searching through a maze-like interior for vast collections of art, books, antiques, trinkets and music memorabilia.

EXHIBITS

One standout feature of the museum is the [Rosa Parks Room](#), where the preserved decor offers an authentic glimpse into the space as it appeared during her time there. Another highlight is the [John Lennon](#) exhibit, which showcases a collection of art, personal letters, rare studio recordings and more — offering a deeper look into the music legend's life and legacy.

Alongside rooms for icons, there are rooms to enrich yourself in world history and culture. The [Silk Road exhibit](#) is filled with items from China, Japan and areas like Tibet and Mt. Everest. [Secret Gardens of Asia](#) houses plants, flowers and porcelain, plus a beautiful cherry blossom tree. [American Roots](#) settles you into a lovely log cabin, filled with original Remington bronze sculptures, a hand-carved wooden bear and textiles of the southwest. [Nomads](#) features indigenous and modern Mexican art and artifacts.

PLENTY TO PURCHASE

Many of these rare items are actually available to purchase and are marked as such. Given the variety of items available, prices can range widely — from a few dollars for souvenirs like decorative objects and gifts to tens of thousands for signed memorabilia and rare artifacts.

Enthusiasts have had the ability to buy guitars autographed by major icons like Willie Nelson. Of course, a number of artworks, like sculptures and architectural pieces, are maintained like a typical museum feature. Many items are donated and the museum even hosts auctions.



PHOTO © ROY BEAUMONT

COMING SOON

Like other museums, the O Museum is always evolving. One exhibit coming soon is The Art of Comics, Anime & Adventures in the Universe. It will feature works from famous artists, from Stan Lee to Akira Toriyama. Examine original sketches, panels and rare artworks, ranging from the early days of comics to modern anime.

For more info on the museum and its exhibits, click [here](#) to visit their website.

- **Cost:** \$20-40 ticket price range
- **Location:** 2020 O St. NW, Washington, DC
- **Phone:** (202) 496-2070

FREE FAMILY-FRIENDLY HISTORICAL WALKING TOURS IN DC

Explore Washington's rich past with these kid-friendly and educational tours, perfect for the whole family

By Jenna Dolch

Washington, DC, offers a wealth of history just waiting to be explored — and many of its best walking tours are free and family-friendly. Whether your kids love stories of presidents or tales of revolutionary times, these tours provide an engaging way to connect with the past. From the National Mall to historic neighborhoods, families can enjoy learning together while getting fresh air and exercise. This article highlights six top historical walking tours around DC that are perfect for children and parents alike. The selections come from reliable sources including the National Park Service, DC tourism websites and local historical societies, ensuring each tour is both educational and safe for young visitors. Lace up your walking shoes, bring snacks and water, and get ready to embark on a memorable family adventure.

1. NATIONAL MALL HISTORY WALK

The National Mall History Walk is a self-guided tour that covers iconic landmarks like the Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial and WWII Memorial. It's an ideal introduction to American history for families, with plenty of open space for kids to explore between stops. Informational plaques and mobile apps help bring stories to life, making it easier for children to follow along and engage with the sites. The flat, paved paths are stroller-friendly, and nearby restrooms and picnic areas make it convenient for families. This trail combines outdoor activity with national history, creating a perfect blend of fun and learning.

■ **Address:** National Mall, Washington, DC

2. CAPITOL HILL HISTORIC WALKING TOUR

Capitol Hill offers a charming neighborhood experience where families can stroll past historic row houses and landmarks like the Supreme Court and Library of Congress. This walking tour gives insight into the city's political history and architectural

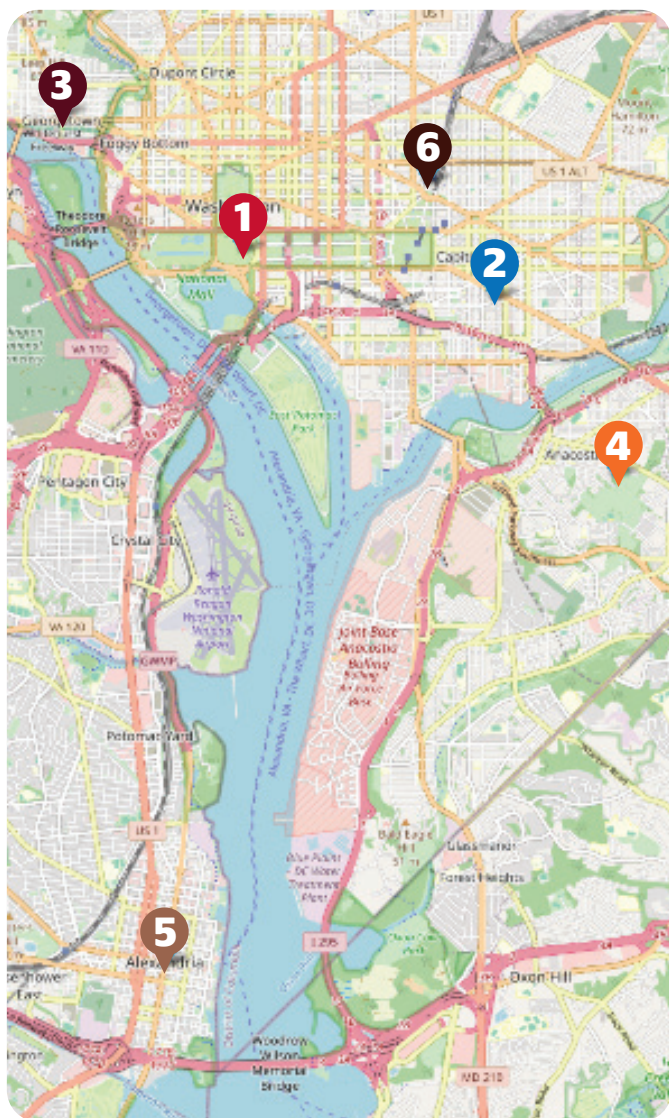
heritage. Kid-friendly guides and maps are available through the [DC Preservation League](#), making it easy for families to customize the pace. The tour is best suited for school-age children who enjoy stories about government and history. There are several parks along the route for breaks and playtime.

■ **Address:** Starting point at Eastern Market Metro Station, 225 7th Street SE, Washington, DC

3. GEORGETOWN HERITAGE TRAIL

Georgetown's cobblestone streets and waterfront views offer a picturesque setting for families interested in colonial and early American history. This trail features sites such as the Old Stone House and C&O Canal, with engaging storytelling about merchants, sailors and early Washingtonians. The walk is relatively short and flat, suitable for younger children and strollers. Interactive exhibits at visitor centers along the way help keep kids entertained. Georgetown also has plenty of family-friendly dining options to enjoy after the tour.

■ **Address:** Starting at the intersection of Wisconsin Avenue and M Street NW, Washington, DC



MAP © OPENSTREETMAP.

4. ANACOSTIA COMMUNITY MUSEUM WALKING TOUR

For families interested in African American history and culture, the Anacostia Community Museum offers a walking tour highlighting important local landmarks and stories of the neighborhood's rich heritage. The tour includes murals, historical markers and community sites that tell the story of Anacostia's role in DC's development. The museum provides family-friendly educational materials to make the experience engaging for children of all ages. This tour is especially meaningful for families seeking a deeper understanding of the city's diverse history.

■ **Address:** 1901 Fort Place SE, Washington, DC

■ **Hours:** 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. daily

■ **Phone:** (202) 633-4820

5. OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA HISTORIC DISTRICT WALK

Just a short Metro ride from DC, Old Town Alexandria offers a beautifully preserved historic district with cobblestone streets and colonial-era buildings. The walking tour takes families past historic homes, waterfront piers and museums that highlight the area's maritime and trading history. The pedestrian-friendly environment and frequent benches make it easy for families with young children. Local shops and cafes add to the charm, providing plenty of options for a family meal or snack break during the walk.

■ **Address:** King St., Alexandria, VA 22314

6. NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM FAMILY TOUR

The National Postal Museum offers free, guided family tours focused on the history of mail and communication in America. While the tour is indoors, it is a walking experience through interactive exhibits that engage children with hands-on activities and stories about stamps, mail carriers and the evolution of communication. It's an excellent complement to outdoor walking tours and a great rainy-day option. The museum is part of the Smithsonian Institution and is family-friendly and free to all visitors.

■ **Address:** 2 Massachusetts Ave. NE, Washington, DC

■ **Hours:** 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. daily

■ **Phone:** (202) 633-5555

Washington DC's historic walking tours offer families an enriching way to explore the city's past together. Whether wandering the National Mall or discovering the stories of local neighborhoods, these tours are designed to be educational and entertaining for children and adults alike. Best of all, they are free, making them accessible options for families seeking quality time and learning opportunities. With a mix of outdoor trails and museum experiences, DC's history is right at your fingertips for your next family adventure.

EXPLORE ALEXANDRIA: A FAMILY-FRIENDLY DESTINATION

Looking for a fun family trip near DC? Alexandria, Virginia, is the perfect place to visit.

By Alli Paveglio



Mount Vernon, Home of George Washington

BIGSTOCK/LARICH

Looking for a fun weekend with the whole crew? Alexandria, Virginia, has you covered! Located right along the Potomac, this charming riverside town blends rich history, bustling markets and plenty of green spaces into a kid-approved adventure. Explore historic sites, shop Old Town, experience a bustling waterfront with scenic views and more when you visit. This guide features nine family-friendly things to do in Alexandria.

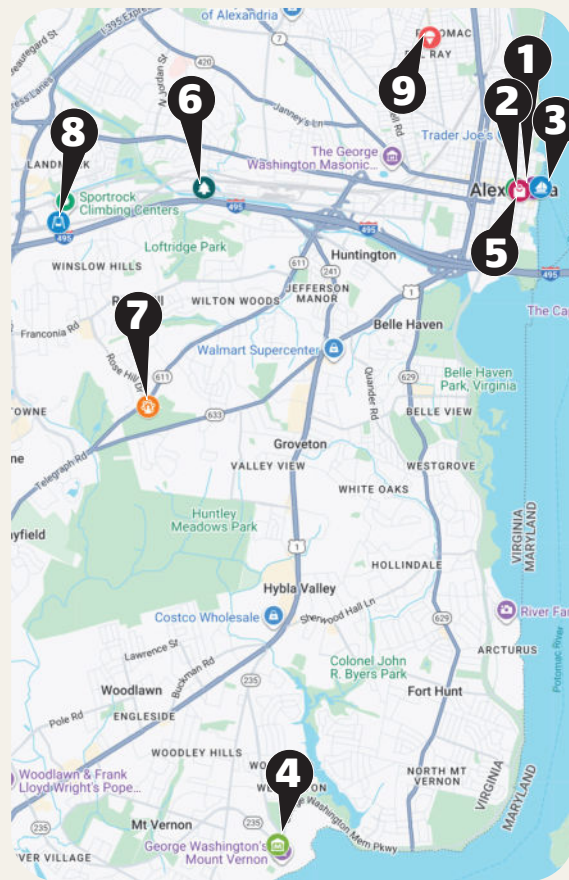
1. VISIT TORPEDO FACTORY ART CENTER

The Torpedo Factory Art Center is home to the nation's largest collection of working artists' open studios under one roof. Find artists actively creating work in a wide variety of media — including painting, ceramics, photography, jewelry, stained glass, fiber, printmaking and sculpture — in 71 studios. Observe the creative process and ask questions. Purchase original work for your own collection.

- **Phone:** (703) 746-4570
- **Location:** 105 N Union St., Alexandria
- **Hours:** 10 a.m.-6 p.m. daily. Artists maintain their own studio hours. It's best to confirm availability before your visit.

What you'll like:

- **The Art League, Studio 21** — Provides a gathering and exhibit space for the visual arts community of Alexandria and the greater Washington, DC, region. Each month brings new exhibits and new opportunities for artist members to submit their works to be juried and considered for exhibition.
- **Multiple Exposures, Studio 312** — Founded in 1985, Multiple



© GOOGLE MAPS



Exposures Gallery is the longest continuously operating fine art photography gallery in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. It promotes the growth and development of fine art photography and represents some of the most highly recognized photographers in the region.

Review highlight: “Free entrance! The Torpedo Factory Art Center is a must-visit for anyone exploring Old Town Alexandria! The space is unique and vibrant, with an amazing variety of art on display, from paintings and sculptures to jewelry and photography,” share Kamonrat DiFiore, Google Reviews.

2. VISIT THE OLDEST FARMERS MARKET IN THE COUNTRY

Held each Saturday morning year-round, the farmers’ market is an event that has been held at the Market Square plaza for over 260 years. During the peak season, there are more than 70 vendors offering fruits and vegetables, meat, poultry, cheeses, breads, pastries, fresh pasta, pickled vegetables, cut flowers, potted plants, soaps, fabric art and paintings.

- **Phone:** (703) 746.4311
- **Location:** 301 King St., Alexandria
- **Hours:** The Market is open every Saturday, rain or shine, 7 a.m. - noon

What you’ll like:

- **Parking** — Parking is always free on Saturdays during market hours in the Market Square Parking Garage (301 King St.), located directly under Market Square Plaza from 5:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. year-round. Access the free garage (108 N. Fairfax St.) between Cameron and King Streets. Additional garage and street parking is also available in the surrounding area.
- **Bike parking available** — Bring your lock and check out our area bike rack map.

Review Highlight: “Fantastic! Fruits, veggies, meats, fish, pastries and more. Lovely Saturday stroll in Old Town, great place to stop,” says K. Moore, Google Reviews.

3. CRUISE THE WATERFRONT AND GO SIGHTSEEING

Potomac Water Taxi offers routes connecting The Wharf to Georgetown, Old Town Alexandria and National Harbor. View the schedule to see departure times at your nearest location. Enjoy the ride along the Potomac River.

What you’ll like:

- **Audio Narration on select tours** — Listen and learn while you make your way across the Potomac.
- **Seeing multiple sights** — Travel along the Potomac River to see the plethora of famous monuments and landmarks, with stunning reflective views of the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Washington Monument, the Arlington Memorial Bridge and more. More info and reservations details can be found online.



PHOTO © STEPHEN B. GOODWIN

- **Phone:** (703) 684-0580
- **Location:** 0 Cameron St, Alexandria
- **Hours:** Departures begin at the Wharf at 11:45 a.m. and will depart every 30 minutes to one hour depending on the day of the week.

Review highlight: “The water taxi service was fantastic! The ride was smooth and efficient, offering beautiful views along the way. The staff was incredibly helpful, friendly, and professional, making sure everyone felt comfortable and informed,” Jen Rhodes, Google Reviews.

4. EXPLORE GEORGE WASHINGTON'S MOUNT VERNON

Step into History at George Washington’s Mount Vernon. Explore the estate on your own or as part of a tour group and experience what life was like for George Washington, his family and the people who lived and worked at Mount Vernon. The estate remains open during their preservation work and guests can visit the museum, historic grounds, George Washington’s Tomb, Slave Memorial, farm and four gardens. Some rooms may be off-view during your visit due to the preservation work.

- **Phone:** (703) 780-2000
- **Location:** 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Mount Vernon
- **Hours:** April through October: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; November through March: 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

What you’ll like:

- **Admission** — In 2025, guests who purchase full-price admission to Mount Vernon can return for free for the rest of the year. [Learn more about the 2025 admission pass.](#) Reservations made in advance are recommended and discounts may be available. Speciality tours are also available.
- **Free parking** — Mount Vernon can be reached by public

continued ...

transportation, car, taxi, rideshare, boat, tour bus or bike. [See the directions page for details](#). A [shuttle service](#) is also available from April 1-Oct. 31.

Review Highlight: “Nice little day trip if you’re in the area.

Beautiful views of the river. Nice museum and shops. Lovely displays outside. Great condition,” says Jessica Cummings, Google Reviews.

5. GO SHOPPING IN OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA

Old Town’s King Street mile is the largest collection of independent boutiques in the DC region. From local shops like [The Happy Place Gift Shop](#) to national favorites like H&M and Lululemon, there is something for everyone. All stores can be found on or nearby the King Street area and accessible by walking. Check online for specific store hours and locations.

■ **Phone:** (703) 838-5005

■ **Location:** 221 King St., Alexandria

■ **Hours:** **May- August:** 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday-Saturday;
September- April: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday-Saturday

What you’ll like:

- **Pippin Toy Co.** — Open since late 2023 from the team behind Penny Post and Red Barn Mercantile, it’s a magical oasis for children’s toys, books, games and more.
- **AR Workshop** — This is a unique DIY workshop where you can host a private event or take classes ranging from monogramming pillows to creating custom painted wood planks and much more. It’s great for all ages and even has special events for teenagers.
- **The Old Town Shop** — Specializing in unique Old Town gifts and novelties, including goods made by artists in Virginia, it’s a great spot to find a meaningful gift to remember your trip.

Review Highlight: “I love this store. It has so many nice gifts at reasonable prices. And they’re so helpful in picking things out. I was delighted to find just what I was looking for,” shares Mary Shipko about The Old Town Shop, Google reviews.

6. ADVENTURE OUTSIDE AT CAMERON RUN REGIONAL PARK

Make a day of it at Cameron Run Regional Park — 26 acres of outdoor adventure in Alexandria. Spend a summer afternoon splashing and sliding at Great Waves Waterpark, swinging in the



PHOTO © GRANDBROTHERS

slowpitch and fastpitch batting cages, or enjoying 18 holes of challenging miniature golf. Discover all the ways you can play at Cameron Run Regional Park: one park, so many possibilities.

■ **Phone:** (703) 960-0767

■ **Location:** 4001 Eisenhower Ave., Alexandria

■ **Hours:** Full 2025 Park Hours available online.

What you’ll like:

- **Batting cages** — Step up to the plate and get ready, because Great Waves is bringing the heat at their deluxe batting cages! Choose slow pitch softball or take a crack at baseballs instead featuring a variety of tough speeds. They’ll provide the bats and helmets, or you can bring your own.
- **Daytime ice skating** — Enjoy gliding on the ice at Cameron Run Regional Park. Tickets are only available for purchase online.
- **Mini golf** — This course offers many challenging holes and hazards.

Review highlight: “This park is amazing! Batting cages, water park and mini golf make for an inexpensive, fun-filled day with the family,” shares Erica Ortiz, Google Reviews.

7. GO PLAY AT CHESSIE’S TRAIL AND BIG BACKYARD

Chessie’s BIG Backyard Playground is located in the Lee Park District. This Chesapeake Bay themed inclusive playground features an accessible, ages 5-12 play structure with tons of opportunities for kids to climb, slide, run and have fun. The safety surfacing is poured-in-place rubber and the playground details are woodsy and charming. The next phase will be an area for the 2-5 age group. There is a fee for any group reservations of 10 or more participants (chaperones included.) More info is available online.

■ **Phone:** (703) 922-9841

■ **Location:** 6601 Telegraph Road, Alexandria

■ **Hours:** 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday-Friday; 9:30 a.m.-8 p.m. Saturday-Sunday

What you’ll like:

- **Carousel** — The carousel has a Chesapeake Bay theme with animals such as a turtle, frog, hummingbird and swan, in addition to traditional horses. The carousel allows children of all abilities to go round and round, side by side. Fee is \$4 per person, Monday-Friday; \$5 per person, Saturday, Sunday and holidays. After-hours and season rental fees apply.
- **Chessie’s trail** — This 2,160-foot trail is designed for children of all abilities with features that appeal to the senses. Visit the sound garden, play with spinning rocks, stroll the boardwalk or rest in the unique nest seating area. Along the way, encounter all kinds of wildlife figures representing animals indigenous to the Chesapeake Bay region.
- **Tree House** — Explore the treetop canopy like never before and observe nature from a totally different perspective as you make your way up the ramps winding around the tree trunks until you arrive at the tree house.

Review highlight: “Our experience was fantastic from start to finish. The facility was clean and well-maintained. I appreciated the convenient amenities, especially the ice cream and water stations. All our boys, from our 10-month-old to our 11-year-old, thoroughly enjoyed the activities including merry-go-round,” says CM Sosa, Google Reviews.

8. HAVE FUN AT SCRAMBLE INDOOR PLAY

Scramble is an amazing and large European-style play center. They offer both physical play and cognitive play with activities aimed at the whole child and their healthy development. A day at Scramble Indoor Play helps little minds and bodies thrive. Scramble has multiple locations in Virginia and their Alexandria location is a play center for children up to 12 years old. Areas are separated by ages: 0-12; 1-4; 5-8; and 8-12.

- **Phone:** (703) 665-1343
- **Location:** 5412 Eisenhower Ave., Alexandria
- **Hours:** 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 9:30 a.m.-8 p.m. Friday-Saturday; 9:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday

What you'll like:

- **Scramble cafe** — Their on-site cafe features great, locally sourced food at a family-friendly price. There's something for everyone in the family to enjoy including pizza, tacos, sandwiches and sweet treats.
- **Bookstore on-site** — Visit the bookstore and take some inspiration home. They carry the very best books with vibrant, award-winning titles from leading children's publishers like Usborne and Kane Miller. Unique puzzles, toys and games are also available.

Review highlight: "Scramble is our go-to spot for fun, food and family time! With kids ranging from 1 to 9 years old, it's the perfect place to tire them out while we enjoy some great food," says Diamond Hoey, Google Reviews.

9. GRAB A SWEET TREAT

Alexandria is a dessert lover's dream destination. Named the Ice Cream Cone Capital of the U.S. by Forbes there is no shortage of yummy treats to try. Find everything from made-to-order ice cream catalyzed by liquid nitrogen to crave-worthy vegan donuts.

- **The Dairy Godmother** — Retro-style parlor dishing up unusual flavors of homemade frozen custard and sorbet. The Dairy Godmother specializes in Wisconsin-style frozen custard.
 - **Phone:** (703) 683-7767
 - **Location:** 2310 Mt Vernon Ave., Alexandria
 - **Hours:** Noon-9 p.m. Sunday-Thursday; noon-10 p.m. Friday-Saturday
- **Lavender Moon Cupcakery** — This is Alexandria's first organic cupcake shop and it's locally owned by a career chef and certified sommelier, with fanciful flavors baked only in small batches. Their bakers prepare wonderfully unique cupcakes and flavors vary by day. With combinations like Mexican chocolate pudding, blood orange dreamsicle and vanilla bean with lemon curd, you've never had a cupcake like theirs!
 - **Phone:** (703) 683-0588
 - **Location:** 116 S Royal St., Alexandria
 - **Hours:** Closed Monday; noon-8 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday; noon-9 p.m. Friday-Saturday; noon-8 p.m. Sunday

A list of more spots for a sweet treat can be found [here](#).



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WHY THERE'S NO J STREET IN WASHINGTON, DC

The fascinating history behind DC's missing J Street,
plus family-friendly tips for exploring nearby sights.

By Alli Paveglio

Washington, DC, is famous for its meticulously planned street grid, so it surprises many first-time visitors (and locals alike) when they realize there's no J Street between I and K. The mystery of the missing letter sparks curiosity. Was it a historical error? A deliberate omission? The answer is a mix of practicality, typography and early American quirks, and it makes for a fun DC fact to share with your kids the next time you're exploring the capital.

SO, WHY IS J STREET MISSING?

The short answer is confusion. When Pierre Charles L'Enfant designed Washington, DC's street grid in 1791, he based it on a logical system using letters for east to west streets and numbers for north to south ones. However, in early print and handwriting, the letters I and J looked nearly identical, especially in the serif heavy fonts of the time. To avoid misreading J as I on maps or street signs, the city's founders decided to skip it entirely.

This wasn't unique to DC either. Many 18th and 19th century maps omitted J in both text and numbering systems for clarity. While modern fonts have cleared up the confusion, the historical layout stuck. So today, if you're walking along I Street and looking for J Street, you'll jump right to K.

WHAT'S AROUND THE MISSING J STREET AREA?

Even without a J Street, there's plenty to see and do with your family nearby. Most of the missing block would land you downtown between I and K Streets NW, close to some great family-friendly attractions and eateries:

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY

This Smithsonian museum is an engaging stop for kids and adults alike. From presidential portraits to pop culture icons, it offers an approachable and interactive way to explore American history through art.

- **Address:** 8th Street NW and G Street NW, Washington, DC
- **Hours:** 11:30 a.m.-7 p.m. daily
- **Admission:** Free



PHOTO © NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM

NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM

Right by Union Station, this hidden gem is perfect for younger kids. With hands-on exhibits like a mail truck to climb in and stamps from around the world, the Postal Museum makes learning about communication fun and interactive.

- **Address:** 2 Massachusetts Ave. NE, Washington, DC
- **Hours:** 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. daily
- **Admission:** Free

FRANKLIN PARK

Just a block from the missing J, this recently renovated urban green space features shady spots for picnics, a splash fountain for hot days and plenty of open space to let the kids run around. There's even a coffee kiosk for parents.

- **Address:** 1332 I St. NW, Washington, DC
- **Hours:** 6 a.m.-9 p.m. daily
- **Admission:** Free

TEAISM PENN QUARTER

A quiet café with family-friendly menu options, including bento boxes, rice bowls and bubble tea. It's a cozy place to refuel before or after museum hopping.

- **Address:** 400 8th St. NW, Washington, DC
- **Hours:** 11 a.m.-8 p.m. daily

TIPS FOR NAVIGATING DC WITH KIDS

Washington, DC, can be overwhelming to navigate at first, but with a few smart strategies, families can get around easily and make the most of their visit:

1. Take the Metro: DC's Metrorail is one of the cleanest and most straightforward public transit systems in the country. Avoid driving and parking by using the Metro to get close to major landmarks. The Metro Center, Gallery Place and Archives stations are all within walking distance of the area around I and K Streets.

2. Walk in Sections: Trying to cover too much of DC in one go can wear out little legs. Break your sightseeing into small zones. For example, one day around the National Mall and another in the Penn Quarter to avoid overdoing it.

3. Look for Interactive Museums: Places like the Postal Museum, the National Children's Museum and the National Museum of Natural History have interactive exhibits perfect for young visitors.

4. Plan Meal Breaks Ahead of Time: Downtown has plenty of family-friendly dining options, but they can fill up fast during lunch hours. Try dining a bit early around 11 a.m. or after 1:30 p.m., or make a reservation where possible.

While the mystery of the missing J Street might stump newcomers, it's just one of the quirky details that make DC's history fun for families to explore. Whether you're strolling past I Street or visiting the Postal Museum nearby, take a moment to appreciate the thought and occasional oddity that went into building the capital city. And the next time your child asks, "Where's J Street?" you'll have the perfect story to share.



PHOTO COURTESY HYATT REGENCY CHESAPEAKE RESORT

A FAMILY ESCAPE TO CAMBRIDGE, MARYLAND

Relaxation, recreation and riverside charm await at the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay.

By Allison Chan

If your family is craving a getaway that blends outdoor adventure with restful retreat, the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Resort in Cambridge, Maryland, delivers on all fronts. Located along the Choptank River, the resort is a haven for parents and kids alike — offering everything from waterfront activities and lawn games to spa treatments and golf. And when you're ready to explore beyond the property, the charming town of Cambridge is packed with family-friendly gems, from cozy cafés to interactive museums and riverside views.

START THE DAY AT THE RESORT

On-site amenities cater to both parents and children, with outdoor activities like tennis, basketball and lawn games. For families drawn to the water, the resort also offers water attractions like paddleboarding, kayaking and guided boat tours.

Younger children can participate in Camp Hyatt, which is a supervised kids camp filled with crafts and games, giving parents a chance to relax at the spa, or enjoy a round on the championship golf course. Additionally, the hotel rooms at Hyatt Regency are quite spacious, which is ideal for larger families.

BRUNCH IN DOWNTOWN CAMBRIDGE

To start a day outside of the resort, the Black Water Bakery + Eats in downtown Cambridge is a great location for brunch. Their menu features house made baked goods like cinnamon rolls and muffins, as well as hearty breakfast options like pancakes and omelets. The welcoming, community-centered atmosphere makes it an extremely kid-friendly spot.

For parents, the bakery serves both hot and iced coffee, made with the signature Chesapeake Bay Roasting Co. beans. Open daily from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., it's an affordable and delicious stop for the entire family.

MIDDAY SHOPPING AND EXPLORING

Just a short walk from the bakery is the Butterfly Boutique — an adorable gift shop that sells locally made treasures and souvenirs. This charming shop carries everything from children's clothing to unique keepsakes, making it easy for kids to bring home a special reminder of the trip. With its vibrant environment and cheerful products, there is sure to be something in the boutique for everyone.

After the boutique, drive to the Choptank River Lighthouse for an entertaining and educational experience. Inside the lighthouse is a mini-museum that provides information through historical exhibits and artifacts. On weekends, volunteers and lighthouse keepers are present to share stories. In addition to learning history, visitors can climb

the spiral staircase to reach the top of the lighthouse for a beautiful, panoramic view of the river and downtown skyline. However, this attraction is only open from May 1 through Oct. 31.

Choptank Bowling & Billiards is just a 7-minute drive from the lighthouse. Here, you will find welcoming staff, food and refreshments, as well as a spacious facility. Beyond the bowling lanes, parents and kids can also enjoy the dedicated arcade and billiards area, complete with pool tables and various games. It's an excellent option for a casual and inexpensive indoor activity.

A WEEKEND TO REMEMBER

To end off the day, the Cambridge Diner provides comforting, budget-friendly meals with attentive service. The menu features classic American comfort food with generous portions and has a kids menu that includes crowd-pleasers like chicken tenders, burgers and fries. Open until 9 p.m., it's a reliable choice for a satisfying dinner.

With its inviting mix of resort relaxation and small-town exploration, the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Resort offers families an ideal setting to recharge, reconnect and make lasting memories. Whether you're paddleboarding at sunrise, shopping for souvenirs downtown, or sharing milkshakes at a local diner, this Cambridge escape proves you don't need to travel far to enjoy something truly special together.

Allison Chan is a Washington Parent intern and a rising senior at Winston Churchill High School in Potomac, Maryland. She is passionate about writing and community engagement.

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BEST PLAYGROUNDS IN BETHESDA

From splash pads to bike paths, these five playgrounds promise fun outdoor play for families with young kids.

By Mia Holub

Whether your kids love climbing, splashing, swinging or just running free, Bethesda offers a wide variety of playgrounds to help them burn off energy and spark their imaginations. From shaded tot lots in quiet neighborhoods to destination parks with water features and nature trails, there's something here for every age and interest.

Playgrounds are more than just a fun way to pass the time. They're also a chance to connect with other local families, enjoy the fresh air and discover new corners of the community. And for parents, knowing where to go (and what to expect once you're there) can make all the difference between a short stop and a successful outing.

We've rounded up five of the best playgrounds in and around Bethesda, each offering a unique play experience. Whether you're planning a full morning adventure or a quick park stop between errands, these kid-approved spots deliver. Bonus: we've included parent-tested tips and tricks for every location to help your visit go as smoothly as possible.

Looking for more family-friendly outdoor fun? Don't miss our guide to the best splash pads in Montgomery County or this month's roundup of summer festivals and events in the DC area.

1. BATTERY LANE URBAN PARK

Tucked into downtown Bethesda, Battery Lane Urban Park has a recently renovated playground, a wide-open grassy area and paved walking paths perfect for strollers and scooters.

■ **Tip:** Street parking is limited — walk or bike in if you're nearby. Great for a quick post dinner energy burn-off.

2. CABIN JOHN REGIONAL PARK PLAYGROUND

Cabin John Regional park has a huge open space, perfect for free play, with miniature train rides, climbing structures and bike trails nearby. It's ideal for mixed-age families.

■ **Tip:** Pack some lunch to enjoy at the nearby picnic tables and wear sunscreen — trail areas have less shade.

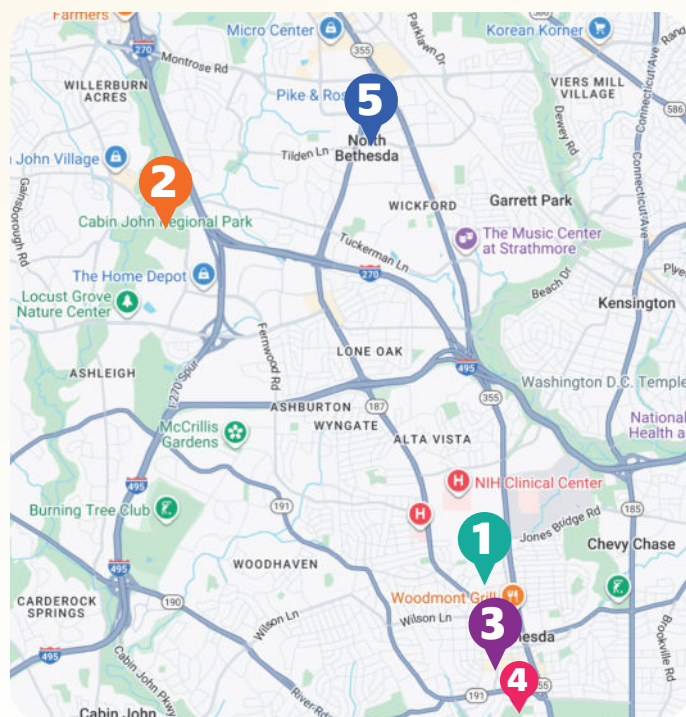


BIGSTOCK/PRESSMASTER

3. CAROLINE FREELAND URBAN PARK

This beautifully updated urban park is a hidden gem in Bethesda, featuring modern play structures and inclusive equipment. Surrounded by trees and tucked right in downtown Bethesda, it offers a peaceful yet playful escape just steps from shops and restaurants.

■ **Tip:** Street parking is limited, so walk if you're already in town. Bring a coffee and settle in on one of the shaded benches — it's a popular morning stop for local families.



© GOOGLE MAPS

4. NORWOOD LOCAL PARK

Norwood Local Park in Bethesda is surrounded by scenic parkland and plenty of favorite community amenities, making it a go-to spot for play and recreation. Visitors can enjoy two playgrounds, five tennis courts, lighted basketball courts, two softball fields, a soccer/football overlay field and an additional soccer field. The park also has two activity buildings — one available to rent for birthday parties, meetings, and special events, and another currently leased by Norwood Daycare.

- **Tip:** There is ample parking but it fills up quickly on weekends and nice days, so be sure to get there early!

5. WALL LOCAL PARK

Often less crowded than other area parks, Wall Local Park offers a spacious playground with classic features like slides, climbing equipment and plenty of open space for free play. The park also includes a basketball court and picnic tables, making it a versatile destination for active families.

- **Tip:** There's a free parking lot and clean restrooms inside the rec center. Great for a midweek visit or a relaxed weekend play session away from the downtown bustle.

Bethesda's playgrounds offer more than swings. They're community destinations where kids make friends, burn off energy and families connect with neighbors. Enjoy discovering your new favorite spot!

PLAYGROUND TIPS

- **Pack snacks and water.** Shade can vary and hydration is important.
- **Know the age range.** Some spots are geared toward toddlers, others suit older kids.
- **Scout peak times.** Mornings and late afternoons are usually calmer and cooler.
- **Check for closures.** Maintenance is scheduled regularly, and schools may close nearby parks occasionally.



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YOUR GUIDE TO KAYAKING THE DMV'S MOST SCENIC WATERS

From iconic monuments to hidden river escapes, these kayaking spots let you see the DC area like never before.

By Allison Chan

DC's prime location on the Potomac River allows for many great on-the-water adventures. From kayaking to paddleboarding, there are many great options to choose from. Escape the hustle bustle of the city and explore the DC, Virginia and Maryland areas from the water.

These locations around the DC area offer the best kayaking equipment, scenic views and unique experiences. Suitable for all ages and skill levels, kayaking is a great way to explore the DC area and all of its sights and sounds. Whether it's kayaking outside Nationals Park, seeing National monuments or paddling down the Shenandoah River, there is no shortage of kayaking fun to choose from.

KEY BRIDGE BOATHOUSE

Escape the hustle and bustle of the city! Enjoy the sights of the Potomac River as you paddleboard, kayak or boat past the Georgetown Waterfront, Roosevelt Island, the Lincoln Memorial and under the beautiful Key Bridge. You can also kayak and board your way up river to the C&O Canal for a relaxing day of tranquility.

- **Phone:** (202) 337-9642
- **Hours:** 8 a.m.-7 p.m. daily. Hours are subject to change during inclement weather or holiday. Advanced reservations are encouraged.
- **Location:** 3500 Water St. NW, Washington, DC

What you'll like

- Port-o-potties on site
- Changing tent
- Lockers available (locks for rent for \$2)
- Private kayaks can be launched from our dock for a small fee
- Dogs are welcome (dog life jackets available)
- Snacks and beverages for sale
- Picnic tables can be reserved for a fee
- Fishing is allowed from boats
- Private boat storage is available
- Classes, camps and tours available

Review Highlight: "Wonderful location to go kayaking! It's easy to reserve them online in advance. Beautiful views and next to the riverfront park and walking/biking trails," shares Kimberly Kane, Google Reviews.

SHENANDOAH RIVER ADVENTURES

The Shenandoah River is calling — answer with a custom adventure that's as relaxing or thrilling as you want it to be! Choose from a variety of vessels and customize your journey by route, duration or activity type. Shenandoah River Adventures offers canoes, kayaks, rafts or tubes tailored to specific routes so you can have the best river experience.

- **Phone:** (888) 309-7222
- **Hours:** 9 a.m.-5 p.m. daily
- **Location:** 415 Long Ave, Shenandoah, VA

What you'll like

- Scenic views
- Friendly staff
- Extra equipment for rent/sale
- Fishing services available
- Haul/shuttle service available
- Convenient location to nearby attractions, lodging and entertainment.

Review Highlight: "I've come here twice, it's magnificent! Love the peaceful river! The people who work there are truly helpful, they guide you, and are patient," says Esmeralda Valladares Pineda, Google Reviews.

CAPITAL SUP- QUIET WATERS PARK

Capital SUP is a clean water-driven company connecting people to the water. Their mission is to make the world a more active place by promoting the culture and sport of paddling. Offering kayaks, paddle boards, pedal boats and canoe rentals to help you have the best experience on the water.

- **Phone:** (410) 919-9402
- **Hours:** 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday-Friday; 8 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday-Sunday
- **Location:** 600 Quiet Waters Park Road, Annapolis, MD

What you'll like

- Kayak, paddle board and pedal boat canoes available for rent
- Tours and lessons available
- Pet-friendly
- Kid-friendly
- Summer Camp offerings
- Special programs and events available, more info can be found online

Review Highlight: "The staff was super friendly and very accommodating! Took my dog paddle boarding, and we had a blast! Beautiful area to explore," says Carrie Ewachiw, Google Reviews.

BALLPARK BOATHOUSE

Paddle the Anacostia River outside Nationals Park! Paddle your way around the Capitol Riverfront in Southeast DC right outside Nationals Park and enjoy all the Anacostia River has to offer. Its convenient location takes you right by sites like DC's historic Navy Yard, Nationals Stadium or a concert at Yards Park. A variety of hourly rentals, special requests and group events are available to fit all your kayaking needs.

- **Phone:** (202) 337-9642
- **Hours:** noon-6 p.m. Friday-Sunday
- **Location:** Diamond Teague Park, Potomac Avenue SE and First Street SE, Washington, DC

What you'll like

- Scenic views of historic sites
- Kid-friendly
- Convenient location to Yards Park
- Plenty of street parking available, especially on the weekends and a garage at Nationals Stadium.
- Season passes available. You'll get early access to upcoming special events and a friend can paddle free of charge with you in a multi-occupancy boat.
- Single and tandem kayaks available

Review Highlight: "We enjoyed the kayaking, staff was super nice and professional. Very organized. Thanks!" shares T Km, Google Reviews.

continued ...

FLETCHER'S COVE

Paddle, fish, explore and then relax on the shore! With access to the Potomac River as well as the historic Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, Fletcher's Boathouse has been a locally renowned paddling and unique fishing destination since the 1850s. Visit the Tackle Shack for expertly chosen fishing tackle suitable for local angling, not to mention snacks and refreshments.

- **Phone:** (301) 714-2233
- **Hours:** 6 a.m.-6 p.m. daily
- **Location:** 4940 Canal Road NW, Washington, DC

What you'll like

- Bathrooms on site (in upper parking lot maintained by National Park Service)
- Private kayaks can be launched from the dock for a small fee
- Dogs are welcome (dog life jackets available)
- Snacks and beverages for sale
- There are picnic tables and grills on-site (first-come, first-served)
- Fishing is allowed from boats and the shore
- Classes and tours available

Review Highlight: "Fletcher's Cove is one of my top three 'nature' spots in Washington, DC and my favorite place to drop a kayak for the evening," says Sara Cottle, Google Reviews.

THE WHARF BOATHOUSE

Located at The Wharf in DC's Southwest Waterfront, The Wharf Boathouse complements the exciting activities of the area with superb water adventures. Paddlers can experience the DC area through a variety of services like paddleboard rentals and a water jitney for quick transportation across the channel. Kayakers, paddleboarders and jitney riders can also enjoy the water views of the crystal high rises reflecting the sun over fleets of the beautiful boats docked at The Wharf Boathouse's extensive marina.

- **Phone:** (202) 337-9642
- **Hours:** 2 p.m.-7 p.m. Wednesday-Thursday; noon-7 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Saturday-Sunday. Hours subject to change during inclement weather or holiday. Advanced reservations are encouraged. Jitney Hours: 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Friday-Sunday.
- **Location:** 710 Wharf St. SW, Washington, DC

What you'll like

- Shuttle service that is free and open to the public
- Provides life jackets
- Offers tours and classes
- Convenient location to shopping and dining options

Review Highlight: "Great place — the kayak staff are friendly and encouraging. Mr. Wilson took good care of us, made sure we had comfortable life jackets that fit and helped get everything organized, made sure everyone had fun. We'll be back!" says Mike Thompsons, Google Reviews.

THOMPSON'S BOAT CENTER

Whether you're looking to explore national monuments, experience peaceful moments reflected in the calm waters or take a sculling class, Thompson Boat Center is the Washington, DC, destination you've been looking for. They offer a wide variety of boat rentals, inviting you to kayak, canoe, row or paddle board to your heart's content in the nation's capital.

- **Phone:** (202) 337-9642
- **Hours:** 6 a.m.-8 p.m. daily; Scull Rentals: 6-10 a.m.; Paddle Rentals: 10 a.m.-7 p.m.
- **Location:** 2900 Virginia Ave. NW, Washington, DC

What you'll like

- Bathrooms on-site
- Water bottle fill station
- Private kayaks can be launched from their dock for a small fee
- Lockers available with locks for rent at \$2
- Dogs are welcome (dog life jackets available)
- Snacks and beverages for sale
- Merchandise available for purchase
- Fishing is allowed from boats
- Private boat storage is available, join the waitlist
- Classes, tours and special events available

Review Highlight: "Such a fun experience! My husband and I went out for a date and boy it was a ton of fun. We would go again and again. Great location and easy process to get on the water," shares Sarah Monty, Google Reviews.

COLUMBIA ISLAND MARINA

Columbia Island Marina on the Potomac River is the perfect place for boating, fishing or cruising by the monuments, offering kayak rentals and scenic views of the beautiful Lyndon B. Johnson Memorial Grove on the Pentagon Lagoon. A variety of paddling adventures are available to suit your kayaking needs, including one to four hour rentals.

- **Phone:** (202) 347-0173
- **Hours:** Marina Office, Fuel Dock and Pump-Out Station: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. daily; Single kayak rentals are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. daily.
- **Location:** George Washington Memorial Parkway, Arlington, VA

What you'll like

- Recycling services for glass, cans, newspapers, etc.
- Full-service restaurant on-site
- Columbia Island Marina is a member of the BoatUS Foundation Life Jacket Loaner Program for Kids! With this program, you can borrow a child-sized life jacket for free.
- WiFi available
- Ship store, offering various souvenirs and boating essentials
- Drinks, ice and snacks available for purchase
- Boat services including maintenance and hauling provided by Washington Sailing Marina

Review Highlight: "This is a nice, peaceful marina. Great place to launch your kayak," says Sean Stidman, Google Reviews.

PENGUIN PADDLING

Open from the weekend closest to April 15 through the end of September, Penguin Paddling focuses on providing great service, smiles and fantastic memories. They want to share the joys of paddling with others and actively participate in community beautification and awareness. Guided kayak tours are available showcasing historical buildings, ruins and a variety of animals and waterfowl.

- **Phone:** (571) 409-1778
- **Hours:** 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday, all equipment must return to the dock by 7 p.m.; 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, all equipment must return to the dock by 8 p.m.
- **Location:** 201 Mill St., Occoquan Historic District, VA

What you'll like

- Kid-friendly
- Dog-friendly
- Tours offered in Occoquan, Neabsco Creek and Aquia Creek
- Convenient location near shopping and dining options

Review Highlight: "Had a great experience yesterday! Staff were very friendly and the check in/check out process was easy. The kayaking was a blast and the water was very calm," shares Tim Busekrus, Google Reviews.

TIDAL BASIN

Tidal Basin is a seasonal destination featuring pedal, swan boat rentals and kayaking on the reservoir amid famous memorials. A variety of kayak rentals are available including single kayaks and sit-on-top Tribe Kayaks. It's a great option to explore the sights and sounds of the DC area and is suitable for all skill levels.

- **Phone:** (202) 479-2426
- **Hours:** 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday; 9 a.m. – 6 p.m Saturday-Sunday
- **Location:** 1501 Maine Ave. SW, Washington, DC

What you'll like

- Kid-friendly
- Scenic views of DC memorials
- Parking lot available at West Basin Drive, Ohio Drive SW and at the Tidal Basin parking lot along Maine Avenue SW
- Bike parking available
- Shuttle available that is free and open to the public

Review Highlight: "Great way to get some views of the Jefferson monument and the MLK memorial, while also getting to be out on the water," shares Gili Reeves, Google Reviews.



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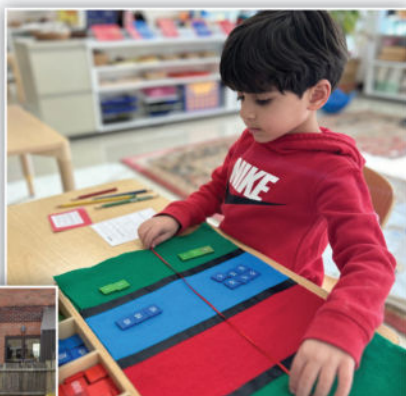
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ARLINGTON, VA, RANKED AMONG AMERICA'S HAPPIEST CITIES

A new national report highlights Arlington's impressive quality of life, from life expectancy to financial strength — making it a top spot for families to thrive.

By Mia Holub

When it comes to finding a place where families can thrive, Arlington, Virginia, checks a lot of boxes — and a new national study backs it up.

Financial technology company [SmartAsset](#) recently released its [2025 ranking of the happiest cities in America](#), and Arlington landed the second spot, just behind Plano, Texas. The study looked at 90 of the country's largest cities and analyzed 11 different metrics across personal finance, physical and mental well-being, and quality of life to determine which cities had the most satisfied residents.

And while happiness can't always be measured, SmartAsset's data offers compelling insight into what makes a city feel fulfilling, balanced and supportive of family life.

What the study looked at

- SmartAsset used recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau and County Health Rankings to evaluate cities across three core themes:
- Personal finance: Percent of households earning over \$100,000, poverty rates, and housing affordability (the share of households spending over 50% of income on housing).
- Well-being: Life expectancy, mental health data, physical activity and health insurance coverage.
- Quality of life: Marriage rates, traffic levels, access to physical activity spaces and household overcrowding.
- Taken together, these indicators help paint a picture of what communities offer, not just for economic success, but for daily happiness.

The top 10 happiest cities in America (2025)

According to SmartAsset's latest findings, here are the cities that lead the nation in happiness:

1. Plano, TX – High marriage rate, low poverty and strong mental health metrics
2. Arlington, VA – Nation's highest life expectancy and strong across all well-being categories

3. Raleigh, NC – Excellent access to exercise and mental health
4. Seattle, WA – Top scores in physical activity and insurance coverage
5. San Jose, CA – High income levels and great mental health stats
6. Boise, ID – Affordable housing and strong well-being scores
7. Fremont, CA – Highest percentage of six-figure earners
8. Lincoln, NE – High mental health and low overcrowding
9. Durham, NC – Great access to healthcare and fitness
10. Anchorage, AK – Low poverty and strong marriage rates

Why Arlington ranks so high

Arlington scored exceptionally well across multiple categories:

- Life expectancy: Residents here live longer than in any other city on the list — an impressive 83.9 years on average.
- Health and fitness: With 100% of the population having access to locations for physical activity and 96.4% covered by health insurance, the city supports healthy lifestyles.
- Financial strength: Over 65% of households earn six figures, while the poverty rate remains low at just 6.9%.
- Mental well-being: Residents reported an average of 84.9% mentally healthy days.
- Strong infrastructure: Overcrowding rates are just 3.4%, and even with heavy traffic, access to resources and community amenities is widespread.

While Arlington didn't snag the top spot overall, its mix of prosperity, public health support and infrastructure make it one of the most balanced places to live, especially for families.

What it means for local families

For parents living in or considering a move to Arlington, this study confirms what many already know: the city offers an exceptional environment for raising kids and building a fulfilling life. Between the career opportunities, excellent public services and opportunities for healthy living, Arlington stands out as one of the most well-rounded places to put down roots.



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Congratulations

to all the 2025 Washington Parent Picks winners and finalists!

We asked. You answered. With more than 22,300 nominations submitted in May and over 31,000 votes cast in July, families across the DMV showed up to support the businesses, services and professionals they trust most. From summer camps and pediatricians to tutoring centers, toy stores, preschools and more, this year's finalists and winners represent the places making family life easier, more enriching and more enjoyable. Whether it's a go-to rainy day spot or the doctor who always puts your child at ease, each honoree reflects what matters most to local parents.

Congratulations to all the 2025 Washington Parent Picks winners and finalists!

CAMPS & SUMMER PROGRAMS

ARTS CAMPS

Tiny Dancers **Winner**
Acting for Young People Finalist
StringTime Finalist

CAMPS FOR NEURODIVERGENT KIDS

Brainy Ridge Inc **Winner**
TLC-The Treatment and Learning Centers Finalist
The Siena School Finalist

DAY CAMPS D.C

StringTime **Winner**
The Theatre Lab Finalist
Camp Aventura Finalist

DAY CAMPS MD

Calleva **Winner**
TLC The Treatment and Learning Centers Finalist
Summer Adventure Camp at Hard Bargain Farm Finalist

DAY CAMPS VA

Ideaventions Academy for Math and Science **Winner**
Tiny Dancers Finalist
StringTime Finalist

SLEEPAWAY CAMPS

Brainy Ridge Inc. **Winner**
Camp Accomplish Finalist
Camp Horizons Finalist

SPORTS & RECREATION CAMPS

Onekick Martial Arts **Winner**
Himchari Martial Arts Finalist
Cardinal Fencing Academy Finalist

STEM CAMPS

Ideaventions Academy for Math and Science **Winner**
Avatar Learning Center Finalist
Alice Ferguson Foundation Finalist

THERAPEUTIC RECREATION CAMPS

Brainy Ridge Inc. **Winner**
Camp Accomplish Finalist
TLC The Treatment and Learning Centers Finalist

CHILD CARE

AU PAIR, BABYSITTING & NANNY SERVICES

Nannies In The City **Winner**
District Sitter Finalist
White House Nannies Finalist

CHILD CARE CENTERS

CHILDREN'S INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL **Winner**
Bright Horizons at 2 Bethesda Metro Finalist
Triangle Tots Finalist

CHILDREN WITH LEARNING & OTHER DIFFERENCES

ADHD & EXECUTIVE FUNCTION COACHING & CONSULTING

Washington Psychological Wellness **Winner**
TLC The Treatment and Learning Centers Finalist
Milestones4Kids Finalist

ADVOCACY & LAW

Washington Psychological Wellness **Winner**
Belkowitz Law, PLLC Finalist
Frances Shefter Finalist

AUTISM SPECTRUM RESOURCES

Washington Psychological Wellness **Winner**
TLC The Treatment and Learning Centers Finalist
Milestones4Kids Finalist

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Milestones4Kids **Winner**
TLC The Treatment and Learning Centers Finalist
Good Beginnings Pediatric Physical & Occupational Therapy Finalist

OUTREACH & TRAINING

Washington Psychological Wellness **Winner**
TLC The Treatment and Learning Centers Finalist
Milestones4Kids Finalist

SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

Milestones4Kids **Winner**
The Center for Communication and Learning Finalist
TLC The Treatment and Learning Centers Finalist

continued ...

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CHILDREN WITH LEARNING & OTHER DIFFERENCES (CONTINUED)

THERAPEUTIC RECREATION

Washington Psychological Wellness **Winner**
TLC The Treatment and Learning Centers Finalist
Milestones4Kids Finalist

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

BASEBALL/SOFTBALL/T-BALL

Northern Virginia Girls Softball Association **Winner**
Bethesda Big Train Finalist
The St. James Diamond Sports Finalist

BASKETBALL

Ness Skills and Drills **Winner**
Washington Mystics Summer Basketball Camp Finalist
DMV Rebels Basketball Club Finalist
Sky Zone Woodbridge Finalist

CHEER & GYMNASTICS

Fitwize 4 Kids **Winner**
Dominique Dawes Gymnastics Finalist
The St. James Cheer & Gymnastics Finalist

CLIMBING

The Adventure Park at Sandy Spring **Winner**
DC Bouldering Project Finalist
Movement Rockville Finalist

COOKING CLASSES FOR KIDS & FAMILIES

Tiny Chefs **Winner**
Cookology Culinary School Finalist
Romp n' Roll Finalist

DANCE

Virginia National Ballet **Winner**
Tiny Dancers Finalist
Dance Academy of Virginia Finalist

FENCING

Cardinal Fencing **Winner**
DC Fencers Club Finalist
Rockville Fencing Academy Finalist

FOOTBALL

Flag Star Football **Winner**
Arlington County Parks & Rec Finalist
Ashburn Youth Football League Finalist

HOCKEY & SKATING

Cabin John Ice Rink--Montgomery Parks **Winner**
Skatequest Finalist
Fairfax Ice Rink Finalist
The St. James Hockey Finalist

MARTIAL ARTS

ONEKICK MARTIAL ARTS **Winner**
Himchari Martial Arts Finalist
Mills Martial Arts Finalist

MUSIC

Mason Community Arts Academy **Winner**
 Musicfully Finalist
 Cohen Violin Studio Finalist

PERFORMING ARTS CLASSES

Tiny Dancers **Winner**
 Acting for Young People (AFYP) Finalist
 Encore Stage & Studio Finalist

SOCCER

MSI Montgomery Soccer Inc. **Winner**
 Brit-Am Soccer Academy Finalist
 Bethesda Soccer Club Finalist

STORY TIMES

Montgomery County Public Library **Winner**
 Fairfax County Public Library Finalist
 National Postal Museum Finalist

SWIMMING

Big Blue Swim School **Winner**
 Goldfish Swim School Finalist
 The St. James Swimming Finalist

VISUAL ARTS CLASSES

Mason Community Arts Academy **Winner**
 The Art League Finalist
 VisArts Finalist

FAMILY FUN**AMUSEMENT & WATER PARKS**

The Adventure Park at Sandy Spring **Winner**
 Tree Trekkers Finalist
 Massanutten Resort Finalist

ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

Ever After Alpaca Farm **Winner**
 National Zoo Finalist
 Clark Elioak Farm Finalist

BOWLING

Bowlero **Winner**
 Pinstripes Finalist
 The Branch Finalist

CAMPING & GLAMPING

Burke Lake Park **Winner**
 Jellystone Park Williamsport MD Finalist
 River Riders Harpers Ferry Campground Finalist

DAY TRIPS

Shenandoah **Winner**
 B & O Rail Museum Finalist
 Sky Zone Woodbridge Finalist

FAIRS & FESTIVALS

National Cherry Blossom Festival **Winner**
 VisArts' Rockville Arts Festival Finalist
 The Maryland Renaissance Festival Finalist

continued ...



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FAMILY FUN (CONTINUED)

FRIENDLY FARMS

Butlers Orchard	Winner
Green Meadows Farm	Finalist
Clarks Elioak Farm	Finalist

GYMS, SPORTS & RECREATION VENUES

Fitwize 4 Kids	Winner
St. James	Finalist
Sky Zone Woodbridge	Finalist

INDOOR PLAYGROUNDS

Wonder Childhood Discovery	Winner
DC Boulderling Project	Finalist
Scramble Indoor Play	Finalist

LOCAL PRO SPORTS TEAMS

Washington Nationals	Winner
D.C. United	Finalist
Washington Capitals	Finalist

MINI-GOLF

Monster Golf	Winner
Burke Lake Park	Finalist
Miniature Golf at Bohrer Park, Summit Hall Farm	Finalist

MUSEUMS & HISTORIC SITES

National Building Museum	Winner
National Gallery of Art	Finalist
Museum of Contemporary Art Arlington	Finalist

PARKS

Meadowlark Botanical Gardens	Winner
Wheaton Regional Park	Finalist
Rose Park, Washington D.C.	Finalist

PICKLEBALL & PADEL

Arlington Parks & Rec	Winner
Kraken Kourts & Skates	Finalist
Padel Up, Sterling	Finalist

RESORTS

Massanutten Resort	Winner
Gaylord National Resort	Finalist
Great Wolf Lodge	Finalist

SKATING RINKS

Fairfax Ice Rink	Winner
Rockville Town Square Outdoor Ice Skating	Finalist
SkateQuest	Finalist

THEATERS & PERFORMANCE VENUES

Imagination Stage	Winner
Encore Stage & Studio	Finalist
Synetic Theater	Finalist

VACATION DESTINATIONS

Williamsburg	Winner
Shenandoah National Park	Finalist
Massanutten Resort	Finalist

FOODIES

CATERING

Purple Onion Catering Co.	Winner
Moby Dick House of Kabob	Finalist
Smokey Glen Farm	Finalist

COFFEE SHOP

Tatte Bakery & Cafe	Winner
La Poteria Local	Finalist
Quartermaine Coffee Roasters	Finalist

CUPCAKES, CANDY & SWEETS

Little Austria	Winner
Sunflower Bakery	Finalist
Baked & Wired	Finalist

FAMILY-FRIENDLY RESTAURANTS

Silver Diner	Winner
Moby Dick House of Kabob	Finalist
Summer House Restaurant	Finalist

ICE CREAM

Sarah's Handmade Ice Cream	Winner
Ben & Jerry's	Finalist
Frostie Moose Ice Cream Store Woodbridge	Finalist

OUTDOOR DINING

Lone Oak Farm Brewing Company	Winner
Lebanese Traverna	Finalist
Backyard Grill	Finalist

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Silver Spring
Grades 5 - 12

Silver Spring Satellite
Grades 3 - 4
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PIZZA

Pines of Rome	Winner
Tony's New York Pizza	Finalist
Pupatella	Finalist
Solo NY Pizza, Leesburg	Finalist

KIDS' STUFF**BOOKSTORES**

The Novel Refuge	Winner
Old Town Books	Finalist
Friends of the Library	
Montgomery County Bookstores	Finalist

CHILDREN'S CLOTHES & SECOND HAND

Mon Chouchou Baby & Child	Winner
Rhea Lana's of Falls Church	Finalist
Kid to Kid	Finalist

HAIR SALONS FOR KIDS

Cartoon Cuts	Winner
Sharkey's Cuts for Kids	Finalist
Westover Barber Shop	Finalist

TOY STORES

Potomac River Kids	Winner
Doodlehopper 4 Kids	Finalist
Mio Reggio.....	Finalist

LET'S PARTY**ENTERTAINMENT**

Fancy Faces By Ashley	Winner
Princess Parties of DC	Finalist
SciGenie	Finalist

PARTY PLANNERS

Princess Parties of DC	Winner
Jamie Kramer Events	Finalist
We're Having a Party	Finalist

PARTY VENUES

Tiny Dancers	Winner
Wonder Childhood Discovery	Finalist
Fitwize 4 Kids	Finalist

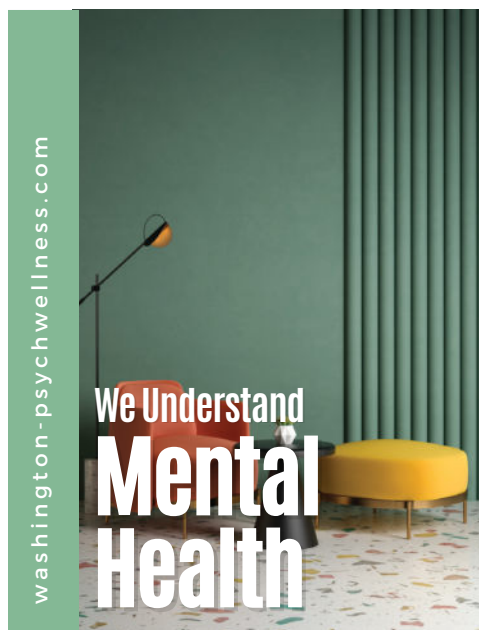
SUPPLIES & DECORATING

Nova Parties	Winner
CYMNOW Flowers	Finalist
Lucy Blossoms Events	Finalist
Sweet Memories by Design	Finalist

LOVE OUR PETS**PET ADOPTION & RESOURCES**

Lucky Dog Animal Rescue	Winner
Homeward Trails	Finalist
Maryland SPCA	Finalist

continued ...

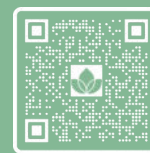
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LOVE OUR PETS (CONTINUED)

PET GROOMERS

Bark In Style Dog & Cat GroomingWinner
 Pet Star Salon, Fairfax Finalist
 For Pets' Sake Finalist

PET HEALTH

Bradley Hills Animal HospitalWinner
 Friendship Hospital for Animals Finalist
 Two Sisters Veterinary Care Finalist

PET SUPPLIES

Weber's Pet SupermarketWinner
 The Big Bad Woof Finalist
 PetMAC Finalist

PARENT EDUCATION & SUPPORT

COACHING & RESOURCES

Washington Psychological WellnessWinner
 Playful Therapy Connections Finalist
 Parent Encouragement Program (PEP) Finalist

PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS

Washington Psychological WellnessWinner
 Playful Therapy Connections Finalist
 Arbit Counseling LLC Finalist

PARENT TIME

DATE NIGHT

Night Climbing at The Adventure Park at Sandy SpringWinner
 Georgetown Piano Bar Finalist
 Jazz in the Garden at National Gallery of Art Finalist

GETAWAY WITHOUT THE KIDS

St. MichaelsWinner
 Boar's Head Resort Finalist
 Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Resort & Spa Finalist

GIRLS OR GUYS NIGHT OUT

Wonder Childhood Discovery Mom's Night OutWinner
 Keep It Lit' Over 18 Night Climb & Zip
 at The Adventure Park at Sandy Spring Finalist
 Georgetown Piano Bar Finalist

SPAS

Salamander Winner
 The Omni Homestead Resort & Spa Finalist
 King Spa Finalist
 Woodhouse Spa Finalist

WORKOUTS FOR PARENTS

FIT4MOM Fairfax Tysons ViennaWinner
 Prepare For Performance Finalist
 The Barre ALX Finalist

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PHOTOGRAPHY & PORTRAITS

FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHY & PORTRAITS

Alexia Ballantine PhotographyWinner
 Danielle Sara photographyFinalist
 Mel Worthington PhotographyFinalist

NEWBORN PHOTOGRAPHY & PORTRAITS

Alexia Ballantine PhotographyWinner
 Danielle Sara photographyFinalist
 Mel Worthington PhotographyFinalist

PET PHOTOGRAPHY & PORTRAITS

Pooch Portrait StudioWinner
 Cindy Kane PhotographyFinalist
 Julie McGuire Pet PhotographyFinalist

PREGNANCY & BABY

BABY GEAR, GIFTS & NURSERY

SnugglyWinner
 Mon Chouchou Baby & ChildFinalist
 Diamant BoutiquesFinalist

INFANT & PREGNANCY MASSAGE

Birth You DesireWinner
 Vyana Infant MassageFinalist
 MOCO Movement CenterFinalist

MIDWIVES, OB/GYNS & DOULAS

Birth You DesireWinner
 Metropolitan Doulas LCCFinalist
 Newborn Care by Let Mommy SleepFinalist

NEW MOMS' MENTAL HEALTH

Dr. Emma Basch & AssociatesWinner
 Washington Psychological WellnessFinalist
 Arbit CounselingFinalist

PRENATAL/POSTPARTUM CLASSES

Birth You DesireWinner
 Be Hive WellnessFinalist
 Metropolitan DoulasFinalist

SLEEP CONSULTANTS

Birth You DesireWinner
 Susan's Sleep SolutionsFinalist
 Pediatric Sleep Specialist Joya RuckerFinalist

SCHOOLS & EDUCATION

COLLEGE CONSULTING

No Anxiety PrepWinner
 The College Funding CoachFinalist
 Moxie College CounselingFinalist

COLLEGE ESSAY COACHING

No Anxiety PrepWinner
 TLC The Treatment and Learning CentersFinalist
 Partners in LearningFinalist

EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT & TESTING

Washington Insight SolutionsWinner

TLC-The Treatment and Learning CentersFinalist
 Heller Psychology GroupFinalist

FOREIGN LANGUAGE & IMMERSION PROGRAMS

Merritt AcademyWinner
 Rochambeau The French International SchoolFinalist
 French Maternal School (FMS)Finalist

HOMESCHOOL PROGRAMS

Avatar Learning ProgramWinner
 Embark Center for Self-Directed EducationFinalist

MONTESSORI SCHOOLS D.C.

TOTH MontessoriWinner
 Little Flower MontessoriFinalist
 Waterfront AcademyFinalist

MONTESSORI SCHOOLS MD.

Parkside Community MontessoriWinner
 Barrie SchoolFinalist
 Oneness-Family SchoolFinalist

MONTESSORI SCHOOLS VA.

Sunset Hills Montessori SchoolWinner
 Parkside Community MontessoriFinalist
 Brookfield SchoolFinalist

PRESCHOOLS D.C.

Lowell SchoolWinner
 National Child Research Center (NCRC)Finalist
 St. Columba's Nursery SchoolFinalist

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SCHOOLS & EDUCATION (CONTINUED)

PRESCHOOLS MD.

Christ Episcopal School **Winner**
Katherine Thomas School Finalist

PRESCHOOLS VA.

Parkside Community Montessori **Winner**
Bright Horizons Finalist
The Griffin Academy of Westminster School Finalist

PRIVATE SCHOOLS D.C.

Sidwell Friends School **Winner**
Lowell School Finalist
Georgetown Day School Finalist

PRIVATE SCHOOLS MD.

Christ Episcopal School **Winner**
The Katherine Thomas School Finalist
The Siena School Finalist

PRIVATE SCHOOLS VA.

Ideaventions Academy for Math and Science **Winner**
Edlin School Finalist
Westminster School Finalist

SCHOOLS FOR NEURODIVERGECHILDREN

The Siena School **Winner**
The Katherine Thomas School Finalist
Diener School Finalist

STEM PROGRAMS

Ideaventions Academy for Math and Science **Winner**
Christ Episcopal School Finalist
Avatar Learning Center Finalist

TEST PREP & TUTORING

Avatar Learning Center **Winner**
Georgetown Learning Centers Finalist
TLC The Treatment and Learning Center Finalist

STAYING HEALTHY

ADOLESCENT MEDICINE D.C.

Washington Psychological Wellness **Winner**
Arbit Counseling Finalist
Azalea Mental Health Finalist

ADOLESCENT MEDICINE MD.

Washington Psychological Wellness **Winner**
Arbit Counseling Finalist
Azalea Mental Health Finalist

ADOLESCENT MEDICINE VA.

Arbit Counseling **Winner**
Capital Area Pediatrics Finalist
Dr. Jennifer Gorrelick Finalist

DENTISTS & ORTHODONTISTS MD.

Chevy Chase Pediatric Dentistry **Winner**
Michaels Orthodontics Finalist
Shady Grove Pediatric Dentistry Finalist

DENTISTS & ORTHODONTISTS VA.

VK Pediatric Dentistry	Winner
SmileCity Pediatric Dentistry	Finalist
Potomac River Orthodontics	Finalist

DENTISTS & ORTHODONTISTS D.C.

Spring Valley Dental	Winner
Hart Orthodontics, Woodbridge	Finalist
Smile Valley Pediatric Dentistry	Finalist

EYE DOCTORS D.C.

Eye Doctors of Washington	Winner
Eye Associates of Washington D.C.	Finalist
Washington Eye Specialists	Finalist

EYE DOCTORS MD.

My Vision First	Winner
Visionary Eye Doctors	Finalist
Washington Eye Consultants	Finalist

EYE DOCTORS VA.

Warby Parker	Winner
Eye Specialists and Surgeons of Northern Virginia	Finalist
Centreville Eye Care/Dr. Kathleen Moore	Finalist
Eye Physicians & Surgeons, Inc.	Finalist

HOSPITAL & URGENT CARE FACILITIES D.C.

Children's National Hospital	Winner
Sibley Memorial Hospital	Finalist
Medstar Georgetown.....	Finalist

HOSPITAL & URGENT CARE FACILITIES MD.

Total Access Pediatric Urgent Care	Winner
Children's National Hospital	Finalist
Adventist HealthCare Shady Grove Medical Center	Finalist

HOSPITAL & URGENT CARE FACILITIES VA.

Inova Fairfax Medical Campus	Winner
INOVA Loudoun	Finalist
Inova Mount Vernon Hospital	Finalist

MEDICAL SPECIALISTS D.C.

Washington Psychological Wellness	Winner
Arbit Counseling	Finalist
The McCuiston Group Pediatrics & Lactation	Finalist

MEDICAL SPECIALISTS MD.

Washington Psychological Wellness	Winner
Arbit Counseling	Finalist
Kennedy Krieger	Finalist

MEDICAL SPECIALISTS VA.

Arbit Counseling	Winner
Virginia Heart	Finalist
Karim Counseling Services PLLC	Finalist
.....	

MENTAL HEALTH D.C.

Dr. Emma Basch & Associates	Winner
Playful Therapy Connections	Finalist
Arbit Counseling.....	Finalist

continued ...

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STAYING HEALTHY (CONTINUED)

MENTAL HEALTH MD.

Washington Psychological WellnessWinner
Heller Psychology GroupFinalist
Playful Therapy ConnectionsFinalist

MENTAL HEALTH VA.

The Heart Leaf CenterWinner
Arbit CounselingFinalist
Azalea Mental HealthFinalist

PEDIATRICIANS D.C.

Healthy Home PediatricsWinner
Children's National HospitalFinalist

PEDIATRICIANS MD.

Nana Adu-Amankwa, MDWinner
Potomac PediatricsFinalist
Hirsch PediatricsFinalist

PEDIATRICIANS VA.

Capital Area PediatricsWinner
Healthy Home PediatricsFinalist
Northern Virginia Pediatric AssociatesFinalist

PHYSICAL THERAPY VA.

Good BeginningsWinner
Transition Physical TherapyFinalist
Loudoun Sports Therapy CenterFinalist
The Baby PTFinalist

PHYSICAL THERAPY D.C.

SMARTherapy Athlete
Motion Analysis Center, WOSMWinner
ThriveAgain Physical Therapy & WellnessFinalist
Washington Wellness Physical Therapy & SportsCare.....Finalist

PHYSICAL THERAPY MD.

MOCO Movement CenterWinner
Early Intervention Associates LLCFinalist
SMARTherapy Athlete Motion
Analysis Center, WOSM.....Finalist

WELL-BEING

MEDITATION & MINDFULNESS

Washington Psychological WellnessWinner
Crossroads Family Counseling CenterFinalist
Mindfulness Practice Center of FairfaxFinalist

PILATES

RTR PilatesWinner
Circle YogaFinalist
Fairfax PilatesFinalist

YOGA

Talk YogaWinner
CorePower YogaFinalist
Radiance YogaFinalist

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FAMILY-FRIENDLY TIPS FOR A WASHINGTON COMMANDERS GAME

Tips for a stress-free,
family-friendly game day at the
Washington Commanders' stadium.

By Allison Chan



Between the cheers, touchdowns and crowds, a Washington Commanders game can be a thrilling experience for the whole family. However, game days with kids should come with their own playbook — knowing where to sit, what to bring and ensuring everything goes smoothly will make all the difference. Here's everything you need to know before heading to the stadium with your young football lovers.

BUYING COMMANDERS TICKETS

- The safest place to purchase tickets is from the [official Washington Commanders website](#) itself or the [NFL ticket exchange](#). Purchasing from these sites will provide you with ensured legitimate tickets.
- If you're looking to buy tickets last minute, NFL trusted third-party resellers include [Ticketmaster](#), [Seatgeek](#) and [Stubhub](#). However, these sites tend to significantly raise prices of tickets, so always check for hidden fees when purchasing.
- Another last minute ticket option includes the box office at the stadium. This option is more risky because the ticket availability on game day is limited, and entry is not guaranteed.

WHERE TO RESERVE YOUR SEATS

- Although Northwest Stadium does not have a dedicated "family area," families in the past have deemed the 200-level areas as more preferable if accompanied by young kids. This area offers a good view, easy access to exits and a safe distance away from rowdier fans. The prices of these seats typically range from \$200-\$400.
- If extra space is needed for additional things like strollers or wheelchairs, the stadium offers tickets for accessible sections. These tickets must be reserved ahead of time.

PARKING & PRICING

- The stadium offers multiple official lots. Parking passes are usually sold out in advance, so it's necessary to pre-purchase if you're planning on utilizing a closer lot. Pay-on-site parking tends to only be available in the furthest parking areas. The

prices of parking usually range from \$55-\$85 depending on its proximity to the stadium.

- These lots are categorized by color and letter, and open four hours before kickoff. Visit the [Parking and Directions page](#) on the Commanders website for specific instructions on how to navigate each lot.

FAMILY AMENITIES

- At Gate A and Gate E on every level, there are family restrooms that include changing tables. Additionally, the Commanders stadium offers a private nursing space located in Suite 128 on the upper level. A pass and directions to this area will be available at any guest services desk.
- If your child is under 3, guest services can provide a "lap pass" for free. This allows your child to sit on your lap instead of in a seat.
- The Legends Plaza opens before kickoff and features live music, food trucks and mascot appearances. These pregame festivities are helpful for keeping kids busy and deliver even more fun.

WHERE TO EAT

- Outside food and drink are prohibited from the stadium, but options are available for purchase once inside.
- Northwest Stadium offers traditional game day eats: hot dogs, nachos, popcorn and peanuts. These options are the most available throughout the stadium along with popular beverages like water, lemonade and soda.
- If you're looking for some kid-favorites, several vendors also offer food like pizza, burger and fries, and ice cream. These options are generally more popular amongst kids, and ensure maximum enjoyment.



BIGSTOCK/DEVON

EMPATHY: The Heart of the Matter

Empathy is more than just understanding others—it's about fostering deeper emotional connections and nurturing compassion, both within ourselves and in future generations.

What is empathy? Is it inborn? Can it be learned? Can we nurture it in ourselves? In our children? We might consider these questions in our roles as parents, as partners, as friends, as teachers. Empathy comes easily for some, while seeming complicated or unattainable for others. Empathy can lead to deeper, more authentic connection with others. When we receive it, we know ourselves to be seen, to be heard, to be understood. We might feel as if we have received a warm hug. In fact, empathy is often nonverbal and sometimes it is — quite simply — a warm hug.

How is empathy different from compassion, sympathy and pity?

Empathy, compassion, sympathy, pity — we use these words often and sometimes interchangeably. But are they? Let's consider the subtle and important distinctions.

- **Empathy** is the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts and experience of another; also: the capacity for this.

- **Compassion** is a caring response to someone else's distress that often begins with empathy and adds a desire to alleviate the person's distress.
- **Sympathy** is a feeling of sincere concern for someone who is experiencing something difficult or painful, rather than actively sharing in the emotional experience of the other person.
- **Pity** is feeling sorrowful or sad for someone, while empathy is feeling sorrowful or sad with someone.

The Golden Rule vs. The Platinum Rule

Having empathy helps us to treat others with kindness and respect. Some of us grew up hearing about The Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have done unto you." When we are practicing and embodying empathy, we might consider the less widely known Platinum Rule, and it goes like this: "Do unto others as they would have done unto them." In other words, seek to discern what the other human needs — and as appropriate, or to the extent possible — do that.

Attunement within, attunement without

Attunement is the capacity to understand and respond to one's own or another's emotions and situational needs. Attunement creates space for deeper connection and understanding. Empathy is a form of emotional attunement. It begins as an inside job: one can — and arguably must — empathize with oneself in order to empathize with others. We may ask ourselves, "How would I feel if this was happening to me?" or "Maybe I haven't had this exact experience, but I can imagine how it would feel."

The biological "how" of empathy: mirror neurons

So, we've talked about the emotional experience of empathy. Biologically speaking, how and why are humans able to empathize? We humans have mirror neurons in our brain, also found in other primates as well as birds. Mirror neurons fire when a human or animal completes an activity as well as when the human or animal observes the same action being performed by another. Mirror neurons contribute to the experience of empathy by allowing an individual to experience a simulation of another person's feelings, thoughts or actions in their own brain. This neural mirroring process helps us to understand and connect with others on a deeper level, fostering a sense of shared experience and emotional understanding.

How can we nurture empathy in our children?

If we agree that empathy is an imperative ingredient to genuine connection with other humans, how do we nurture it in our children?

✓ The DOs

- Listen. Seek to understand before striving to be understood.
- Offer compassionate curiosity. "Are you feeling ...?" "Help me understand ..."
- Reflect back. "I think I heard you say ..."

X The DON'Ts

- Giving unsolicited advice, unless it is specifically requested.
- Offering solutions or trying to fix the problem. ("Help is the shiny side of control." – Anne Lamott)
- Sharing your similar experiences, "That happened to me once ..."
- Using wording such as, "Well, at least" ... "At least you still have xyz" or "At least something even worse didn't happen."
- Trying to talk someone out of feeling the way they feel.
- "Shoulding" others. Do not tell someone how they should or should not feel. All emotions are valid. It's how we express them that matters.
- Judging others. "You're not trying hard enough ..." "If only you could see things the way I see them ..." Judgment often uses "should" or "shouldn't."

When we sow the seeds of empathy in our children, they become the empathy seeds of the future, leading with love and understanding, forming healthy, deeply connected relationships in their own lives.

Kathy Matay is a parent educator with the Parent Encouragement Program (PEP) in Kensington, MD. For more information on PEP's resources for parents, including online classes and on-demand videos, visit <https://PEPparent.org>.

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NURTURING GROWTH IN THERAPY AND PARENTING

How the seed metaphor helps families and educators understand sensory needs and build connection.

By Melissa Schwarzbard, COTA/L



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Before I became an occupational therapy assistant, I was a single mother raising a child with cerebral palsy. My early exposure to therapy came from the other side of the table — navigating appointments, working with providers and doing my best to meet my daughter's needs. That experience led me into the OT field more than 20 years ago, but it wasn't until the past five years when I faced the sensory and emotional needs of my own neurodivergent children that I began to truly understand the power of caregiver reflection. It wasn't a diagnosis that changed me, but a new lens — one that showed me progress doesn't begin with a perfect plan. It begins with giving yourself permission to reflect, to be imperfect and to find strength in connection.

That shift deepened my connection to my work. Today, I carry both lenses, therapist and parent, and the most meaningful change in therapy doesn't happen to a child. It happens with the adults who support them.

Planting the Seed: A Sensory Metaphor Rooted in Therapy and Parenting

One of the ways I help families and educators understand a child's sensory and emotional needs is through a metaphor I return to often in therapy: planting the seed. In this metaphor, the child is the seed—full of potential, waiting for the right conditions to grow, but seeds don't grow in isolation. They need soil, space, and water. The soil is the child's sensory foundation, the ability to process touch, sound, movement, and body awareness. Without rich, supported soil, it's difficult for a child to build higher-level skills like attention, regulation, or even social interaction. The hole is the space created by caregivers—a pause for compassion, curiosity, and flexibility. It takes courage to slow down and say, "Maybe my child's behavior is a form of communication, and I need to look at how I respond, too." The water is presence, reflection, and consistency. Growth doesn't come from perfection; it comes from connection and care.

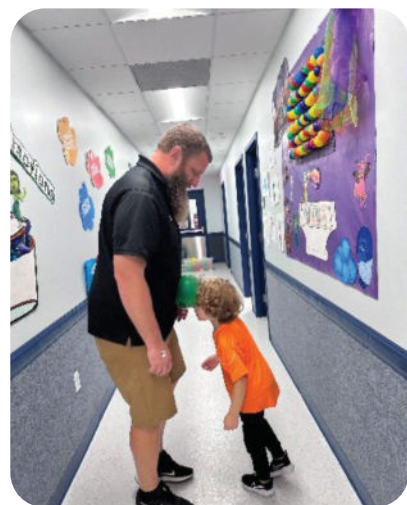


Modeling the Metaphor in Real Life

I've seen this metaphor come to life in countless sessions. During a school-based activity, a pre-K class decorated me as a holiday tree. They problem-solved and communicated while I stayed steady and open. In that moment, I was the soil. Their growth came from the space I created that was rooted in trust, creativity and connection.

In another session, a father and son navigated an obstacle course while keeping a balloon afloat between them. They laughed, adjusted and moved in sync. The activity worked on motor skills, but more importantly, it strengthened trust and emotional connection.

During another activity with a mother and son, they sat side by side painting. There was a mutual moment of reflection and emotional resonance. These sessions remind me that therapy isn't always about fixing, it's about creating space where connection and understanding can bloom.



"Today, I carry both lenses, therapist and parent, and the most meaningful change in therapy doesn't happen to a child. It happens with the adults who support them."

Occupational Therapy Is for the Whole Family

In my work, I don't just support the child, I support the caregiver. I help them understand their own sensory preferences or nervous system. Often, giving them permission to be



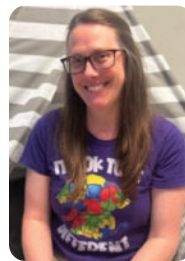
seen and feel supported. I remind caregivers that regulation starts with them, and they are not alone.

I also plant seeds with teachers who may feel overwhelmed by a child's differences. I translate behaviors into needs and offer small, realistic strategies that build empathy. When we work together, children flourish.

Caregiver Reflection Isn't Extra — It's Foundational

Reflection isn't about blame, it's about understanding. When caregivers become aware of their own triggers, they can co-regulate and connect with their children more effectively. That is often the starting point for everything else: emotional safety, behavior change and functional growth.

We grow together — through insight, compassion and trust. So, if you are in a situation where nothing seems to be working, take heart and give yourself grace. Some days, a seed just needs to sit in the soil. Maybe you've already planted the seed. Now might be the time to soften your soil, create space and water it gently. That's how growth begins. Over time, small shifts lead to big changes at home, in therapy and in the relationship between the child and adult.

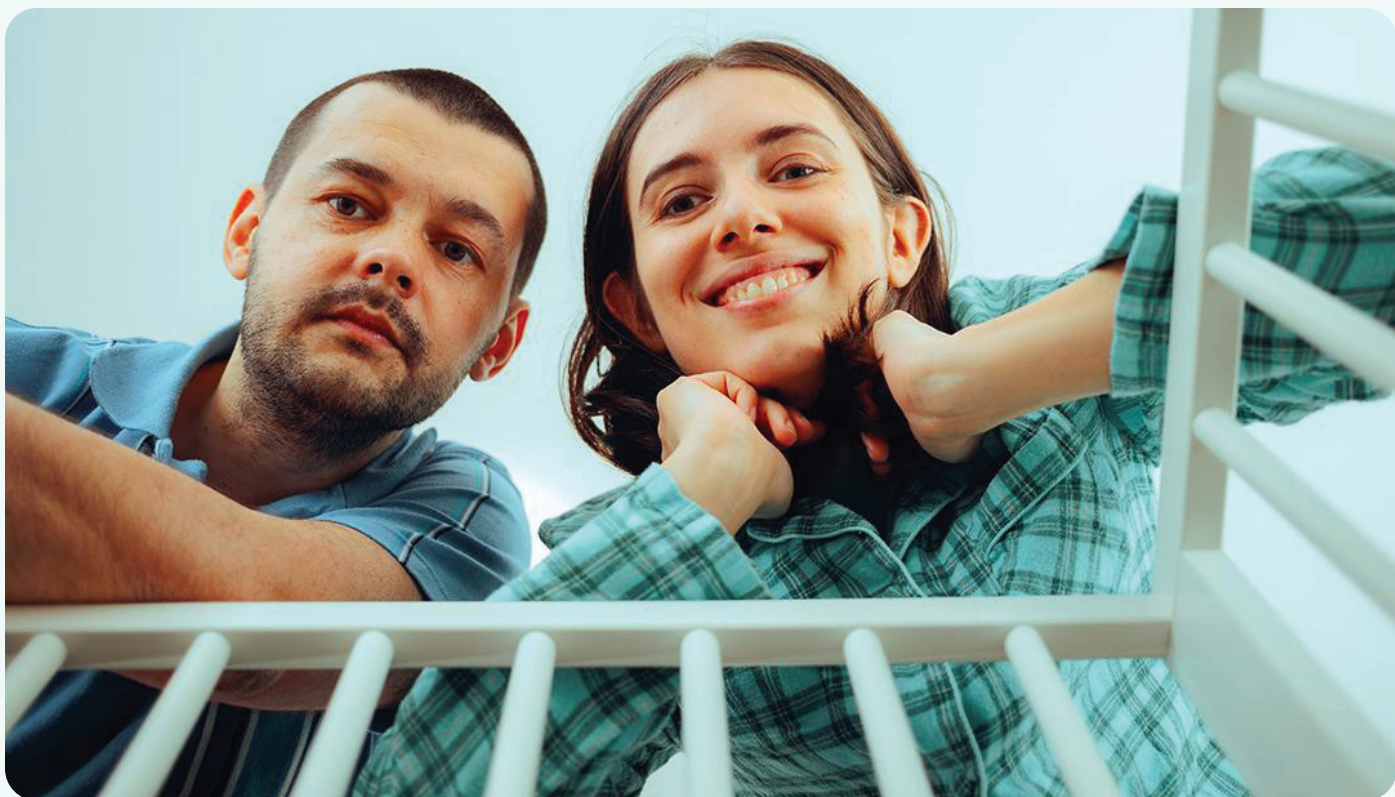


Melissa Schwarzbard, COTA/L, is an occupational therapy assistant who specializes in sensory processing disorders at TLC in Rockville, MD.



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BIGSTOCK/DEVON

FROM HELICOPTERS TO HUMMINGBIRDS: A NEW ERA OF PARENTING

Why modern parents are trading constant supervision for strategic support—and how it's helping kids thrive.

By Sirisha Dinavahi for LA Post

This story was produced by the LA Post and reviewed and distributed by Stacker.

Modern parenting styles are shifting from constant supervision to strategic support as new research reveals the downsides of overprotective parenting approaches, the LA Post reports.

The once-popular helicopter parenting style faces growing scrutiny as child development experts point to the benefits of a more measured approach called hummingbird parenting. While both approaches stem from a desire to support and nurture children, they differ significantly in execution and impact. Understanding these styles can help parents navigate their roles more effectively and foster healthier, more independent children.

Research labels were identified back in the 1960s by Diana Baumrind, a clinical and developmental psychologist. The three distinct approaches to child-rearing under the “classic” label are authoritative, authoritarian and permissive parenting. These research-based categories examined how parents balance demands with emotional support. While authoritarian

parents focus on strict obedience and permissive parents avoid confrontation, authoritative parents combine clear boundaries with emotional responsiveness.

Understanding Helicopter Parenting

Helicopter parenting is a term that describes parents who are overly involved in their children's lives, hovering nearby to monitor and intervene in nearly every situation. This style can manifest in various ways, from micromanaging homework assignments to controlling social interactions. The intention behind this behavior is often rooted in love and concern; parents want to protect their children from failure and hardship.

While helicopter parents can offer children a structured environment with guidance, this approach can have unintended consequences. A recent study published in the National Library of Medicine shows that children raised under this umbrella may struggle with mental health such as anxiety and depression. Data from the National Survey of Children's Health shows a 20%

increase in diagnosed anxiety for children (aged 6–17 years old) between 2007 and 2012. Another study found a 63% increase in depression from 2009 to 2017 for young adults aged 18–25 years old. As their autonomy and decision-making are hindered, they might become overly reliant on their parents for direction, as indicated in this study.

Helicopter parenting may also affect the self-esteem and resilience of children. The constant intervention may prevent children from valuable learning experiences that come from facing challenges independently. This dynamic can create a cycle in which children feel incapable of navigating the world without parental assistance.

The Rise of Hummingbird Parenting

In contrast, hummingbird parenting takes a more balanced approach. Hummingbird parents keep a close watch on their children but are careful to allow them the freedom to explore and make mistakes. They act like hummingbirds, flitting in and out of their children's lives, providing support when needed but stepping back to allow for independence.

"We need to be developmentally sensitive so that we gradually back off as they grow older. This allows them to practice using freedom in responsible ways and to meet their intrinsic need for autonomy. We want to avoid doing things for them that they can (or should) do themselves," says Dr. Mike Brooks, a licensed psychologist from Austin, Texas, in a blog on Psychology Today.

Hummingbird parents encourage their children to accomplish new endeavors without succumbing to the fear of failure, as they understand that failure is a part of growth and learning. These parents prioritize honest conversations. They create a safe space for children to express their thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment. Instead of solving every problem, hummingbird parents provide guidance and support, allowing their children to develop problem-solving skills independently.

The Balance Between the Two Styles

Finding the right parenting style is not about choosing one method over the other; it's about striking a balance. Both helicopter and hummingbird parenting have their merits and pitfalls. The key is to understand when to hover and when to flit.

"Parenting doesn't fit neatly into clearly delineated categories. At different times, situations, with different children, and ages of the children, the same parent is likely to adjust his/her demandingness/responsiveness. Moreover, if multiple caregivers are involved, different parenting styles are likely to come into play," adds Dr. Brooks, in the blog.

There are moments in a child's life when hovering is appropriate. For example, children may benefit from extra guidance during significant transitions, such as starting school or navigating a new social environment. In these cases, being a "helicopter" parent can help ease anxiety and provide necessary support.

Conversely, as children grow and develop, they need space to explore their interests and make mistakes. This is where hummingbird parenting shines. Allowing children the freedom to navigate their own paths fosters self-confidence and encourages them to become proactive problem solvers.

Recognizing Your Parenting Style

Self-awareness is crucial in parenting. As parents looking to raise healthy, independent and mindful individuals, it is important to understand the key differences between these parenting styles and switch between them depending on the situation.

Given a situation, the choices exhibited by a parent can help identify the "label" one tends to lean towards — a high level of control stemming from anxiety and a desire to avoid/prevent mistakes is the signature of a helicopter parent while allowing the child to make an independent decision and learn from them in case of failure while offering balanced emotional support is a clear indication of a hummingbird parent.

Creating a Supportive Environment

Creating an environment that promotes growth and independence is essential regardless of your predominant parenting style. Here are some strategies to consider, as explained by Dr. Susan Landers, MD, neonatologist:

1. **Set Clear Expectations:** Communicate your expectations while allowing your child to define their own goals. This gives them the structure they need without feeling stifled.

2. **Encourage Problem-Solving:** Ask guiding questions that help your child think through challenges instead of providing solutions. This promotes critical thinking and resilience.

3. **Celebrate Independence:** Acknowledge and celebrate your child's achievements, no matter how small. Positive reinforcement boosts confidence and encourages further independence.

4. **Model Healthy Boundaries:** Show your child the importance of balancing involvement with independence. This teaches them to respect boundaries in their own relationships.

Undoubtedly, parenting is a journey filled with unique challenges and rewards. Self-introspection can empower you to facilitate a healthy, supportive environment for your child. By balancing guidance and independence, you can help your child grow into a confident, resilient individual capable of navigating the complexities of life.

According to resilience expert Deborah Gilboa, MD, of Ask Doctor G, "Remembering to look for opportunities to take one step back from solving our child's problems will help us build the resilient, self-confident kids we need."

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TOP RATED ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN ALEXANDRIA

A look at the highest-rated Elementary Schools in Alexandria, VA.

By Seth Hagler

Choosing the right elementary school is one of the most important decisions a parent can make — and in Alexandria, VA, families have a variety of strong options to consider. To help narrow the search, online ranking platform [Niche](#) evaluates schools using a blend of hard data, research and real feedback from parents and educators. Beyond academics and teaching quality, their grades reflect broader aspects of student life, from extracurricular activities and sports to diversity and college preparation.

This guide focuses on elementary schools in the Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) district, along with select private institutions, all of which have earned Niche grades ranging from B- to A+. Proficiency scores noted for each school come from state assessments in math and reading (language arts) and represent the percentage of students meeting or exceeding grade-level expectations.

ST. STEPHEN'S AND ST. AGNES SCHOOL

- **Type:** Private, Episcopal
- **Grades Offered:** Pre-K, K-12
- St. Stephen's and St. Agnes School is lauded for its academics, teachers and extracurriculars. Younger students will benefit from a balanced, comprehensive curriculum all the way up to college prep. The school has an impressive student-teacher ratio of 6:1.
- **Niche Grade:** A+

BROWNE ACADEMY

- **Type:** Private
- **Grades Offered:** Pre-K, K-8
- Browne Academy is a respected private school. With nearly 40 full-time teachers and a 5:1 student-teacher ratio, students get the individual attention and small class sizes for which the school strives.
- **Niche Grade:** A+

LYLES-CROUCH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- **Type:** Public
- **Grades Offered:** Pre-K, K-5
- Lyles-Crouch boasts a solid reading proficiency score of 77%, along with a 62% in math. The academics and teachers are well-rated overall, and their student-teacher ratio is 16:1.
- **Niche Grade:** B

NAOMI L. BROOKS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- **Type:** Public
- **Grades Offered:** Pre-K, K-5
- Naomi L. Brooks also has a noticeable disparity in math and reading proficiencies, with math at 52% and reading at 67%. They have a student-teacher ratio of 17:1.
- **Niche Grade:** B-

DOUGLAS MACARTHUR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- **Type:** Public
- **Grades Offered:** Pre-K, K-5
- Douglas MacArthur features proficiency scores above 50% and a student-teacher ratio of 16:1. They have been awarded an A for diversity.
- **Niche Grade:** B-



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TOP TUTORING CLASSES IN THE DC AREA

Top-Rated Tutoring Centers for Academic Excellence

By Jenna Dolch

Washington, DC, is home to a variety of tutoring centers that cater to students seeking academic support, test preparation and enrichment programs. Whether you're looking to improve grades, prepare for standardized tests or enhance specific skills, these top-rated tutoring centers offer personalized services to meet your educational needs.

ILLUMINOS ACADEMIC COACHING & TUTORING

Illuminos offers personalized academic coaching and tutoring designed to help students improve study skills, time management and subject mastery. Their programs cater to K-12 and college students, focusing on building executive functioning skills alongside academic content. With both in-person and virtual options, Illuminos provides tailored strategies to support long-term academic success.

- **Phone:** (571) 313-5163
- **Website:** <https://illuminos.co/>

RUSSIAN SCHOOL OF MATHEMATICS

The Russian School of Mathematics (RSM) provides an after-school math enrichment program based on a rigorous and logical curriculum. Serving students from elementary through high school, RSM focuses on developing strong mathematical foundations and critical thinking skills. Classes are available online and at various DMV locations.

- **Address:** 3330 Washington Blvd., No. 100, Arlington, VA

- **Hours:** 4 p.m.-9 p.m. Mon-Thurs
- **Phone:** (202) 996-8844
- **Website:** <https://mathschool.com/locations/arlington-va>

BASS EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Bass Educational Services specializes in college planning and academic support for students with learning differences, ADHD or other special needs. They provide tutoring, test prep, executive functioning coaching and guidance through the college admissions process.

- **Address:** 4229 Cherry Valley Dr., Olney, MD
- **Phone:** (301) 774-5211
- **Website:** <https://basseducationalservices.com/>

NO ANXIETY PREP

No Anxiety Prep helps students prepare for standardized tests with a focus on reducing test-taking stress. They offer one-on-one and small-group instruction for the SAT, ACT and other exams, emphasizing strategies to improve performance and confidence. Visit their website to explore more about their services and schedule a consultation.

- **Website:** <https://noanxietyprep.com/contact>

ALOHA MIND MATH, READING, WRITING

ALOHA offers programs to enhance math, reading and writing skills for children from preschool through middle school. Using an interactive and engaging approach, ALOHA focuses on mental math, comprehension and creative writing to strengthen core academic skills.

- **Address:** 10875 Main St., Suite 211, Fairfax, VA
- **Phone:** (877) 256-4203
- **Website:** <https://alohamindmath.com/locations/fairfax-tutoring/>

PREPMATTERS

PrepMatters provides tutoring, test prep and educational planning for students in middle school through college. Their individualized programs cover standardized tests, academic subjects and executive functioning skills, with a focus on helping students achieve their full potential.

- **Address:** 5001 Cordell Ave., Bethesda, MD
- **Phone:** (301) 951-0350
- **Hours:** 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Monday-Friday; 8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Saturday; 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Sunday
- **Website:** <https://prepmatters.com/>

KUMON

Kumon offers a self-paced learning method designed to help students develop strong math and reading skills. With centers across the DC metropolitan area, Kumon provides daily practice and incremental progress to build mastery and confidence.

- **Address:** 2200 Wisconsin Ave. NW, Washington, DC
- **Phone:** (202) 838-3500
- **Hours:** 12-9 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 12-4 p.m. Friday; closed Saturday-Sunday
- **Website:** <https://www.kumon.com/georgetown>

TLC

Located in Rockville, Maryland, TLC is a trusted private nonprofit organization with a legacy stretching back to 1950. Every year, it supports nearly 2,000 children, teens and adults with diverse abilities — not just through tutoring, but via a holistic suite of services including speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, educational evaluations, counseling and more.

- **Address:** 1390 Piccard Drive, Suites 120 and 210, Rockville, MD
- **Phone:** (301) 424-5200
- **Hours:** 8 a.m.-3:45 p.m. Monday-Friday
- **Website:** <https://ttlc.org/>

AVATAR LEARNING CENTER

Avatar Learning Center offers personalized, STEM-focused tutoring for K-12 students in math, science, coding and test prep. Led by PhD-level instructors, their one-on-one and small-group sessions are tailored to each student's learning style, with flexible scheduling and real-time feedback. In addition to online and in-person tutoring, they host hands-on enrichment programs at the Rockville Science Center, giving students a chance to explore STEM concepts in an engaging, collaborative environment.

- **Address:** 36C Maryland Ave., Rockville MD
- **Phone:** (515) 428 2827
- **Website:** <https://avatarlc.com/>

APLUS EDUCATION

APLUS Education provides tailored academic support through one-on-one and small-group tutoring, available both in-person and online. Their certified teachers create individualized plans that can include homework help, enrichment in math and writing, and targeted test prep — often helping SAT students boost scores by an average of 160 points. They also offer AP Boot Camps, college essay coaching and academic advising to help students reach their full potential in school and beyond.

- Address:** 401 N Washington St., sixth floor, Rockville, MD
- Phone:** (301) 838-9668
- Website:** <https://apluslearninginc.com/>

FUSION ACADEMY

Fusion Academy is a fully accredited, one-on-one private school for grades six through 12 that blends personalized instruction with academic and emotional support. Every class pairs a student with a dedicated teacher who tailors lessons to individual strengths and pace, and provides daily feedback on progress. Beyond tutoring, Fusion offers flexible scheduling, a Homework Café for supported coursework time, social-emotional learning, clubs and full social experiences like prom and field trips — all designed to help learners truly thrive.

- **Address:** 11700 Plaza America Drive, Suite 150, Reston, VA
- **Phone:** (703) 988-6377
- **Website:** <https://fusionacademy.com/>

TUTORING FOR SUCCESS

Tutoring For Success is a trusted tutoring service serving the Washington, DC, metro area, including Northern Virginia and parts of Maryland, with one-on-one sessions that can be held in your home or online. Their carefully selected tutors cover a wide range of subjects — from math, writing, science, and languages to test prep for exams like the SAT, ACT, GRE and GED — as well as support for students with learning challenges and help with study skills and academic coaching.

- **Phone:** (703) 390-9220
- **Website:** <https://tutoringforsuccess.us/>

JULIA ROSS PROFESSIONAL TUTORING

Julia Ross Professional Tutoring offers elite, personalized academic coaching and test prep with a proven track record since 1994. Their expert tutors help students — from middle school through graduate programs — boost grades, sharpen study skills and gain admission to top-tier schools via tailored SAT/ACT prep, admissions strategy and organizational support.

- **Address:** 5641 Burke Centre Parkway, Suite 208, Burke, VA
- **Phone:** (703) 830-7037
- **Website:** <https://juliarosspt.com/>

The Washington, DC, area offers a diverse range of tutoring centers that cater to various academic needs. Whether you're seeking assistance with standardized test preparation, subject-specific tutoring or comprehensive academic support, these centers provide personalized services to help students achieve their educational goals. Consider reaching out to these organizations to find the right fit for your tutoring needs.

WHAT TO READ

New Books Spotlight Family, Environment

Embrace of these topics impacts the lives of three local authors

By Mary Quattlebaum



BIGSTOCK/BRECA

Karen Leggett Abouraya

With her new picture book, Karen Leggett Abouraya wanted to highlight an experience common to her family — and that of many Americans.

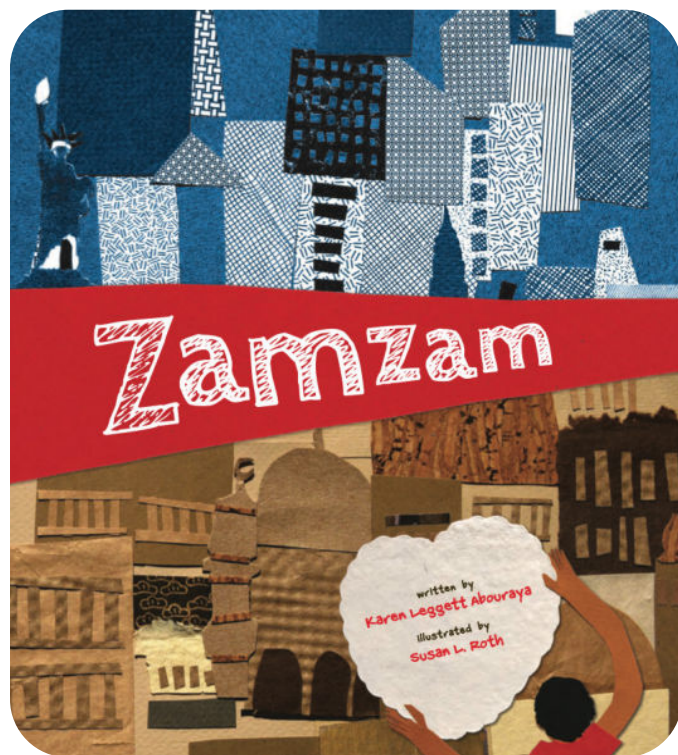
“Zamzam” (Reycraft, 2024, ages 2-7, \$9.95) “celebrates the similarities in all our cultures,” said Abouraya, who lives in Rockville, Maryland. And it features “the joy and richness of having multiple cultures in a single family or community.”

The title character is a little boy who has grandparents in Alexandria, Egypt, and New York City. In the story, the first-person narrator shares his observations and experiences as he visits their respective cities. The lively text hews to his perspective in fresh, captivating ways. For example, in Egypt, he rides a “humpy-lumpy” camel that drinks his soda. And he’s thankful that his carousel horse in Central Park refrains from doing the same!

Susan L. Roth, the illustrator for Abouraya’s previous two books, returns with her signature stunning collage art. Roth uses paper of different hues and textures and found objects from her travels throughout the world, including Egypt. Readers will have fun spotting Zamzam’s baby picture, which is a photo of Abouraya and her young grandson, the inspiration for the book. Like the character, he has grandparents from Egypt and the United States.

Abouraya is already working on a sequel, to the delight of her young muse, who has taken an active interest in the book-making process. Following a recent family trip to Egypt, he sat down and wrote his own story about his adventures.

As a child in Akron, Ohio, Abouraya reveled in a home with



“books in every room,” she said in a recent interview. Her belief that all young people should have access to intellectually enriching materials now fuels her advocacy work for literacy, through the local Turning the Page and Summer Fun Stuff programs, and the disability community in Montgomery County.

For a writer so engaged with the world, Abouraya said that she hopes her books “bring attention to the importance of young people speaking up and taking pride in their heritage and beliefs.”



Caroline Brewer

Washingtonian Caroline Brewer honors the natural world and a national hero in **"Harriet Tubman, Force of Nature: A Biography in Poems"** (What on Earth Books, 2025, ages 7-11, \$18.99).

Brewer's vivid poems and richly textured collage illustrations plumb Tubman's deep connection to nature. Her knowledge enabled her escape from enslavement in Maryland, through unknown, night-dark woods and fields, to freedom in Philadelphia. And it helped her to guide many enslaved people successfully through the Underground Railroad.

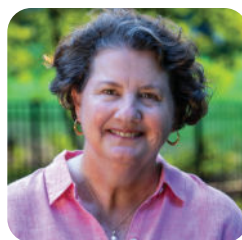
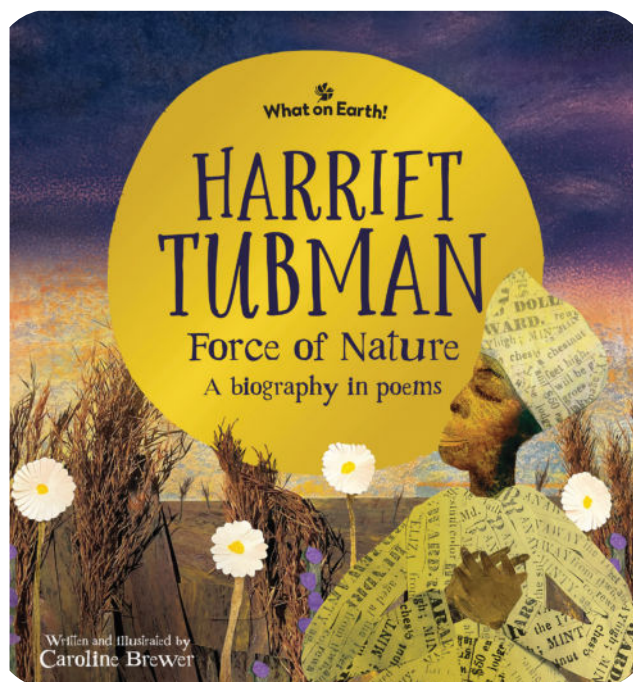
To bring to light this little-explored aspect of Tubman's life, Brewer did extensive research. She especially enjoyed "learning how nature played such a decisive role in how Harriet saw herself — born as free as the eagle," said Brewer in a recent interview. She had "dreams of herself in flight, just like birds, and she made those dreams come true."

Brewer hopes that the book will "inspire children to be more curious, adventurous and comfortable outdoors, and learn how to better protect themselves and the environment."

Growing up in Fort Wayne, Indiana, Brewer's first writings, she said, were poems to her mother on birthdays and Mother's Day. Her passion for reading and writing intensified when her older sister introduced her to the work of Maya Angelou.

Brewer's respect for the natural world is deeply entwined with her longtime work in literacy and environmental education. Her experience as a reading specialist and chair of the Taking Nature Black Conference led her to found Nature-Wise four years ago. Through books and activities, this training program helps teachers, librarians and students achieve a greater "understanding of our oneness with nature," she said.

She believes that "having the courage to discuss so-called difficult, yet important issues, is critical to developing healthy identities in children." Doing so in a way that engages young people has been a thread through all her books.



Barbara Carroll Roberts

"The most enjoyable part of writing fiction, to me, is when the characters start to really gel, and I begin to hear their individual voices," said Barbara Carroll Roberts, who lives in Oakton, Virginia.

For her new novel **"The Metamorphosis of Bunny Baxter"** (Holiday House, 2025, ages 10-14, \$18.99), the title character "gelled" into an engaging first-person narrator with a distinct voice and intriguing interest. Bunny is fascinated by insects and worried by their dwindling numbers, which mirrors scientific concern worldwide. She's also a socially anxious kid trying to navigate a new school.

Roberts also wanted to feature an aspect of her character that's all but invisible in children's books. Bunny was adopted.

A fellow writer had once mentioned the tendency of the very few books about adopted children to center on an "issue directly related to adoption, such as the character searching for a birth parent," said Roberts. This writer, who had been adopted into her family and had adopted her own children, felt that youngsters who had been adopted needed books that better reflected their many, varied experiences.

Since Roberts and her husband had adopted one of their children, she decided to try writing such a book.

Roberts also drew on her awareness of environmental issues as she developed Bunny's character. She remembers the northern California of her childhood during the 1960s and 1970s. This was before the Environmental Protection Agency and the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts, she said. This was back when breathing the Los Angeles smog was "equivalent to smoking a pack of cigarettes every day, when some rivers were so polluted, they caught fire."

She continued: "Restoring and protecting the health of our planet has always been important to me."

To this end, Roberts monitors the environmental impact of her daily activities. She gardens with native plants and avoids use of pesticides. She supports the work of several environmental organizations, especially the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. Their publications, she said, were key to her research for Bunny's story, which she hopes "will inspire a love of our natural world in young readers."



Mary Quattlebaum lives in Washington, DC, and is the author of 30 award-winning children's books, most recently "Queen Elizabeth II," an early reader biography. She teaches in the graduate program in writing for children at the Vermont College of Fine Arts, writes frequently for the Washington Post and is a popular school and conference speaker. For more information, visit <https://maryquattlebaum.com>.



"WILD KRATTS: OCEAN ADVENTURE!" EXHIBIT

Sept. 1-7. Join PBS Kids' Wild Kratts® at the National Children's Museum. Kids will explore ocean habitats and their unique inhabitants. They'll combine science, technology and teamwork to solve problems, help animals and more.

■ **Location:** 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC

REGGAE ON THE LAKE 2025

Sept. 6. Reston Community Center & Fairfax county present this family-friendly festival. Immerse yourself in Jamaican music, food and beverages. Additionally, there will be fun activities for kids, including games, face painting, balloon art, crafts and more.

■ **Location:** 1609 Washington Plaza, North Reston, VA



CIRQUE DU SOLEIL: LUZIA

Sept. 6-30. This edition of the Cirque du Soleil touring production features a journey into the world of Luzia, inspired by classical and contemporary Mexico, filled with culture, mythology and different characters. Luzia is also the first time that Cirque du Soleil is incorporating water into their acrobatic presentation.

■ **Location:** 8025 Galleria Drive, Tysons, VA



TAIL-WAGGIN' GOOD TIME AT THE WATER MINE'S DOG DAZE

Sept. 7. The Water Mine Family Swimmin' Hole invites dog owners for a dog-only swimming day. The Water Mine's pools, sprays, showers and water playgrounds will be open exclusively for your furry friends. This is a family-friendly event and vendors will be available.

■ **Location:** 1400 Lake Fairfax Drive, Reston, VA

TAKOMA PARK FOLK FESTIVAL

Sept. 7. The Takoma Park Folk Festival combines music, art and food from around the world. There will be six music stages, a craft show and plenty of activities for all ages.

■ **Location:** 7611 Piney Branch Road, Takoma Park, MD



BROADWAY ON THE SQUARE PRESENTS "BROADWAY'S BAD BOYS"

Sept. 7. Visit the Reston Town Square Park for some family-friendly performances by Broadway veterans. The show will feature the Phantom from "The Phantom of the Opera" and the Beast from "Beauty and the Beast."

■ **Location:** 11900 Market St., Reston, VA

LAKE BUDDIES AT CHEVY CHASE LAKE

Sept. 13. Visit Chevy Chase Lake and enjoy a fun morning of arts and crafts, games and more, plus live music from Rocknoceros.

■ **Location:** 8525 Chevy Chase Lake Terrace, Chevy Chase, MD

CAFRTZ FOUNDATION CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL EVENT SERIES: FALL CARNIVAL EXPERIENCE

Sept. 13. This community-centric festival event will feature live music and entertainment, games, face painting, food and plenty of fun.

■ **Location:** 400 Galloway St. NE, Washington, DC



49TH ANNUAL FALLS CHURCH FESTIVAL & TASTE OF FALLS CHURCH

Sept. 13. The Falls Church Community Center is hosting the 49th Annual Falls Church Festival, which includes the Taste of Falls Church – where local restaurants serve samples of their cuisine that attendees can use taste tickets to purchase. There will be live entertainment and kid's activities, as well as a beer garden. There's a combined total of more than 90 businesses, crafters and civic organizations.

■ **Location:** 223 Little Falls St., Falls Church, VA

BILL PICKETT RODEO INVITATIONAL

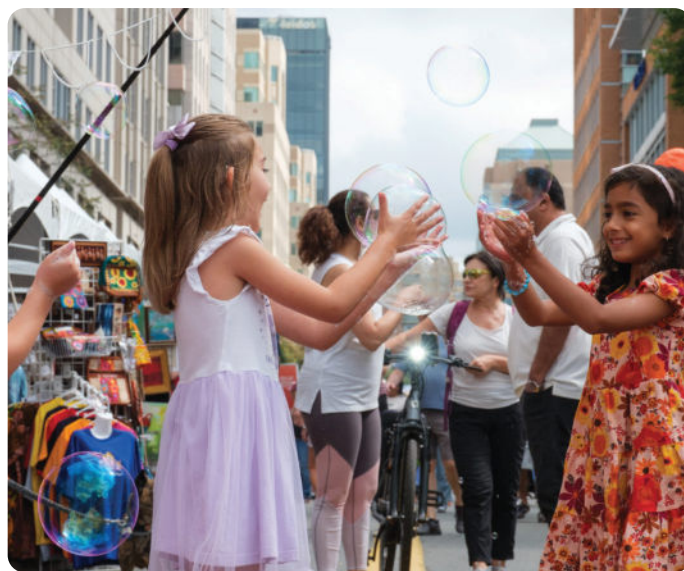
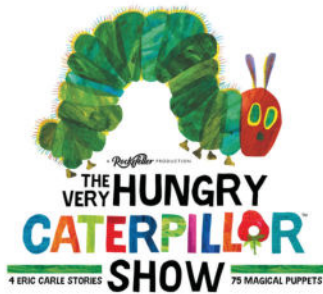
Sept. 19. This invitational rodeo honors the contributions of Black Cowboys and Cowgirls to building the West, while doubling as a cultural event and opportunity for learning and entertainment through reenactments, history highlights and more.

■ **Location:** 14900 Pennsylvania Ave., Upper Marlboro, MD

THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR SHOW

Sept. 20. Imagination Stage presents The Very Hungry Caterpillar Show. Experience 75 wonderful puppets and original music like "Brown Bear, Brown Bear," "10 Little Rubber Ducks," and the eponymous "The Very Hungry Caterpillar."

■ **Location:** 4908 Auburn Avenue, Bethesda, MD 20814



RESTON MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL

Sept. 20. Reston Community Center presents the Reston Multicultural Festival, a celebration of Reston's diverse and communal spirit. Experience the vibrant cultures through song, dance, food and art.

■ **Location:** 11900 Market St., Reston, VA

MUSICA VIVA KENTLANDS CONCERT

Sept. 20. Kentlands Community Foundation is sponsoring this free, family-friendly event at the Kentlands Club House, as part of an ongoing effort to provide classical music concerts each year in Kentlands.

■ **Location:** 485 Tschiffely Square Road, Gaithersburg, MD

WASHINGTON GROVE FALL FESTIVAL

Sept. 24. This festival, aimed at kids specifically, will feature over 30 fine artisans looking to sell their quality work. Plus, there will be pumpkin painting, food and ice cream trucks and live music.

■ **Location:** 303 Chestnut Road, Washington Grove, MD

DMV'S MOST OVER-THE-TOP Milkshakes

Family-friendly shops in DC, Maryland and Virginia serving Instagram-worthy shakes big enough to share.

By Jenna Dolch



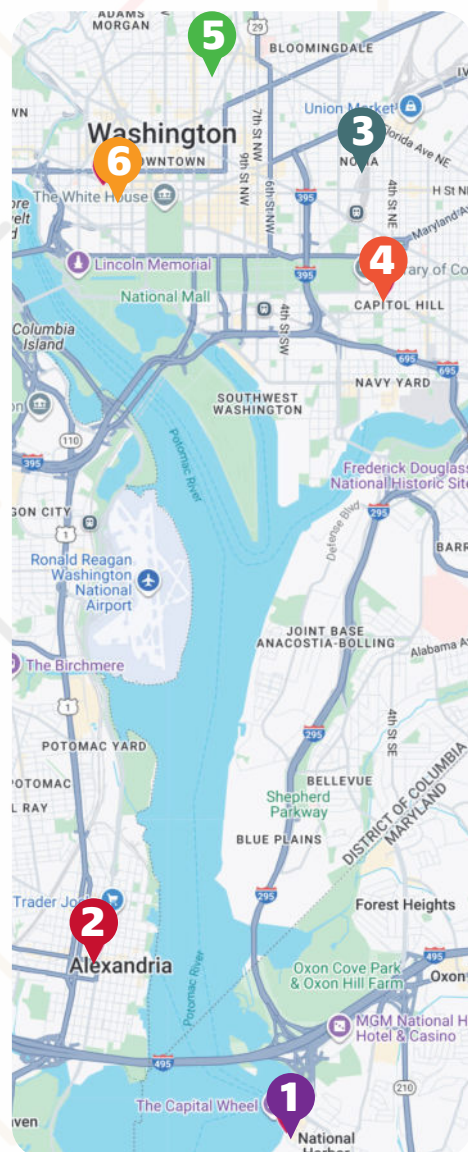
BIGSTOCK/ALLENKASM

Milkshakes have come a long way from their classic diner days. Today, they're taller, wilder and topped with everything from cupcakes to full-sized cookies. In this roundup, we're highlighting six over-the-top, family-friendly milkshake spots across DC, Maryland and Virginia. To ensure these picks are kid-approved and worth the trip, we gathered information from trusted sources including Eater DC, Yelp, Reddit and business websites. Each location was chosen for its fun atmosphere, creative presentation and all-ages accessibility, so get your camera (and your sweet tooth) ready.

1. THE YARD MILKSHAKE BAR (NATIONAL HARBOR, MD)

At National Harbor's waterfront location, The Yard Milkshake Bar delivers epic shakes topped with cookies, candy and even doughnuts. Kids and adults love choosing from 24 flavors and 60 toppings, plus vegan and gluten-free options, then watching the staff build their towers of whipped cream and sweets. The festive atmosphere and Instagram-ready creations make it a hit for family outings.

- **Address:** 185 Waterfront St., Oxon Hill, MD
- **Hours:** Noon-10 p.m. Monday-Friday; 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Saturday-Sunday
- **Phone:** (251) 948-0121
- **Website:** <https://theyardmilkshakebar.com/national-harbor-menu>



© GOOGLE MAPS

2. CRAZY MASON MILKSHAKE BAR

(OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA, VA)

Crazy Mason in Old Town serves colossal shakes in mason jars topped with brownies, candy bars, cookies or waffles. Its artistic, “crazy creation” approach earns fame, and parents appreciate portions made for sharing so siblings can sample various outrageous flavors.

- Address: 716 King St., Alexandria, VA
- Hours: 5-9 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 5-10 p.m. Friday; 12:30-10 p.m. Saturday; 12:30-9 p.m. Sunday
- Website: <https://thecrazymason.com/>



3. TED'S BULLETIN (DC AND ARLINGTON)

While known for diner-style meals, Ted's Bulletin also offers nonalcoholic and kid-safe boozy shakes. Think milkshakes crowned with scones or Oreos and whipped cream — without compromising on classic flavors. Its bright, family-friendly diner atmosphere fits perfectly for parents and little ones.

- Address: 1005 First St. NE, Suite 3, Washington, DC
- Hours: 7 a.m.-10 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 7 a.m.-11 p.m. Friday-Saturday; 7 a.m.-10 p.m. Sunday
- Phone: (202) 793-6700
- Website: <https://tedsbulletin.com/>



4. GOOD STUFF EATERY

(GEORGETOWN, CAPITOL HILL, CRYSTAL CITY)

Best known for its toasted marshmallow shake, Good Stuff Eatery balances nostalgia with quality. Rich shakes arrive topped with marshmallows or strawberries, and kids love the playful flavors while grown-ups appreciate the nostalgic-casual vibe.

- Address: 303 Pennsylvania Ave. SE, Washington, DC
- Hours: 11 a.m.-10 p.m. daily
- Phone: (202) 543-8222
- Website: <https://goodstuffeatery.com/>

5. BEN'S CHILI BOWL (U STREET, DC)

A DC institution, Ben's Chili Bowl is beloved for its half-smoke hot dogs — and its thick, creamy shakes in classic flavors like chocolate, strawberry or Oreo. Topped with whipped cream and cherries, the shakes are a crowd-pleasing finale in a family-friendly casual venue.

- Address: 1213 U St. NW, Washington, DC
- Hours: 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Monday-Thursday and Sunday; 11 a.m.-4 a.m. Friday-Saturday
- Phone: (202) 667-0909
- Website: <https://benschilibowl.com/>

6. CAPTAIN COOKIE AND THE MILKMAN

(FOGGY BOTTOM/GWU, DC)

Part bakery, part milkshake bar, this spot offers rich milkshakes paired with signature ice cream cookie sandwiches. Its kid-friendly setting near campus makes it a convenient treat stop for families exploring museums or the National Mall.

- Address: 2040 I St. NW, Washington, DC
- Hours: 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Monday-Friday; 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Saturday-Sunday
- Phone: (202) 795-9184
- Website: <https://captaincookiecdc.com/>

From mason jar marvels in Alexandria to nostalgic diner-style shakes in DC, these six DMV spots serve up milkshakes that are part dessert, part experience and totally Instagram-worthy. Whether you're after fruity marshmallow creations or classic cookies-and-cream towers, these family-friendly destinations deliver smiles and sweet memories.



6 KID-FRIENDLY PIZZA SPOTS IN DC

From ping-pong and pound cake to New York slices and Detroit squares, these family-friendly DC pizzerias serve up great food and good times.

By Jenna Dolch

Welcome to our guide to the best family-friendly pizza in DC! This article highlights six outstanding pizzerias across the District that cater to families with young children, offering welcoming environments, varied menus and quality pies. We consulted reputable resources like Yelp, TripAdvisor, Washington Family, Eater DC and more, to ensure our recommendations are well-founded and up-to-date. Whether you're craving Neapolitan, Detroit-style or classic New York slices, you'll find a perfect spot here.

WE, THE PIZZA

A Capitol Hill favorite since 2010, the casual atmosphere at We, the Pizza draws families, tour groups and office crowds alike. Known for its punny slice names and creative flavor combos, it offers high-quality ingredients and catering for events—perfect for a family gathering. The location near museums makes it a convenient lunch stop.

- **Hours:** 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Monday through Sunday
- **Location:** 305 Pennsylvania Ave. SE, Washington, DC
- **Phone:** (202) 544-4008
- **Website:** <https://wethepizza.com/>

2AMYS

A DC institution in Cleveland Park, 2Amys offers classic Neapolitan pies with a soft center and thin crust, great for kids learning to appreciate quality thin-crust pizza. The open-kitchen, tiled-floor setting adds casual fun, and homemade desserts like almond pound cake add a sweet finish.

- **Hours:** 5-9 p.m. Monday-Friday; 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Saturday-Sunday
- **Location:** 3715 Macomb St. NW, Washington, DC
- **Phone:** (202) 885-5700
- **Website:** <https://2amypizza.com/>

WISEGUY PIZZA

With multiple DC locations, including Chinatown and Navy Yard, Wiseguy Pizza serves New York-style deck-oven pies in a vibrant casual space. The approachable menu and kid-friendly atmosphere makes it great for families. Some DC outlets stay open late, ideal for after-event slices.

- **Hours:** 10:30 a.m.-11 p.m. Monday-Wednesday; 10:30 a.m.-12 a.m. Thursday; 10:30 a.m.-1 a.m. Friday; 11 a.m.-1 a.m. Saturday; 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Sunday
- **Locations:** 1205 19th St. NW, Washington, DC
- **Phone:** (771) 208-4066
- **Website:** <https://wiseguypizza.com/>



BIGSTOCK/BRECA

EMMY SQUARED PIZZA (NAVY YARD)

Located near Nationals Park, Emmy Squared offers a hybrid Detroit-grandma style, square focaccia-like crust edged with caramelized cheese. The menu features award-worthy pizzas, burgers, appetizers and a welcoming atmosphere.

- **Hours:** 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Sunday-Thursday; 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Friday-Saturday
- **Location:** 1300 4th St. SE, Suite 100, Washington, DC
- **Phone:** (202) 290-2810
- **Website:** <https://emmysquaredpizza.com/location/navy-yard-washington/>

COMET PING PONG

This longtime Chevy Chase spot blends pizza and play. Kids can play ping-pong while families enjoy thin, yeasty crusts with creative toppings. Its casual, lively vibe appeals to children and adults alike.

- **Hours:** 5-9:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 4-10:45 p.m. Friday; 11:30 a.m.-10:45 p.m. Saturday; 11:30 a.m.-9:30 p.m. Sunday
- **Location:** 5037 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC
- **Phone:** (202) 364-0404
- **Website:** <https://cometpingpong.com/>

MENOMALE

With two Northeast DC locations, Menomale serves Neapolitan-style pies and delicious pesto pizza, among other styles, in a friendly environment. Quiet enough for family meals, lively enough for groups — the gelato or cannoli finish makes it a treat.

- **Hours (12th St. NE):** 5-9 p.m. Monday and Wednesday; 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Thursday and Sunday; 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday-Saturday; closed Tuesday
- **Location:** 2711 12th St. NE, Washington, DC
- **Phone:** (202) 248-3946
- **Website:** <https://menomale.us/>

Whether you're craving quick casual slices, wood-fired Neapolitan crust or indulgent Detroit-style squares, these family-friendly DC pizza spots deliver in flavor and atmosphere. Each offers kid-approved menus and warm environments, making pizza night easy and enjoyable. These trusted picks promise dough-lightful memories for all ages!

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Montessori Children:

- Learn at their own pace • Are encouraged to choose work and make decisions
- Develop to their greatest potential
- Learn spontaneously and creatively • Discover that learning is a joy that can last a lifetime



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

TOTH MONTESSORI

Navy Yard & Capitol Riverfront, DC
202-748-5930
Ages 3 mos.-6 yrs.
tothmontessori.org

MARYLAND

APPLE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Bethesda, MD 20817
301-320-8832
Ages 2-6 yrs.
applemontessorimd.com

CROSSWAY MONTESSORI FOREST SCHOOL

Kensington, MD 20895
301-929-2505
Ages 3 mos.-7 yrs.
crosswayschool.org

ROCK CREEK MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Silver Spring, MD 20902
(301) 942-9561
Ages 18 months- Kindergarten
www.rockcreekmontessori.com

ONENESS-FAMILY SCHOOL

Chevy Chase, MD 20815
301-652-7751
Ages 2 yrs.-Grade 12
OnenessFamily.org

THE BETHESDA MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Bethesda, MD 20814
301-986-1260,
Ages 3-6, Pre-K & K
bethesdamontessori.com

VIRGINIA

BROOKSFIELD SCHOOL

McLean, VA 22101
703-356-5437
Ages 2-6 yrs.
brooksfieldschool.org

HOLLY BROOK MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Dunn Loring, VA 22027
703-573-7800
Ages 3-6 yrs.
preschoolmontessori.com

HUNTER MILL MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Oakton, VA 22124
703-938-7755
Ages 2.9-6 yrs.
preschoolmontessori.com

MONTESSORI SCHOOL OF ALEXANDRIA

Alexandria, VA 22310
703-960-3498
Ages 3-12 yrs.
montessorischoolofalexandria.com

MONTESSORI SCHOOL AT GOOSE CREEK PRESERVE

Ashburn, VA 20148
571-417-3999
Ages 16 mos.-6 yrs.
goosecreekmontessori.com

MONTESSORI SCHOOL OF CEDAR LANE

Fairfax, VA 22031
703-560-4379
Ages 3-6 yrs.
preschoolmontessori.com

MONTESSORI SCHOOL OF MCLEAN

McLean, VA 22101
703-790-1049
Ages 2-12 yrs.
mcleanmontessori.org

MONTESSORI SCHOOL OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

Annandale & Falls Church, VA
703-992-0255
Ages 2-15 yrs.
msnv.org

MONTESSORI SCHOOL OF OAKTON

Fairfax, VA 22030
703-715-0611
Ages 3-12 yrs.
oaktonmontessori.com

SUNSET HILLS MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Reston, VA 20191
703-476-7477 *
Ages 21-months through 4th grade
sunsethillsmontessori.com



See advertisement in this issue. EACH SCHOOL INDEPENDENTLY GOVERNED.

FUN THINGS

TO DO WITH KIDS IN THE DMV

Did you know ...

You can list your kid-friendly events
FREE on [washingtonparent.com](https://www.washingtonparent.com)?

HERE'S HOW TO CREATE AN EVENT:

- Go to [DC Kids Events Calendar](#)
- Click on blue ADD EVENT button
- Provide details of the event

LOOKING FOR THINGS TO DO WITH THE KIDDOS?

Go to [WashingtonParent.com](https://www.washingtonparent.com):

- View our [Calendar of Events](#)
- [Sign up](#) for our weekly
[Top Things To Do This Weekend](#) e-news
- Find our [Top Things to Do with Kids in the DMV This Weekend](#) featured events

