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ON THE COVER

Celebrate America all month long!

3 THINGS TO KNOW THIS MONTH



BRANDI CALHOUN,
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Don't miss these upcoming experiences

Enjoy a little more summer fun before back-to-school readiness begins!

Summer in the DMV is far from over, and there's already plenty on the horizon to carry families straight through the start of the new school year. This stretch is a little bit history, a little bit science fiction and a little bit first-day-of-school prep.

See George Washington's Original Clothing

During the nation's 250th birthday, Mount Vernon is offering a once-in-a-lifetime look at garments George Washington actually wore — a red wool waistcoat on loan from the New Hampshire Historical Society, plus a white cotton-and-linen waistcoat with breeches and a blue wool coat from Mount Vernon's own collection. Together, the pieces offer a glimpse into Washington's personal philosophy on dress, on view for a limited time only.

■ Now through July 26, Donald W. Reynolds Museum & Education Center, Mount Vernon, VA

Teddy Bear Clinic

Kids are invited to bring their favorite stuffed animal in for a checkup at this free, hands-on program built around the body, physical fitness and healthy habits. Recommended for children in PreK through second grade, it's a gentle, playful way to ease young kids into routines, new environments and a little independence right as the school year gets underway.

■ **9:30-11:30 a.m. Sept. 19**, National Museum Health and Medicine, 2500 Linden Lane, Spring



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Smithsonian Starstruck: An Immersive Experience

Developed with the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory, this roughly hour-long experience straps small groups into wireless VR headsets for a 40-minute, free-roaming journey from a real observatory out to the Sun, a supernova and beyond, narrated by a virtual guide and built from real telescope data. It's an immersive way for older kids and teens to experience astronomy up close, though the headset fit and shared physical room mean it skews toward tweens and up rather than younger children.

■ **Now open**, Fever Hub, 926 F St. NW, Washington, DC

EDUCATION & PARENTING

Surviving summer without losing your mind

Whether you're scrambling for last-minute camp spots, working around a tight budget or just trying to survive the unstructured weeks, here's a practical summer guide for DC-area parents.

BY CAREY HELLER, PSY.D.

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Summer is almost here. Many kids are eagerly counting down the days or are already out of school for summer break. As a parent, you may have mixed feelings. On the one hand, summer can serve as a break from battles over homework and fewer after-school and weekend activities.

At the same time, summer brings its own challenges with having to plan out each week, figure out drop-off and pickup times/locations for camps (possibly a different routine each week), navigate different childcare needs and balance work and kids at home if they don't have activities on a given day.

Furthermore, if your child has ADHD or other things under the umbrella term of neurodivergence (like autism, anxiety, etc.), they may have additional needs that need to be supported during the summer months.

Finally, what do you do if you now realize (or knew before and ignored it) you have multiple weeks without structured activities for your kids?

What do I do if all of the camps I found are now full?

The DC area has hundreds of camp options. While many certainly fill far in advance, there are a couple of general options that you could pursue to sign your child up for camps if that is your goal and is feasible financially.

Waitlist: Many camps have waitlists so you can put your child on waitlists and see if any options open up.

Search for additional camps: A lot of specialty camps such as sports ones offer week-by-week options with multiple locations. If you are looking for a baseball or soccer camp for example, there are at least four or five different companies (probably more) offering camps for these sports. The week-by-week camps tend to have more openings at the last minute. A lot of school-year aftercare programs also offer camps so looking at these can be useful.

Expand the search radius: If needed, if you search a bit further out within the DC area, it's also highly possible you can locate additional camps with openings.

What if I cannot afford camp for any or many weeks?

Camps can be expensive, especially if you don't pay for school tuition to suddenly have to pay perhaps \$350 to \$500 or even more per week for camp per child. Even if you are used to paying tuition, it's still an extra cost. If covering all weeks with camp is not financially feasible, you'd rather invest that money elsewhere, your child doesn't want to go to camp, or for other reasons, there are some other options to help fill the time.

Non-camp summer week options:

- Organize a week of plans (or a given day) with a group of friends and their parents. Each parent could take a day or half a day at a time (based on how many kids there are). This could be simply hanging out together at someone's house. Or, if the parent has the time, the group could take advantage of the countless opportunities for things to do in the DC area.
- You could also organize a week of plans with just your child if that makes more sense.

CONTINUED...

- In terms of some ideas for things to do around the DC area:
 - Boating on the Potomac River, pedal boating at Rio, or at National Harbor
 - Play tourist and visit some of the Smithsonian or other museums.
- Take a day trip to somewhere such as Harpers Ferry or Frederick.
- Spend the day on a bike trail such as the Capital Crescent Trail.
- Plan a weeklong visit with relatives or friends and work remotely if that's an option.
- If your schedule allows, compress your work hours or take a morning, afternoon, or even the last couple of hours off (for example, after 3 p.m.) to do activities with your kids. When you do need to work, set up independent activities for them.
- Have your kids participate in an online camp or a self-paced course while you're working.
- Tackle long-delayed projects at home like having your child organize their room or helping sort the garage or pantry. As appropriate, get them started and break the work into smaller steps so they can complete portions independently while you're working.

Getting through weeks without structured activities

If your child will be home for stretches of the summer and coordinating lots of playdates or trading childcare with other families isn't workable, these ideas can help you create a bit of structure for the day.

- **Strategy:** Three daily anchors: A simple way to shape the day without recreating a strict school-style schedule:
 1. **Anchor 1:** Keep wake-up and breakfast at a consistent time.
 2. **Anchor 2:** Plan one out-of-the-house activity (even a short walk counts).
 3. **Anchor 3:** Include one "contribution" (a chore or skill-building task; summer homework can fit here too).
- Responding to "I'm bored." These may be some of the hardest words to hear on repeat when your child is home all day in the summer. It often won't matter how many toys are around or how many suggestions you offer. If your child struggles to independently choose and start an activity, nearly anything you propose may be met with a "no." Here are a few lines you can try:
 1. "I really believe in your imagination. I'm excited to see what you come up with."
 2. "Boredom can be a doorway to a new idea. I'm confident you'll find something good."
 3. "I trust your brain to pick something fun. Tell me what you decide."
 4. "This is a perfect moment to get creative. I'm sure you'll land on something you enjoy."
 5. "You're great at finding ways to have fun. Enjoy whatever you choose to do."
 6. "If you cannot find anything to do, you can always clean or organize your room." This one often leads kids to find something to do if they dislike cleaning their room.

Whatever your child's summer ends up looking like, I'm wishing you both a season filled with fun, rest and meaningful growth. Make the most of the summer, rejuvenate, keep your sanity and use the time to bond with your child.



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Top Fairfax County public and specialty schools

From nationally ranked academic powerhouses to innovative specialty programs, these Fairfax County schools continue to stand out for academics, extracurriculars and student opportunities.

BY JENNA DOLCH

Families moving to Northern Virginia often put Fairfax County at the top of their list and a major reason is the school system. Known for strong academics, advanced coursework and nationally recognized programs, Fairfax County Public Schools consistently ranks among the best districts in Virginia. Alongside traditional public schools, families can also find innovative specialty learning environments offering unique educational experiences. Here are some of the top public and specialty schools families in Fairfax County continue to rave about.

BEST PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Carter G. Woodson High School

Woodson High School continues to be one of Fairfax County's most respected public schools thanks to its strong academics, athletics and extracurricular programs. Families often praise the

school's balance of rigorous coursework and supportive student culture. The school also consistently performs well in college readiness and AP participation. Its central Fairfax location makes it a popular choice for many county families.

■ **Address:** 9525 Main St., Fairfax

■ **Phone:** (703) 503-4600

Fairfax High School

Fairfax High School remains one of the county's most well-rounded public schools with strong academic programs, arts opportunities and athletics. Families appreciate its diverse student body and wide range of extracurricular activities. The school offers AP courses, career-focused programs and strong college preparation resources. Its longstanding reputation makes it a cornerstone school within the county.

■ **Address:** 3501 Lion Run, Fairfax

■ **Phone:** (703) 219-2200

Rachel Carson Middle School

Rachel Carson Middle School is consistently recognized as one of Fairfax County's top middle schools thanks to its

strong academics, advanced coursework and supportive learning environment. Families often praise the school's STEM opportunities, engaged teachers and wide range of extracurricular activities. The school also feeds into several highly ranked Fairfax County high schools, making it especially popular among local families.

■ **Address:** 13618 McLearen Road, Herndon

■ **Phone:** (703) 925-3600

Longfellow Middle School

Longfellow Middle School is known for rigorous academics, strong arts programs and high-performing student achievement. Located in Falls Church, the school offers extensive honors coursework, music programs and extracurricular clubs. Parents often highlight the school's academic reputation and strong preparation for high school-level learning.

■ **Address:** 2000 Westmoreland St., Falls Church

■ **Phone:** (703) 533-2600

BEST SPECIALTY SCHOOLS

Basis Independent McLean

Basis Independent McLean has become one of Northern Virginia's most talked-about specialty schools thanks to its accelerated academics and STEM-heavy curriculum. Families often choose the school for its advanced coursework, smaller class sizes and strong college-prep focus. The school emphasizes critical thinking and high academic expectations across grade levels.

■ **Address:** 8000 Jones Branch Drive, McLean

■ **Phone:** (703) 291-3360

Ideaventions Academy for Mathematics and Science

Ideaventions Academy is a highly regarded STEM-focused specialty school serving students interested in science, engineering and mathematics. The school is known for project-based learning, small class sizes and individualized instruction. Families often praise the school's innovative environment and strong academic culture.

■ **Address:** 12340 Pinecrest Road, Reston

■ **Phone:** (703) 860-0211

Merritt Academy

Merritt Academy offers a private-school-style environment focused on individualized learning and strong academic foundations. The school serves younger students with an emphasis on leadership, creativity and enrichment opportunities. Parents often appreciate the nurturing atmosphere alongside the strong academics. Its Fairfax location makes it especially convenient for local families.

■ **Address:** 9211 Arlington Blvd., Fairfax

■ **Phone:** (703) 273-8000

Gesher Jewish Day School

Gesher Jewish Day School combines strong academics with Jewish studies, language learning and STEAM-focused

programming. The school emphasizes community, leadership and hands-on learning opportunities for students. Families often highlight its supportive environment and well-rounded curriculum. The school also incorporates environmental stewardship and creative learning experiences into student life.

■ **Address:** 4800 Mattie Moore Court, Fairfax

■ **Phone:** (703) 978-9789

Palm Tree School

Palm Tree School offers a globally focused educational approach with strong emphasis on academics, language and individualized student development. Families appreciate the school's small community atmosphere and modern educational style. The school also incorporates cultural learning and enrichment opportunities throughout its curriculum.

■ **Address:** 8900 Lee Highway, Fairfax

■ **Phone:** (703) 665-9915

Kilmer Center School

Kilmer Center School is a Fairfax County specialty public program supporting students with diverse learning needs through individualized instruction and life-skills education. Families praise the school's supportive staff, specialized services and inclusive environment. The school provides academic, vocational and transition programs tailored to student success.

■ **Address:** 8100 Wolftrap Road, Vienna

■ **Phone:** (571) 226-8400

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Help for every kind of learner

From STEM enrichment and SAT prep to ADHD coaching and college essay guidance, here are the DMV's best academic support programs.

BY STEVIE ROSENFELD

Every child learns differently, and sometimes the classroom alone isn't enough to help them thrive. The good news? The DC area is full of academic support and enrichment programs designed to meet kids where they are and help them grow into confident, capable learners. We've rounded up some of the best, including our Washington Parent Picks winners and finalists, so you can find the right fit for your child.

WASHINGTON, DC

Partners In Learning

It can be difficult for students to synthesize some of the deepest and most influential experiences of their lives into 500 words or less, but Partners In Learning helps teens express themselves in a way that highlights their strengths and increase their chances being admitted to their dream school in addition to offering tutoring in a variety of subjects. *2025 Washington Parent Picks finalist.*

- **Best ages:** 13 and older
- **Cost expectation:** Prices vary based on service.
- **Tip:** Provide some information about your child during sign up to ensure you are matched with the right tutor and services.

Avatar Learning Center

With a focus on math, science, and computer skills, Avatar Learning Center offers support for kids falling behind and enrichment for STEM lovers. Classes are designed to align with Common Core Curriculums so your students' work at the Center

will translate directly into the classroom, giving them a leg-up and boosting their confidence. *2025 Washington Parent Picks winner and finalist.*

- **Best ages:** 6-14
- **Cost expectation:** Prices vary based on the program, but typically cost between \$400-700 for multiweek programs with discounts for "re-enrolling."
- **Tip:** Many classes are online, so establish a study space at home to avoid distraction.

No Anxiety Prep

There are few things more stressful than the college admissions process, but No Anxiety Prep helps make the process as seamless as possible. Offering everything from exam prep, general academic tutoring, resume guidance, and interview practice, No Anxiety Prep will help your child end up where they truly belong. *2025 Washington Parent Picks winner.*

- **Best ages:** 14 and older
- **Cost expectation:** \$200 per hour for private test prep, \$300 per hour for private admissions prep
- **Tip:** Many classes are online, so establish a study space at home to avoid distraction.

Illuminos

While many programs teach children the material, Illuminos also teaches them the study skills they need to become self-sufficient learners. Focusing on broader life skills like time-management, organization, and communication, Illuminos is ready to tackle and overcome any of your child's struggles.

- **Best ages:** 12 and older
- **Cost expectation:** \$125 per hour with additional costs for certain services
- **Tip:** This program has a specific curriculum to support children with learning disabilities.

Tutoring for Success

Serving students across the DMV, Tutoring for Success helps students from kindergarten to college in all academic subjects as well as standardized test prep and academic coaching.

MARYLAND

Washington Psychological Wellness

Young people with ADHD often receive advice telling them to work against their natural inclinations and strengths, but Washington Psychological Wellness works with the way their brain naturally works to help them understand their habits and create strategies for an improved lifestyle. *2025 Washington Parent Picks winner.*

- **Best ages:** 10 and older
- **Cost expectation:** Prices vary based on insurance and method of payment
- **Tip:** Ask your child about the skills they learned in coaching so you can find the best ways to support them.

MileStones4Kids

This program offers a variety of occupational and speech therapy services tailored to each student's needs. Parents of participants praise their thorough feedback and practical advice. *2025 Washington Parent Picks winner and finalist.*

- **Best ages:** 8 and older
- **Cost expectation:** Group activities cost between \$185-\$225, individual service prices vary
- **Tip:** Group activities like bowling are a great way for kids to work on social skills and make friends.

Top Score Education

Offering guidance for standardized testing, academic subjects, and life skills, Top Score education encourages students to form strategies for success rather than reacting to test questions or circumstances. Top Score seeks to inspire students to become life-long learners and independent problem solvers.

- **Best ages:** 13 and older
- **Cost expectation:** \$150-\$175 per hour
- **Tip:** Top Scores suggest beginning a test prep plan at least 4 months before an SAT or ACT, so consider enrolling early.

Marks Education

Marks Education works with students to help them meet their individual goals, not arbitrary benchmarks. In addition to traditional tutoring, Marks offers specialized text books to guide students.

- **Best ages:** 14 and older
- **Cost expectation:** \$195-\$325
- **Tip:** Schedule a consultation before signing up for tutoring to determine what services may best serve your student.

Maryland Tutoring Services

Taking students from failing grades to As and Bs, Maryland Tutoring Services works to help students achieve their full

potential in even difficult subjects like math and engineering.

- **Best ages:** 12 and older
- **Cost expectation:** Prices vary based on needs and services.
- **Tip:** Classes are offered online and in person, creating flexibility for busy students.

VIRGINIA

Ideaventions Academy for Math and Science

This school for gifted students attempts to foster a love of learning while developing the analytical, creative and communication skills vital to success. Students work in small groups to complete lab and research activities, getting personal attention from an educated staff; two-thirds of Ideaventions teachers have master's degrees and a quarter have PhDs. *2025 Washington Parent Picks winner.*

- **Best ages:** 5-17
- **Cost expectation:** Tuition is approximately \$30,000 per year with discounts for enrolling multiple children.
- **Tip:** Encourage your child to get involved in one of the many academic extracurriculars Ideaventions offers.

Grade Potential

Serving 30 locations in Virginia, Grade Potential helps students determine a clear path to their learning goals. Tutors communicate clearly and consistently with parents so the whole family can keep students on track to learn.

- **Best ages:** 6 and older
- **Cost expectation:** Prices are presented based on needs, location and services
- **Tip:** If you have multiple children with similar needs, consider enrolling them in group classes at no additional charge.

Virginia Virtual Academy

Working with state-certified teachers and easy to use technology, Virginia Virtual Academy helps students work through assignments and recommend next steps for growth and learning.

- **Best ages:** 6 and older
- **Cost expectation:** Virginia Virtual Academy is tuition free in certain school districts.
- **Tip:** Ensure that home wifi and printers are functioning before courses begin.

Russian Math School

This after school program helps create strong math students ready for class, exams, and even Math Olympiad competitions. The Russian School of Mathematics uses math to develop students' intellect and character.

- **Best ages:** 6 and older
- **Cost expectation:** Costs vary by grade.
- **Tip:** Classes are offered on pre-determined schedules, meaning you may have to organize around courses.

Tungsten Prep

A family-focused program, Tungsten Prep works with students' unique learning styles. Tungsten seeks to create deep, long-term connections with students to support hard work and extended learning.

- **Best ages:** 14-18
- **Cost expectation:** \$130-\$144 per session
- **Tip:** Discuss goals before meeting your tutor so they can create a focused plan.

Tiny libraries, big community

These tiny neighborhood book boxes are turning sidewalks into story-sharing spaces and families across DC, Maryland and Virginia are joining the fun.

BY JENNA DOLCH

At first glance, it may just look like a tiny wooden box sitting near the sidewalk.

But for many families around the DMV, Little Free Libraries have become something much bigger: neighborhood gathering spots, mini treasure hunts for kids and an easy way to share a love of reading with the community.

These small book-sharing boxes can now be found across Washington, DC, Maryland and Virginia, tucked into front yards, parks, playgrounds and walking trails. Some are simple and classic, while others are painted like tiny houses, castles, schools or colorful works of art. No matter the design, they all follow the same idea: take a book, leave a book and keep the stories moving.

For parents looking to encourage reading without making it feel like homework, Little Free Libraries can become one of the simplest and most fun family traditions around.

What is a Little Free Library?

A Little Free Library is a small outdoor book-sharing box where neighbors can freely exchange books. There are no library cards, no due dates and no fees. Anyone can stop by, grab a book to read and leave another behind for someone else to enjoy.

The movement began in 2009 and has since grown into a worldwide network of community book exchanges. Some Little Free Libraries are officially registered through the nonprofit

Little Free Library, while others are simply neighborhood passion projects created by local families.

What makes them special is how personal they feel. Unlike large libraries or bookstores, these tiny book boxes often reflect the personality of the families and communities that build them.

Some even expand beyond books with puzzle swaps, toy exchanges or seasonal activities nearby.

Why families love them

For kids, Little Free Libraries feel a little bit like discovering buried treasure.

Unlike a bookshelf at home where the same titles stay put, Little Free Libraries constantly change as neighbors swap books in and out. One day there may be picture books, the next day graphic novels or chapter books from another family down the street.

That surprise element is part of what keeps children interested.

Parents also love how easy they make reading feel. There's no pressure, no return deadlines and no expectation beyond simply sharing stories with the community.

For many families, they also solve another common problem: overflowing bookshelves. Instead of tossing old books into storage bins or donation piles, families can pass them directly to neighbors who may enjoy them just as much.

A fun family project

Building a Little Free Library has also become a popular family weekend project across the DMV.

Many families use basic wood materials to create weatherproof boxes, then let their children take over the decorating process with paint, drawings and creative themes. Some libraries look like miniature row homes, while others resemble school buses, treehouses or even tiny castles.

Kids can also help:

- Sort books
- Organize shelves
- Restock titles
- Decorate seasonally
- Wipe down the library after storms

Those small responsibilities give children a real sense of ownership and pride within their neighborhood.

Tips before building one

If your family wants to build a Little Free Library, experts recommend:

- Checking HOA or neighborhood guidelines first
- Choosing weather-resistant materials
- Placing it somewhere visible from the sidewalk
- Keeping books dry and organized
- Including a mix of children's and adult titles

Many families also officially register their library through [Little Free Library](https://www.littlefreelibrary.org) so it appears on the organization's worldwide map.



BIGSTOCK/PAPABEAR

Want to skip the DIY part?

Not every family wants to spend a weekend building a library from scratch and that's completely okay. The good news is that [Little Free Library](https://www.littlefreelibrary.org) also offers pre-built library kits that can be ordered online and customized at home.

Families can choose from a variety of ready-made styles and sizes, then personalize them with paint, decorations and books once they arrive. It's a great option for busy parents who still want the experience of creating a neighborhood book-sharing space without needing woodworking tools or construction skills.

The organization also provides:

- Pre-designed library kits
- Official charter signs
- Building plans
- Installation tips
- Weatherproofing guidance
- Community resources for new library owners

For families who simply want to get books into their neighborhood quickly, the pre-built route can make the process much easier and less intimidating.

Find Little Free Libraries near you

Want to see if your neighborhood already has one? Families can explore the official worldwide Little Free Library map to find registered libraries throughout Washington, DC, Maryland and Virginia.

The interactive map lets families search by location and discover Little Free Libraries near parks, schools, neighborhoods and walking trails all across the DMV.

LITTLE FREE LIBRARIES TO VISIT AROUND THE DMV

WASHINGTON, DC

Capitol Hill Little Free Libraries

Capitol Hill is filled with charming Little Free Libraries tucked between historic row homes and tree-lined sidewalks. Families walking through the neighborhood can easily turn library spotting into a mini scavenger hunt. Many libraries here are beautifully painted and regularly stocked with children's books.

- **Best For:** Family walks and stroller outings
- **Tip:** East Capitol Street and Lincoln Park areas often have multiple libraries within walking distance.

Takoma Park Neighborhood Libraries

Known for its strong community atmosphere, Takoma Park is home to several creative and heavily used Little Free Libraries. Families often find books for all ages alongside puzzles, art supplies and seasonal decorations.

- **Best For:** Younger readers and community events
- **Tip:** Pair a library walk with a visit to local parks or cafés nearby.

CONTINUED...



PHOTO COURTESY LITTLE FREE LIBRARY NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

MARYLAND

Little Free Libraries Around Bethesda

Bethesda neighborhoods feature numerous Little Free Libraries, many located near playgrounds and walking trails. Families love the variety of children's books and the easy walkability between locations.

- **Best For:** Elementary-aged readers
- **Tip:** Some libraries are located near schools and community centers for easier parking.

Silver Spring Community Libraries

Silver Spring's diverse neighborhoods have embraced the Little Free Library movement with colorful and creative designs throughout the area. Some boxes even include bilingual books and seasonal reading themes.

- **Best For:** Diverse book selections
- **Tip:** Bring extra books, these libraries tend to rotate inventory quickly.

Annapolis Waterfront Libraries

Several neighborhoods around Annapolis feature coastal-themed Little Free Libraries that fit perfectly with the city's waterfront charm. Families can combine library visits with downtown walks or trips to nearby parks.

- **Best For:** Weekend family outings
- **Tip:** Summer mornings are ideal before tourist crowds pick up.

VIRGINIA

Arlington Neighborhood Little Free Libraries

Arlington is packed with Little Free Libraries scattered throughout family-friendly neighborhoods and walking paths. The libraries often include children's books, middle-grade novels and community recommendations.

- **Best For:** Frequent book swapping
- **Tip:** Several neighborhoods have multiple libraries within biking distance.

Del Ray Storybook Libraries

The Del Ray neighborhood in Alexandria is known for its artsy and community-focused atmosphere, making it a natural fit for adorable Little Free Libraries. Many are brightly painted and maintained by local families.

- **Best For:** Family bike rides and neighborhood strolls
- **Tip:** Keep an eye out for themed libraries during holidays.

Vienna & Fairfax County Libraries

Throughout Vienna and Fairfax County, families can find Little Free Libraries tucked into suburban neighborhoods, parks and school-adjacent walking areas. Many families regularly rotate children's books, making them especially popular with younger readers.

- **Best For:** Regular neighborhood visits
- **Tip:** Evening walks are a great time to stop by and browse new books.

Why They Matter

At their core, Little Free Libraries are about more than books. They encourage generosity, spark curiosity and create moments of connection between neighbors who may otherwise never meet. For children, they help make reading feel exciting and personal rather than assigned or required.

And in many communities, they quietly improve access to books for families who may not always have easy access to libraries or bookstores nearby.

Sometimes, all it takes is one tiny wooden box to make a neighborhood feel a little more connected.

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Where families can play pickleball across the DMV

From beginner clinics to free outdoor courts, here's where you can pick up a paddle across DC, Maryland and Virginia.

BY MIRANDA SIMPSON

Washington, DC

1. Turkey Thicket Recreation Center

Turkey Thicket is one of the most active pickleball hubs in Washington, DC. With six hard courts, four outdoor and two indoor, players can drop in on a first-come, first-served basis or join an organized session run through DC Parks and Recreation. Completely free with a relaxed vibe, Turkey Thicket is a perfect practice spot for players trying to hone their skills without judgment.

- **Location:** 1100 Michigan Ave NE, Washington, DC
- **Best ages:** All ages
- **How long families usually stay:** 1-2 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Free
- **Tip:** Courts fill up fast on weekend mornings, so arrive early to claim a spot, especially on Saturdays.

2. Experience Kraken

Kraken Kourts & Skates is a massive indoor venue spanning over 70,000 square feet with 14 indoor pickleball courts that provide a much-needed escape from the DC sun. Both a pickleball hub and a social destination, you can drop in for open play, host a private party or beginner clinics running Wednesday



PHOTO COURTESY KRAKEN KOURTS

through Saturday. It's a fun half-day outing that can easily extend into roller skating or table tennis!

- **Location:** 514 Rhode Island Ave NE, Washington, DC
- **Best ages:** Kids 8 and up with a parent; teens and adults
- **How long families usually stay:** 2-3 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Moderate; check experiencekraken.com for current pricing
- **One practical tip:** Stick to daytime and early evening sessions for the best family-friendly atmosphere.

3. Southeast Tennis and Learning Center

The Southeast Tennis and Learning Center offers pickleball courts through DC Parks and Recreation in a welcoming, all-

ages environment. It's the home of the annual Washington DC Pickleball community tournament each spring, and certified instructors run beginner and intermediate clinics at various points throughout the year.

- **Location:** 701 Mississippi Ave. SE, Washington, DC
- **Best ages:** All ages
- **How long families usually stay:** 1.5-2 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Free
- **One practical tip:** Check washingtondcpickleball.org for the current clinic schedule before visiting.

4. Anacostia Park

Anacostia Park features 10 pickleball courts, dual-lined on five tennis courts, with some nets available in a lockbox and plenty of parking along a bike trail. It's one of the most spacious and accessible free outdoor pickleball venues in the entire city, and is managed by the National Park Service.

- **Location:** 1900 Anacostia Drive, Washington, DC
- **Best ages:** Adults
- **How long people usually stay:** 1-2 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Free
- **One practical tip:** Put "Anacostia Pool and Recreation Center" in your GPS; the street address alone may take you to the wrong part of the park.

5. Sherwood Recreation Center

Sherwood Recreation Center in Northeast DC offers two free indoor pickleball courts in a kid-friendly, multi-sport facility just a few blocks from Union Station. Courts are in good condition, loaner paddles are available and informal instruction is on offer, so parents and kids can show up with zero equipment and still get on the court.

- **Location:** 640 10th St. NE, Washington, DC
- **Best ages:** All ages
- **How long families usually stay:** 1-2 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Free
- **One practical tip:** Mid-morning on weekdays is your best bet for open court time.

VIRGINIA

6. The Pickleball Club of Tysons

The Pickleball Club of Tysons is one of Northern Virginia's newer pickleball destinations, located near the Tysons area and easily accessible for families in Fairfax County. The club offers lessons and open play in a modern facility that caters to players at every level, including those who have never held a paddle.

- **Location:** 8528 Tyco Road, Vienna
- **Best ages:** All ages
- **How long families usually stay:** 1-2 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Moderate (around \$20 for visitor open play)
- **One practical tip:** Call ahead to confirm current beginner clinic availability, as programming schedules can shift.

7. YMCA Arlington Tennis & Pickleball Center

Six dedicated courts, beginner clinics, private lessons and league play make this location one of the most well-rounded pickleball facilities in the region. It's part of the YMCA of Metropolitan Washington's regional pickleball network, which means equipment and instruction standards are consistently high.

- **Location:** 3400 13th St. N, Arlington



PHOTO COURTESY YMCA OF METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON

- **Best ages:** All ages
- **How long families usually stay:** 1-2 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Moderate; membership or day pass required
- **One practical tip:** A free Court Reserve account is required to book court time and clinics, so set one up online before your first visit.

8. Pickleballerz

A major hub for pickleball players in Northern Virginia, Pickleballerz boasts six indoor, climate-controlled courts for year-long play. Offering open play, leagues, clinics, tournaments and private lessons, the facility's structured four-course learn-to-play pathway gives beginners a clear roadmap for improvement, taught by PPR-certified coaches.

- **Location:** 14424 Albemarle Point Place, Suite 115, Chantilly
- **Best ages:** Kids 7 and up through adults
- **How long families usually stay:** 1.5-2.5 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Moderate; drop-in fees apply, memberships available
- **One practical tip:** Visit the pro shop before your first real game, staff will match grip size and weight to your child's size and playing style.

MARYLAND

9. YMCA Silver Spring

YMCA Silver Spring offers open play, clinics and private lessons year-round, and its connection to the broader YMCA Metro Washington network means members can also access courts in Bethesda and Arlington. It's the most reliable all-seasons family option on the Maryland side of the DMV.

- **Location:** 9800 Hastings Drive, Silver Spring
- **Best ages:** All ages
- **How long families usually stay:** 1-2 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Moderate; Y membership required
- **One practical tip:** Reserve your spot online ahead of time, open play sessions at this location fill up.

10. Dill Dinkers

With locations in both North Bethesda and Columbia, Dill Dinkers is Maryland's most community-driven pickleball option, known for its beginner-friendly culture and regularly organized group play. Sign up for kids or couples lessons and experience a true pickleball haven.

- **Location:** 4942 Boiling Brook Parkway, North Bethesda; 9179 Red Branch Road, Suite F, Columbia
- **Best ages:** All ages
- **How long families usually stay:** 1-2 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Low to moderate; check dilldinkers.com for location-based session fees
- **One practical tip:** Download the Dill Dinkers App to reserve a court before arrival.

Nannies, au pairs and daycares, oh my!

Making the right child care
decision for your family

BY STEVIE ROSENFELD



BIGSTOCK/STOKKETE

What does a nanny do?

The full-time services of a nanny are great for working families with young children. Full-time nannies typically work about 40 hours a week to watch babies and infants full time, with many working more hours to cover parents' commutes or less time when kids are in school. Nannies can also help with a variety of household tasks like laundry, grocery shopping and cleaning.

While nannies can help children through a variety of stages, they typically do not provide the same educational and social opportunities a daycare might. Nanny services in the DMV typically cost \$20-\$40 per hour with varying expectations for time off and health care stipends. Additionally, many nanny services charge search fees and require deposits before services begin.

How is an au pair different from a nanny?

In addition to providing full-time child care services, hiring an au pair allows your family to help someone experience a new culture and potentially further their education. Au pairs are pre-screened, international people who provide live-in childcare for their host families.

Au pairs are required to live with their host families, so they may not be the best option for families with limited

space. They typically take on a range of child care and light household duties in exchange for room, board and a small stipend. Their primary responsibility is the care and supervision of the host family's children, which can include dropping-off and picking-up kids from school, helping with homework, preparing meals for the children and organizing age-appropriate activities and outings. Au pairs often assist with bedtime routines, bath time and general day-to-day child supervision.

Beyond childcare, they may handle light housekeeping tasks related to the children, such as tidying play areas, doing the kids' laundry and keeping common spaces tidy. While not typically expected to act as a full-time housekeeper, an au pair is generally considered a helpful, participating member of the household who contributes to its smooth daily functioning. The role also carries a cultural exchange component, as au pairs are usually from another country and are expected to share their language and culture with the family while immersing themselves in the host country's way of life.

Au pair services typically cost about \$1,750 a month. While this is comparable to daycare, au pair services typically charge per family, so this may be the more affordable option for large families.

**Do you have a question you'd like to see answered here?
Send it to us at editor@washingtonparent.com.**

Why daycares are the standard option for families

Daycare services in DC cost about \$27,000 per year, with much lower prices near \$15,000 available in Maryland and \$12,000 in Virginia. Many daycares offer educational services, which can give your child a jumpstart in school. Additionally, daycares let little ones make friends and learn social skills on their own in a space where they are safe but not under the watch of mom or dad. Daycare may also offer you the opportunity to meet and bond with other families.

While daycare can support normal working hours, some daycares do not offer a 9-5 schedule, which may require you to change your schedule for pick up and drop off. Some daycares also institute fees for late pickup or drop off, offering less flexibility than nanny or au pair services. Additionally, while nannies and au pairs may work with you to resolve behavior issues, some daycares may suspend children for repeated behavior issues. This is usually only in extreme circumstances, such as repeated biting or aggression towards other children.

Local options for families

Check out some of our 2025 Washington Parent Pick winners and finalists for nannies, daycares and au pair services.

Nannies

- **District Sitter:** Helping create balance in your home, District Sitter provides screened, experienced, and adaptable nannies and house staff to meet your family's specific needs.
- **White House Nannies:** With less than a 5% acceptance rate, White House Nannies employs only the most qualified child care professionals to nurture your children.
- **Nannies in the City:** Working with busy professionals like physicians, attorneys and diplomats, Nannies in the City personally vets and approves of nannies before presenting them to families.

Daycare

- **Children's International School:** With pre-school and pre-kindergarten programs, Children's International School helps kids learn through inquiry-based and globally minded programs.
- **Bright Horizons at 2 Bethesda Metro:** Caring for infants through kindergartners, Bright Horizons is is great for busy families to help their kids learn and grow through experience and socialization.
- **Triangle Tots:** Learning and activity focused, Triangle Tots ensures kids have fun while preparing them for success in kindergarten and beyond.

Au Pairs

- **Go Au Pair:** A service focused on meeting your individual family's needs, Go Au Pair provides guidance on finding and hosting an au pair to make the transition smooth for all parties.
- **Cultural Care Au Pair:** With au pairs from over 30 countries, Cultural Care Au Pair services will help your child learn about the world while ensuring their lives are cared for and managed by a professional.
- **Au Pair Care:** Serving families across the DMV, Au Pair Care prioritizes cultural immersion. For any of DC's many military families, the service offers discount for military members.



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Understanding the blame game

PARENTING
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BIGSTOCK/SHAROMKA

Why neurodivergent (and some neurotypical) kids blame others when they make mistakes.

BY JEN DRYER, MA

At a recent family wedding outside Denver, my son lost it. Between the time change, disruption to routine and pressure to socialize with unfamiliar family members, my neurodivergent son (autistic and ADHD) was on edge. His nervous system was frayed.

After a long day of travel, we went to a pre-wedding dinner, and he angled to leave for a solid half hour. Nothing worked to occupy him. He just needed out.

When we finally left, he bolted across the empty parking lot, slipped on some loose gravel, fell down hard and immediately started to cry. When we sped over to help him up, he yelled:

“Why didn’t you tell me not to run???
This is all your fault!”

It was obvious to everyone that this was not our fault. Deep down, he knew he had used poor judgment. But his brain was completely flooded with shock from the fall, physical pain, embarrassment and a nervous system already stretched thin. In that moment, his brain’s only accessible coping strategy was shifting the blame outward.

Few things can rankle us like getting blamed for something that is not our fault. And when our kids struggle to “accept responsibility,” it can feel like a parenting fail.

Kids of *good* parents always accept responsibility, right? Thankfully, that is a myth. Our kids’ “blame game” reveals a brain under stress, *not* a character flaw.

The right strategies can take time

I responded to my son by normalizing the mistake. *Everybody falls sometimes; it was dark and hard to see the gravel.*

I validated his feelings. *That fall was really surprising; it hurts to get scraped; it’s okay to feel upset about it.*

We offered soothing strategies. *What might help your body feel better right now? Maybe a hug?*

Despite it all, he continued blaming us. His brain simply wasn’t ready to accept responsibility because admitting he made a mistake felt unsafe. His self-protective instincts were in charge.

Eventually, his nervous system settled. Once back to a calmer state, we talked about what happened.

We named it gently and compassionately. His brain had a hard time accepting he made a mistake, which is *normal*. Everyone makes mistakes; mistakes help us learn. We made a plan. Next time, we’ll walk carefully in an unfamiliar place in the dark.

At that point, he was able to let go of the blame and move forward.

The brain science behind blame-shifting

We've all been there. Those moments when we wish we could rewind life five minutes and choose differently. Accepting mistakes, especially in the moment, is hard.

That ability to accept responsibility for our mistakes lives in the prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for reasoning, reflection and impulse control. And that region doesn't mature until adulthood. For neurotypical kids, it's not fully developed until age 25; for neurodivergent (ND) kids, it's often up to 30% later.

So, expecting an ND kid with a reactive nervous system to calmly accept responsibility while dysregulated is entirely unrealistic.

When kids shift blame, it's often what Dr. Sharon Saline calls an "amygdala hijack." The amygdala, a part of the brain's limbic system, triggers the fight, flight, freeze — and yes — the *blame* response. In that hijacked state, the thinking brain is offline.

So, blame-shifting is not defiance or manipulation, but a brain trying to protect itself from shame, overwhelm, or emotional pain.

Shift: Curiosity before correction

Behavior is *always* a form of communication. When kids struggle to take responsibility, something underneath feels too big, too painful, or too unsafe.

When your child or teen plays the "Blame Game," try this:

- Get curious.** Ask yourself what's underneath the behavior. Are they embarrassed? Overwhelmed? Trying to protect themselves from shame?
- **Validate, validate, validate.** Tell them you see how hard this feels. Normalize mistakes. Help them feel seen.
 - **Stay calm.** Your most powerful parenting tool. Your calm helps their nervous system re-regulate.
 - **Lead with compassion.** As Ross Greene reminds us, *kids do well when they can*. If your child struggles to accept responsibility, they need support, not punishment, to build their skills.
 - **Use it as a teachable moment (later).** Once regulated, help them understand their brain. Discuss what triggered the blame response and what helped them recover. This builds metacognitive skills (understanding one's own brain), which is crucial for ND kids.
 - **Model taking responsibility.** Owning our own mistakes normalizes imperfection, which is hard for many ND kids. Model that mistakes are learning opportunities, not failures.
- If your child often blame-shifts, it means their brain is still learning how to tolerate discomfort, regulate emotion and recover from mistakes. With curiosity, compassion and some "brainsplaining," your child will learn to accept responsibility for the mistakes they make.

Jen Dryer, MA, is a parent educator with Parent Encouragement Program (PEP) in Kensington, MD. She is also co-founder of Raising Orchid Kids, which supports parents and caregivers raising neurodivergent children and teens. Jen has over 25 years of experience working with children, families and teachers in both NYC and DC as a public-school teacher, staff developer and parent coach. She brings her lived experience as a parent of a neurodivergent teen to her coaching work.



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Happy birthday, America!

BY MARY QUATTLEBAUM

Books that explore the Revolutionary Era

The 250th birthday of the United States of America brings fireworks, parades, celebrations — and a host of new books. Lively and engaging, they offer a multifaceted view of the early history of our country. You can reflect on the evolving role of a key Founding Father, the contributions of Black people and the diversity inherent in the Constitution's opening words. Several titles even draw nuanced connections between issues of the past and present.

TOTS TO AGE 7

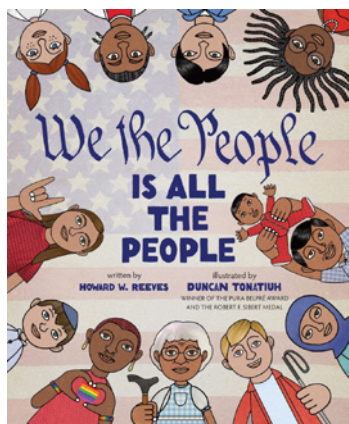
"We the People Is All the People"

By Howard Reeves

Illustrated by Duncan Tonatiuh

Abrams, 2026, \$19.99

This timely book opens with the preamble to the U.S. Constitution, with the first words "We the People" then serving as a refrain throughout. To whom does that phrase refer? As text



and art make clear, "We the people" is all the people. The book celebrates our nation's diversity of races, jobs, ages, religions, abilities and genders. One spread recognizes the immigration experience and honors Indigenous people as the first inhabitants. "People who were here, who arrived later, who still come today." Turning the pages, youngsters will be inspired and amazed by the many who live in this country.

"Black Hands: Builders of Our Nation"

By Carole Boston Weatherford

Illustrated by R. Gregory Christie

Crown, 2026, \$19.99

Black people and their contributions to the United States center this powerful, lyrical history. They "laid the foundation of a new nation," building the White House and Capitol and stitching flags. They fought "in every American war" and grew tobacco, rice and cotton. They "set the tempo for ragtime and strummed the blues into being."



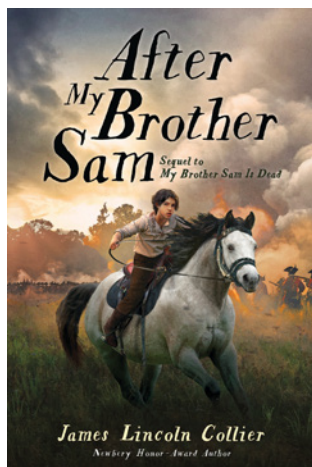
They were doctors and nurses, spiritual leaders, activists, artists, athletes, scientists, politicians and voters. The book concludes with Black hands “prodding this land to live up to its promise: liberty and justice for all.” Back matter fleshes out the historical figures and movements touched on in the text and illustrations. Look for Harriet Tubman, Shirley Chisholm, the Harlem Renaissance and the Great Migration.

TWEENS

“After My Brother Sam”

By James Lincoln Collier
Scholastic, 2026, \$18.99

James Lincoln Collier returns with a gripping sequel to his novel “My Brother Sam Is Dead,” a 1975 Newbery Honoree. In the first book, Tim Meeker tries to understand the politics dividing his family during the Revolutionary War. His father is a British Loyalist, his older brother, Sam, an American Rebel. In this new book, Tim wrestles with his grief and anger at Sam’s death and tries to help his widowed mother run the family tavern. Unfortunately, the British and American soldiers constantly badger them and demand free food and lodging. To Tim, neither side feels especially noble, and the author paints a nuanced portrait of wartime privation, uncertainty and fear. Leavening this grim reality, though, is humor provided by Tim’s new friend Becky and a fast-talking “bamboozler” named Chauncy.



“When George Washington Bowed to the New Nation”

By Barbara Carroll Roberts
Illustrated by Anne Yvonne Gilbert
Creative Editions, 2026, \$18.99

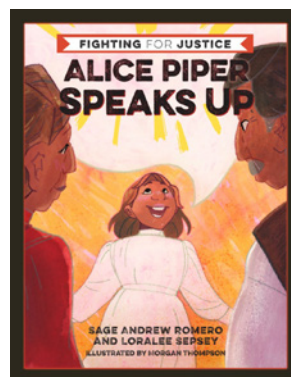
Acclaimed Virginia author Barbara Carroll Roberts tells the compelling story of commander-in-chief George Washington’s return to citizenship after the Revolutionary War. One expectation was that the victorious general would be crowned king, as had occurred in other countries. But that was not what Washington and other key patriots desired. Roberts paces the narrative beautifully to build suspense, with Anne Gilbert’s stunning art providing a visual counterpoint. What *will* Washington do? And will this radically different role help or harm the new nation? This emotionally resonant true story presents a leader who is wise, capable, reliable and focused on his country’s needs. An exemplary leader, in war and peace. And as an aside, Washington was born and raised in Virginia. This year might be the perfect time to visit his birthplace Wakefield in Westmoreland County, his boyhood home Ferry Farm in Stafford County or his plantation, Mount Vernon in Fairfax County.



“Alice Piper Speaks Up”

By Sage Andrew Romero and Lorelee Sepsey
Illustrated by Morgan Thompson
Heyday Press, 2026, \$22
Persecuted and displaced, Native Americans often receive scant mention in mainstream histories about the colonists’ struggle for independence. And as the years passed, they continued to be denied the rights granted others.

This fascinating nonfiction account explores a landmark case in California, which sought to right one such injustice. In 1924, by law, Alice Piper, a Numu (Paiute) teen in California, could attend only the Indian school 40 miles away. There, Native children were taught to be maids and laborers rather than reading, writing and arithmetic as at white-only schools. Alice wanted to attend one such school, which was new and nearby. So, she and six other Native children went to court — and won. This case influenced others involving youngsters of other races denied access to mainstream schools, including “Brown v. Board of Education.” The third in the award-winning Fighting for Justice series, this volume uses poems, prose and art by Native creators to tell Alice’s important story. It also shares information on Numu traditions and efforts to preserve their culture.



TEENS

“Rebellion 1776”

By Laurie Halse Anderson
Atheneum/Simon & Schuster, 2025, \$18.99

This riveting historical novel follows Elspeth Culpeper, a teenaged servant in Revolutionary Boston. By centering a character frequently marginalized because of gender and class, acclaimed author Laurie Halse Anderson offers a fresh perspective. Elspeth must contend with the chaos of a wartime city, her problematic employers and worries about her now-missing father. Then an invisible enemy starts to attack the population: smallpox. A rudimentary inoculation may save lives, but its detractors are as fiercely vocal as its proponents. The stakes are high and the mood volatile, in a story that has parallels to our current controversy over vaccines.



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 maryquattlebaum.com.

THINGS TO DO

Your July summer fun guide

Summer's here, and coming with it is a multitude of fun, family-friendly events. Here's your guide to what's happening across the DMV this July.

BY ZAKKARY PARKER

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FEATURED DESTINATIONS AND ACTIVITIES

In this section, Washington Parent's advertising partners share their top summer destinations and activities.



PHOTO COURTESY HYATT REGENCY CHESAPEAKE BAY GOLF

Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay

The award-winning Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay Golf Resort, Spa and Marina is the kind of place where families can do as much or as little as they want — and still come home feeling like they made the most of summer. Water lovers will be right at home with multiple outdoor pools overlooking the waterfront, including an adventure pool with a waterslide, plus an indoor pool where nightly dive-in movies make for a perfect end to a full day. Throughout the summer, the resort partners with Black Water Adventures for water sport rentals and guided kayak excursions. Parents looking for some me-time can head to Sago Spa & Salon for standout treatments like the VOYA seaweed poultice massage or the Eminence marine flower hydrating peptide facial. Golf enthusiasts can hit the links at the onsite River Marsh Golf Club. Before you book, check out the resort's Sunny Days, \$100 Ways package. Available for stays between June 15 and Sept. 30, 2026 — when booked by Sept. 30 — guests receive a \$100 resort credit to use toward spa services, golf or dining at one of the resort's on-site restaurants. Visit the resort's website to book.

■ **Address:** 100 Heron Blvd US-50, Cambridge, MD

More destinations and activities

This section features other DMV summer destinations and activities chosen by Washington Parent staff. Many of these destinations and activities have high reviews according to Google, Yelp and other destination websites.

TODDLERS (2-4)

National Gallery of Art Storytime: Spectacular Spots

This free, interactive storytime is perfect for toddlers, introducing them to art through a playful picture book. The event, which runs from 10 to 11 a.m., offers both English and Spanish reading and will be followed by creative arts and crafts activities.

■ **Date:** Aug. 1

■ **Location:** 4th St and Constitution

Reservoir Recess: Family Field Day

This outdoor field day, running from noon to 4 p.m., is designed as the perfect playdate. Featuring lawn games, live music performances, crafts and other interactive activities is great for young children.

■ **Date:** Aug. 1

■ **Location:** 10 Lower Service Court NW, Washington, DC

ELEMENTARY (5+)

National Mall

The National Mall is the ultimate free summer adventure for families with kids. Stretching over two miles, from the Lincoln Memorial to the U.S. Capitol, it's packed with world-class Smithsonian museums. Kids can run and play on the open lawns, splash in the reflecting pool's surroundings, and take in iconic monuments that spark real curiosity about American history. With everything free and within easy walking distance, it's one of the best family days you can have in the country.

■ **Location:** 1717 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC

Great Falls Park

Just 15 miles from DC, Great Falls Park is a stunning natural escape where the Potomac River crashes through a series of rapids and waterfalls — one of the most powerful whitewater stretches on the East Coast. Kids ages 6 and up will love exploring the rugged trails along the cliffs, spotting wildlife and taking in the overlook views. Older kids and teens can tackle longer hiking routes and learn about the historic Patowmack Canal. It's a perfect half-day trip that trades city sidewalks for fresh air and adventure.

■ **Location:** 9200 Old Dominion Drive, McLean, VA

TWEENS AND TEENS (10+)

The Changing of the Guard

The Changing of the Guard at Arlington National Cemetery's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is a must-see for any DMV visit. The Tomb is guarded 24/7, rain or shine, by members of the 3rd Regiment of the U.S. Army — honoring the unidentified soldiers who gave their lives in service to the United States. The Tomb has been continuously guarded every minute of every day since 1937. July is a perfect time to visit, as from April through September the guard is changed every half hour — meaning you won't have to wait long to witness the precise, deeply respectful ritual. The cemetery is open from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. during this season. Admission to the cemetery is free, and the experience is one that resonates with visitors of all ages.

■ **Location:** Arlington National Cemetery, Section 33, 1 Memorial Ave., Arlington, VA

Jazz in the Garden

This summer's Jazz in the Garden series, "American Sounds," is a nod to the nation's 250th anniversary, with music spanning Appalachian and Americana, Creole jazz, Hill Country blues

CONTINUED...

📍 THINGS TO DO

and contemporary jazz. Once inside, the concert has the feel of a neighborhood hangout that sits next to world-class art, with Pavilion Café pop-ups and bars serving sangria, beer and wine while blankets and picnic spreads take over the lawn. Best of all, admission is free, though passes are distributed through a weekly lottery that opens each Monday at 10 a.m.

- **Dates:** Friday evenings through Aug. 14
- **Location:** National Gallery of Art's Sculpture Garden, 7th Street and Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, DC

Movies on the Potomac

Families can lounge on the lawn and watch fan-favorite films on the waterfront. Running from July until September, this event is great for older kids, offering multiple genres and late-night showtimes.

- **Dates:** July 2-September
- **Location:** 150 National Plaza, National Harbor, MD

DMV Asian Night Market

This after-dark market is packed full of flavor, music, vendors and good vibes. Offering a variety of food and interactive activities, it's perfect for tweens and teens who want the freedom to wander and explore.

- **Date:** July 25, 2026
- **Location:** 7200 Columbia Pike, Annandale, VA

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25 ways to celebrate America's 250 in the DMV

Find new ways to celebrate America's 250th birthday in the DMV this summer!

BY STEVIE ROSENFELD

Looking for ways to celebrate the nation's 250th anniversary in its capital? See how many events from our 250th Celebration Scavenger Hunt you can attend with your family and loved ones over the summer!

WASHINGTON, DC

Spirit of '76 Special Exhibition

Explore 250 years of American independence through this exhibit in the U.S. Capitol, tracing how Congress and Americans have commemorated the Declaration of Independence across generations. Original artifacts include one of the first printed copies of the Declaration showing the Founders' signatures, an 1876 Declaration of the Rights of Women by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a Centennial time capsule opened at the Bicentennial in 1976 and more.



PHOTO COURTESY SPIRIT OF '76, PCUS, CAPITOL VISITOR CENTER

- **Date:** Open daily through July 31
- **Location:** E Capitol Street and 1st Street NE, Washington, DC
- **Best ages:** 8 and up
- **Time requirement:** 1-2 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Free
- **Tips:** Plan your visit around a Capitol tour or nearby mall attractions to make the most of your trip.



PHOTO COURTESY JMBEST ENTERTAINMENT

America's State Flowers at the Botanic Gardens

Walk through the beautiful and exciting Botanic Gardens to see and learn about state flowers from across the country. This exhibit will be open in the Garden's Conservatory.

- **Date:** Now through Oct. 26
- **Location:** U.S. Botanic Gardens, 100 Maryland Ave. SW, Washington, DC
- **Best ages:** 6-12
- **Time requirement:** 1-2 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Free to visit with no tickets required.
- **Tips:** Check the online map of the Conservatory to pinpoint where your favorite flower will be!

National Independence Day Parade

An always spectacular parade will take on new meaning on the 250th anniversary on July 4. Running from Constitution Avenue to 12th Street along 3rd Street and Independence



PHOTO COURTESY NIDP AND DIVERSIFIED EVENTS

Avenue, kids can see fife and drum corps, floats, equestrian teams and more.

- **Date:** 10:30 a.m. July 4
- **Location:** 3rd Street, NW; Independence Avenue; and 12th Street
- **Best ages:** 3 and up
- **Time requirement:** All day event
- **Cost expectation:** Free
- **Tips:** Be conscious of little ones temperature, hydration, bathroom and dietary needs during this long but exciting event.

Salute To America 250

An annual tradition will take on new meaning as fireworks shine behind the Washington monument on the 250th Independence Day on the National Mall. Celebrate 250 years of democracy with the whole family at the unifying fireworks display.

- **Date:** July 4
- **Location:** The National Mall, between 4th Street and 14th Street, Washington, DC
- **Best ages:** 4 and up
- **Time requirements:** Times to be announced
- **Cost expectation:** Fireworks are free to attend
- **Tips:** Arrive early and be aware the Mall can get very crowded.

Capitol Hill Fourth Of July Parade

A holiday staple in the heart of the nation, the Capitol Hill Fourth of July Parade will feature cultural performers, marching bands, community groups and more. The parade will begin on 8th Street and can be viewed anywhere along Barracks Row.

CONTINUED...

THINGS TO DO

- **Date:** July 4
- **Location:** Capitol Hill, 8th St. SE, Washington, DC
- **Best ages:** 3 and up
- **Time requirement:** The Parade will begin at 10 a.m., the end time has not been finalized. There will be further celebrations on Barracks Row and Eastern Market after the parade.
- **Cost expectation:** The parade is free to attend.
- **Tips:** Arrive earlier to ensure you get a good view of the marchers.

The Great American State Fair

A 16-day event will showcase the traditions of many states and territories through live music, carnival rides, and activities for all ages. Opening on the National Mall on June 25 with events honoring “The American Canon” and closing on July 10 with a focus on future innovation, the Great American State Fair allows the whole family to explore the history and culture of our country.

- **Date:** July 10
- **Location:** The National Mall, between 4th Street and 14th Street, Washington, DC
- **Best ages:** 3 and up
- **Time requirement:** Events run all day, so there is time to explore at your own pace.
- **Cost expectation:** Free tickets can be reserved online
- **Tips:** Be sure to bring water and hydrate as summer days on the mall can get very warm.

Smithsonian Family Day

Watch historical re-enactments, sing along to musical performances, and take part in hands-on activities at the Smithsonian’s Arts & Industry Building’s immersive event. Perfect for family bonding and education during the nation’s anniversary.

- **Date:** 10 a.m.-4 p.m. July 25
- **Location:** Smithsonian, 900 Jefferson Drive SW, Washington, DC
- **Best ages:** 3 and up
- **Time requirement:** Event runs for six hours with no requirement to stay the whole time.
- **Cost expectation:** Free
- **Tips:** Use this event as an opportunity to meet families with children close in age to your own.

Freedom 250 Grand Prix

Watch IndyCar’s zip around the National Mall in August. For sports or car loving kids, this exciting race will celebrate the 250th anniversary with a thrill.

- **Date:** Aug. 22-23
- **Location:** The National Mall, between 4th Street and 14th Street, Washington, DC
- **Best ages:** 8 and up
- **Time requirement:** IndyCar street races typically take 1.5-2 hours.
- **Cost expectation:** Free general admission tickets will be available on the Grand Prix website and will be awarded via a lottery.
- **Tips:** Pack headphones for younger kids who may not be used to the noise of roaring engines.

American Dream Experience

As most of the country is looking 250 years in the past, the Milken Center is looking to the future in their interactive holodeck and world cloud exhibits that examine what education, health and business may be like in the future. Take your kids to this experience and get a glance at the world they will inherit.

- **Location:** The Milken Institute, 1503 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC
- **Best ages:** 5 and up
- **Time requirement:** The museum offers suggested 30-, 60- and 90-minute itineraries.
- **Cost expectation:** Free tickets can be reserved online, but some experiences like the holodeck come at an additional cost.
- **Tips:** Read up on the artists after attending to gain a new understanding of the pieces.

Dear America

Examine what it means to be American while taking in incredible works of art at this National Gallery. This exhibit offers a unique way to learn about history, humanity and art while honoring the nation’s 250th anniversary.

- **Location:** National Gallery of Art, 6th Street and Constitution Avenue, Washington, DC
- **Best Ages:** 10+
- **Time Requirement:** 1-2 hours
- **Cost Expectation:** Free
- **Tips:** Discuss the art with your children to see what their biggest takeaways were.

Free and Independent

An exploration of the Declaration of Independence and how it has been protected, this exhibit by the National Archives encourages learners to examine what it means to advance freedom. Featuring over 40 original artifacts from the Revolutionary era, the exhibit is a celebration of the United States’ founding.

- **Location:** The National Archives, 701 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC
- **Best ages:** 10 and up
- **Time requirements:** 1-2 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Free general admission tickets are available online, with \$1 timed entry tickets available to help attendees avoid long lines.
- **Tips:** Go over museum etiquette with your children before entering the Archives.

Smithsonian Castle

Previously closed for renovations, the historic Smithsonian Institution Building reopened as part of the “Our Shared Future: 250” campaign. “The Castle” is the first and oldest Smithsonian building. Kids can play in the colorful gardens or go embark on an outdoor historic scavenger hunt.

- **Location:** Smithsonian, 1000 Jefferson Drive SW, Washington, DC
- **Best ages:** Historic exhibitions best for children 11 and up, while outdoor explorations suitable for younger kids.
- **Time requirement:** Varies by family and exhibition choices
- **Cost expectation:** Free
- **Tips:** There is no parking facility near the castle, so consider taking public transportation to the National Mall.



Red, White & Spy

Discover how General George Washington used espionage to secure American independence through hands-on crafts at the International Spy Museum. Kids and adults can try writing in invisible ink or learn to pass secret notes at these interactive exhibits.

- **Location:** 700 L'Enfant Plaza NW, Washington, DC
- **Best ages:** 9 and older
- **Time requirement:** 2-3 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Activities are included with museum admission. Tickets for children 6 and under are free, \$23.27 for children 7-12, and \$34.93 for people 13 and older.
- **Tips:** Also check out the Top Secret Family Guide to the Spy Museum, which highlights 250th anniversary inspired exhibits in the museum.

Creating Healthier Communities

Looking to help make America better on its 250th birthday? Consider attending one of Creating Healthier Communities many summer events to support treatments and programs for those with disabilities and chronic illnesses.

- **Location:** Differs based on program
- **Best ages:** 13 and up
- **Time requirement:** Time commitments vary by event, program, and/or affiliate organization.
- **Cost expectation:** No cost to volunteer

- **Tips:** Consider volunteering as a family to help establish good habits and values as well as set an example for your children.

National Archives “The American Story”

The National Archives Museum’s newest exhibit brings over two million historic records to life through AI-powered, personalized galleries. Scan a QR code at the start of your visit to choose your interests, then explore original documents, artifacts, images, and film tailored to you — highlights include the Declaration of Independence, the Louisiana Purchase, the Wright Brothers’ flying machine patent, and Apollo 11 footage. Kids can also head to the Discovery Center to play “Democracy Disco” and “Clause of Power” in the Archives Arcade.

- **Location:** 700 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, DC
- **Best ages:** All ages; the Discovery Center is especially great for kids 5-12.
- **Time requirement:** Allow 1.5-2 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Free
- **Tips:** Scan the QR code at the entrance to unlock the personalized experience.

MARYLAND

Miles For Maryland

Get outdoors and get your steps in with the Maryland Park Service “Miles for Maryland” Trail Challenge. Park Service challenges locals to walk 250 miles on one of Maryland’s 80 State Park trails by the end of 2026 in honor of the country’s anniversary. This challenge could be an opportunity to bond with your family through exercise and outdoorsmanship.

- **Location:** National Parks around Maryland
- **Best ages:** 10 and up
- **Time requirement:** Participants have until the end of 2026 to submit proof of completion.
- **Cost expectation:** Free to participate
- **Tips:** Make sure to register your family as a team so everyone’s miles are counted. While it may be easier for adults to track mileage using a smart watch or phone app, Park Service offers tracking activity sheets for kids to participate.

Maryland Mosaic

Do you have a fun bit of family history you would like to share? Or is your child a budding history buff? Consider contributing to the Maryland Mosaic, an art piece that will catalog the actions and events of United States’ history that first took place in Maryland. This at-home research project can be a fun and educational activity for the whole family to participate in.

- **Location:** Locations vary
- **Best ages:** 8 and up
- **Time requirement:** While coming up with an idea and research may take several days, submission should take approximately one hour.
- **Cost expectation:** Free to participate.
- **Tips:** Consider this activity an opportunity to learn more about Maryland with your family, rather than a competition.

CONTINUED...

Washington County 250th Anniversary

A combination of block party events, musical performances, and historical celebration, Washington County is turning up for the 250th anniversary of the county and our country. Make sure to stop by downtown Hagerstown to unveil a time capsule buried in 1976.

- **Location:** Washington County Agricultural Education Center, 7313 Sharpsburg Pike, Boonsboro, MD
- **Best ages:** 4 and up
- **Time requirement:** 3 hours
- **Cost Expectation:** Events are free to attend with some concessions costs.
- **Tips:** Be sure to prepare younger kids for loud fireworks.

Fourth of July Cruise

A beautiful tour of St. Michaels Island and view of the sunset culminating in an incredible fireworks show which reflects across the water. Toast complimentary champagne with your small group of sailors on a historic vessel.

- **Location:** 101 Harbor Road, St. Michaels
- **Best Ages:** 11 and up
- **Time Requirement:** 2 hours
- **Cost Expectation:** \$175-\$265
- **Tips:** Even if you're on a tour with strangers, take time to get to know them so you can enjoy the experience together.

VIRGINIA

Mount Vernon

Visit the home of George Washington and learn about his life in a new interactive exhibit at Mount Vernon. Through 4D technology, kids can experience Washington's life and role in the Revolution first hand.

- **Location:** 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Mount Vernon
- **Best ages:** 7 and up
- **Time requirements:** Visitors can take in the exhibits at their own pace, though 4D shows take 22 minutes.
- **Cost expectation:** Admission is free for children 0-5, \$16 for those 6-11 and \$30 for people 12 and older.
- **Tips:** Take time to look at original founding documents and Washington's belongings in addition to the many virtual exhibits.



PHOTO COURTESY MOUNT VERNON LADIES ASSOCIATION

Stars and Stripes Spectacular

Look out at the beautiful water of Constant's Wharf while enjoying an incredible fireworks display with your family and dance to music by The Fuzz Band.

- **Location:** Constant's Wharf Park and Marina, 110 E Constance Road, Suffolk
- **Best Ages:** 4 and up
- **Cost expectation:** Free
- **Time Requirements:** 3.5 hours
- **Tips:** Take a look at some privately owned boats to see how owners decorated for the holiday.

The Great American Birthday Quilt

One of Colonial Williamsburg's many creative ways of honoring history, the one-of-a-kind Great American Birthday Quilt is on display in Merchants Square to celebrate the shared history of our nation.

- **Location:** 101 Visitor Center Drive, Williamsburg
- **Best ages:** 3 and up
- **Time requirements:** A visit to the quilt will likely take under 20 minutes, but families may want to spend the whole day exploring Williamsburg.
- **Cost expectation:** Tickets to Colonial Williamsburg cost \$10 for children 6-12 and \$37.50 for people 13 and older.
- **Tips:** Check out the Colonial Williamsburg website to see what events you may want to attend after seeing the quilt.

Liberty Celebration

This event is full of interpretive programs, artillery demonstrations, and educational activities that allow visitors to learn about our nation's founders.

- **Location:** 200 Water St., Yorktown
- **Best Ages:** 6 and up
- **Time Requirements:** 3-4 hours
- **Cost expectation:** \$20 for adults, \$10 for youth
- **Tips:** Historical re-enactors are very knowledgeable on their subjects, so make conversation to learn fun facts.

VA250 Mobile Museum

Visit the interactive museum on wheels when it passes through your neighborhood to immerse yourself and your family in the story of Virginians who took part in the revolution. An event schedule is available on the museum's website.

- **Location:** The museum is mobile, locations vary
- **Best ages:** 6 and up
- **Time requirements:** 1-2 hours
- **Cost expectation:** The museum is free to attend, but it often travels to events which may have an admission cost.
- **Tips:** Talk to your kids about their favorite part of the museum to help them connect more with the history.

Star-Spangled Cookout

A traditional American cookout featuring music, puppet shows, crafts, and games with prizes. Attendees will stroll into historic Yorktown as a community to celebrate the nation's birthday with fireworks.

- **Location:** 200 Water St., Yorktown
- **Best Ages:** 6 and up
- **Time requirements:** 1-2 hours
- **Cost Expectation:** \$45 for adults, \$25 for youth
- **Tips:** Use this event as an opportunity to meet your neighbors over good food.

The best bites are rolling your way

Visit the best food trucks in the DC area that the entire family will enjoy.

BY STEVIE ROSENFELD



PHOTO COURTESY OF TRUCKS AND SKYLAND

TOP PICK: CHAR'D

A perfect mix of simple and decadent, Char'd combines high quality ingredients with family friendly American classics. From classic burgers to duck fat fries dipped in hand spun shakes, Char'd appeals to a variety of ages. While there are limited vegan and vegetarian options, Char'd utilizes Halal grass-fed beef and avoids seed oils, artificial flavors and genetically modified organisms. All burgers also come in lettuce wraps for those with gluten intolerance. Trucks travel across Maryland and Northern Virginia, and an updated schedule is available on the website. If you can't wait for the truck to stop near you, consider visiting the brick and mortar location in Tysons, Virginia, or Bethesda, Maryland. Meal prices range from \$10-\$17, with handspun shakes costing \$9.

Bullfrog Bagels

A breakfast staple with trucks based in Tenleytown, H Street and Western Market, DC, Bullfrog Bagels offers flavorful and fun breakfast sandwiches for kids and adults. Perfect for early morning sporting events or long trips, Bullfrog is an affordable option for busy families, with the most expensive "bagelwich" costing under \$13.

Astro Doughnuts and Fried Chicken

The unique combination of dessert and breakfast offered at Astro Doughnuts and Fried Chicken is great for celebrations and

special occasions. The monthly specialty donuts cost about \$5 each and meals cost about \$10. Trucks are located on G Street in DC, and Arlington, Virginia.

Roaming Rooster

Featuring spicy salads and sandwiches for adults as well as milder options for kids, Roaming Rooster food trucks travel around the Washington, DC, area regularly. Meals cost between \$10-\$12.

Taco One

A savory lunch for the whole family, Taco One has a large menu with something for everyone. Locations on Shaw Street in DC, and Reston, Virginia offer tacos, burritos, quesadillas and salads, all for under \$15.

Kush

While Kush's shawarma wraps and falafel bowls may be tailored to adults, their Baharat seasoned chicken tenders and pita platters will appeal to even the pickiest of eaters. Daily locations are available on Kush's Instagram.

DC Slices

DC Slices serves several classic pizzas served as 18 inch pies or individual slices, perfect to serve a whole family with similar or differing tastes. While there is a consistent location in Navy Yard, other truck locations can be found on DC Slices' website.

Celebrate America all summer long



BIGSTOCK/JOYKID

If you want to celebrate America's 250th all summer long, here are 10 underrated DC destinations worth visiting to keep the party going.

BY STEVIE ROSENFELD

Most families living in the DMV have spent their share of summers admiring the Washington Monument or taking little ones on a stroll around the reflecting pool, but in a place so full of history, it might be time to explore one of the other patriotic destinations in the city.

O Museum

Focusing on arts across mediums, cultures and time, the O Museum in the Mansion features a variety of exhibits honoring American heroes and moments. This summer, consider teaching your children about history through the Mrs. Rosa Parks Tour or enjoy tunes from DC Bluegrass Union.

- **Best ages:** 7 and up
- **Time requirement:** 1.5-2.5 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Tickets range from \$25-45 depending on the event.
- **Tip:** Wear comfortable shoes to explore secret passages.

Attend a Nationals Game

Celebrate America with America's favorite pastime at a Nationals Game this summer. In addition to enjoying the game, check out one of the many kid-friendly experiences like the Kids Zone or getting a "First Game Certificate."

- **Best ages:** 5 and up
- **Time requirement:** 3 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Tickets range from \$27-\$465 depending on seating area.

- **Tip:** Ensure kids have sun protection in preparation for extra innings in the heat.

The People's House

While it can be difficult to schedule a visit to the White House and tours are often limited, your family can see all the highlights at the People's House, a museum that shares virtual and physical models of the building. The exhibits highlight important moments in United States history in fun interactive ways to engage your children.

- **Best ages:** 5 and up
- **Time requirement:** 1-1.5 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Admission is free, but passes should be reserved online in advance.
- **Tip:** After your visit, take a stroll down Pennsylvania Avenue to take a look at the actual White House.

Smithsonian Carousel

A classic childhood experience steeped in history, the Smithsonian Carousel has returned to the National Mall. The historic carousel, a center of the Civil Rights debate that was first de-segregated on the day of Martin Luther King's "I Had a Dream Speech," has been restored and is open to ride.

- **Best ages:** 3 and up
- **Time requirement:** 10 minutes depending on lines
- **Cost expectation:** \$6 per rider
- **Tip:** Be prepared to ride multiple times when little ones can't get enough!

Passport DC

Experience the whole world in one place by visiting some of the city's international and cultural institutions in this annual program. DC Events is hosting a variety of events celebrating cultures from around the globe for your family to attend.

- **Best ages:** 4 and up, depending on the event
- **Time requirement:** Time requirements vary based on the event
- **Cost expectation:** Prices vary based on event
- **Tip:** Consider finding events related to your families culture to help kids connect with their past as well as events you are unfamiliar with to expand their horizons.

Rock Creek Park

When President Ulysses S. Grant founded the first National Park in 1872, he began a movement that created some of our nation's greatest natural gems. Explore one of Rock Creek Park's many branches this summer for an outdoor adventure.

- **Best ages:** 7 and up (long walks involved)
- **Time requirement:** 1-2 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Parks are free to visit.
- **Tip:** Research parking options ahead of time, as not all park entrances are near a lot.

Clara Barton Missing Soldiers Museum

Honoring the soldiers lost during the Civil War and the hard work completed to uncover what happened to them, the Clara Barton Missing Soldiers Museum explores Barton's personal and professional life while learning about the nuances of American History.

- **Best ages:** 10+
- **Time Requirement:** 1-2 hours
- **Cost Expectation:** Free for children, \$9.50 for adults
- **Tip:** Visiting and guided tour hours are limited, so be sure to check the website and plan your trip in advance.

Summer of Sunflowers

Have a fun family outing while getting summer decor for your home at Great Country Farm's Summer of Sunflowers event, where children can play in the fields and pick their own flowers.

- **Best ages:** 3-11
- **Time requirement:** 1-2.5 hours
- **Cost expectation:** Flowers cost \$1 per bloom.
- **Tip:** Bring your own clippers so you won't have to borrow from the Farm Market.

Colonial Williamsburg

A real glance into American history through exciting activities and games the whole family can enjoy. With everything from comedy and fashion shows to re-enactments of world-changing historical events, Colonial Williamsburg celebrates many aspects of American history.

- **Best ages:** 4 and up
- **Time requirements:** Full-day excursion
- **Cost expectation:** \$10 for children 6-12 and \$37.50 for people 13 and older
- **Tip:** Take a look at the event schedule for the day of your visit to ensure every family member gets to see their favorite part of the town.

Navy Yard

A center of DC fun and culture, a visit to Navy Yard will allow your kids to play on waterside swings, look at beautiful views of the city and Potomac, enjoy food from Gordon Ramsay's restaurants and try one of several unique ice cream stores along the pier.

- **Best ages:** All ages.
- **Time requirement:** 1-2 hours
- **Cost expectations:** While Navy Yard is free to visit and explore, restaurants and shops in the area have a variety of prices.
- **Tip:** Consider taking older kids and teens by Navy Yard at sunset to get photos in front of a beautiful sunset.





PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

Experience international adventures at the National Geographic Museum

Take a trip to some of the world's most incredible sites through the eyes of great adventurers.

BY STEVIE ROSENFELD

Experience the natural world like you've never seen it before at the National Geographic Museum of Exploration. Look through the lens of National Geographic's best photographers and writers at this new museum and immersive experience opening on June 26.

WHY KIDS WILL LOVE IT

The Museum of Exploration offers a glimpse into some of the farthest reaches of our planet. At the museum, you and your family will have a chance to see things glimpsed only by the world's most daring explorers. At the "Rolex Explorers" exhibit, kids can follow the journeys of famous explorers from the



PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

inception of their journeys to the final destinations.

To truly immerse yourself in the greatest natural landscapes of our planet, visit the outdoor courtyard, which brings to life six interactive ecosystems through life-sized animal statues and wildlife prints. In this area, kids can touch, listen and play in incredible landscapes while learning about the beauty of biodiversity. These ecosystems are modeled on the six global environments: tropical and temperate forests, oceans, deserts, polar regions and grasslands.

Environmentally inclined kids can also stop by the "Animals of Earth" Photo Ark, which houses striking portraits of some of the Earth's most magnificent and endangered species.

For history-minded students or nostalgic adults, stop by "The Archives" to learn about National Geographic's history of exploration and storytelling, look at the "In Focus" showcase of celebrated photographs, or swing by the Magazine Gallery, which contains artifacts dating back to 1888.



PHOTO BY JOY ASICO-SMITH



PLANNING YOUR VISIT

The National Geographic Museum of Exploration opened on June 26 and features special interactive activities. Adult tickets cost \$30, youth tickets \$23 and are free for children 4 and under.

Discounted tickets are available for families enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the Women, Infants and Children program as part of the Museums for All program.

Exhibits at the museum are wheelchair-accessible and offer closed captioning, assistive listening devices and ASL interpretation. Braille signage and screen-reader compatible visual descriptions are also available. Sensory bags are available to borrow at the main lobby desk to assist with stimulation or dampening. There is also a quiet space available for sensory-sensitive visitors, as well as spaces for nursing.

The museum is accessible via the Red, Blue, Orange and Silver Metro lines as well as the D60 and D6X bus routes. There is no onsite parking available, so public transport or ridesharing might be your best travel options.

■ **Location:** 1600 M St. NW, Washington, DC

■ **Hours:** 9 a.m.-8 p.m. daily



MAKE A DAY OF IT

Coffee Bar

Get energized for your visit by stopping at the Coffee Bar, featuring artisan drinks and baked goods.

■ **Location:** 1200 17th St. NW, Washington, DC

Swing 365 Golf

In this indoor golf course, experienced golfers and young beginners can try their hand at the sport for a virtual simulation. Visiting Swing 365 after the National Geographic Museum is a great way to combine education and activity.

■ **Location:** 1101 16th St. NW, Washington, DC

Dauphine

With a brunch menu for the whole family, Dauphine is a unique dining experience only a block from the museum. Consider stopping by on a Sunday to take in live jazz music while you eat.

■ **Location:** 1100 15th St. NW, Washington, DC

Grazzie Nona

Enjoy classic Italian dishes after your trip at Grazzie Nona. Stop by for lunch, dinner or brunch.

■ **Location:** 1100 15th St. NW, Washington, DC

The Mall

After learning about the far reaches of the world, learn about history closer to home by taking in the monuments of the National Mall less than a mile from the museum.

■ **Location:** Between Independence Avenue and Constitution Avenue





PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL HARBOR

National Harbor's Kids Day returns for the summer

From interactive story times and PBS Kids activities to live performances and hands-on workshops, National Harbor's Kids Day is packed with free family fun all summer long.

BY JENNA DOLCH

Summer mornings just got a lot more exciting at National Harbor.

Returning for the summer, Kids Day transforms the National Harbor Plaza into a lively family-friendly destination every Tuesday morning from June through August. The weekly series combines entertainment, educational activities and interactive experiences designed to keep little ones engaged while giving parents an easy (and free) summer outing option.

With waterfront views, rotating themes and activities for a wide range of ages, it's the kind of event families can visit more than once without feeling repetitive.

WHAT IS KIDS DAY?

Kids Day is National Harbor's recurring summer event series focused entirely on family fun. Families can gather at the Plaza for different themed activities ranging from performances and story times to educational workshops and interactive entertainment at 10:30 a.m. every Tuesday.

One week might feature dancing and PBS Kids characters, while another could include wildlife-themed art activities, musical theater performances or opportunities to meet local firefighters and police officers.

The rotating schedule keeps the experience fresh throughout the summer and makes it easy for families to pick dates based on their children's interests.

WHAT FAMILIES CAN EXPECT

One of the biggest highlights this year is the return of WHUT, Howard University Television's interactive PBS Kids programming. The 2026 theme, "Retro PBS Kids," blends nostalgic favorites with newer characters and activities designed to spark cross-generational fun for both kids and parents.

Families can also look forward to:

- Interactive story times with the Prince George's County Memorial Library System
- Meet-and-greets with police and fire departments
- Hands-on wildlife and art workshops
- Historical activities with George Washington's Mount Vernon
- More fun events

The event series mixes education with entertainment in a way that feels playful rather than overly structured, ideal for younger children who learn best through movement, music and hands-on activities.

STANDOUT SUMMER EVENTS

Retro PBS Kids Experiences

WHUT's PBS Kids programming will appear multiple times throughout the summer and is expected to be one of the season's biggest draws. Families can participate in activities

inspired by beloved PBS Kids shows while exploring creativity, storytelling and interactive learning.

Wildlife Wonder Boat Activities

Several events this summer tie into National Harbor's newest public artwork, Wildlife Wonder Boat. Children can participate in coloring activities, learn about endangered species and even earn certificates while exploring themes centered around wildlife conservation.

Teen Performance Ensemble Musical

On July 28, families can catch a special performance of "The Case of the Vanishing Vase," a kid-friendly musical mystery presented by the Teen Performance Ensemble. The interactive storyline and live theater format make it especially fun for elementary-aged children.

Australian Didgeridoo Workshop

One of the most unique events of the summer arrives Aug. 11 when families can learn about the didgeridoo from Australian artist Cameron McCarthy. Kids will get an introduction to the instrument's history, sound and storytelling traditions.

WHY PARENTS LOVE IT

For DMV parents, Kids Day checks several important boxes:

- It's free
- It happens during daytime hours
- It's stroller-friendly
- It offers built-in variety
- It's educational
- There are restaurants, bathrooms and shaded areas nearby

The waterfront location also makes it easy to turn the event into a full day outing. Families can grab lunch, ride the Capital Wheel, walk along the harbor or cool off with ice cream afterward.

Because activities begin in the morning, it's also a great option before peak summer heat kicks in later in the day.

Good to know before you go

KIDS DAY AT NATIONAL HARBOR

- **Time:** 10:30 a.m. Tuesdays, June-August
- **Location:** 165 Waterfront St., National Harbor
- **Cost:** Free
- **Phone:** (877) 628-5427

Best for:

- Toddlers and elementary-aged children
- Families looking for free weekday activities
- Summer playdates
- Educational entertainment
- Waterfront family outings

Parent tips:

- Arrive early for shaded seating areas.
- Bring water, sunscreen and strollers for younger kids.
- Parking garages nearby can fill quickly on busy summer mornings.
- Pair the event with lunch or dessert around the Harbor afterward.

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Small-town charm and big family fun

From train museums and scenic trails to sweet shops and Main Street adventures, Ellicott City is packed with family-friendly fun worth exploring.

BY JENNA DOLCH

With its historic Main Street, scenic walking trails and old-fashioned charm, Ellicott City feels a little bit like stepping into a storybook.

Located in Howard County, the town has become a favorite family day-trip destination thanks to its mix of history, shopping, outdoor fun and food stops that work well for kids and adults alike. Families can spend the morning exploring train history, the afternoon hiking or browsing Main Street and finish the day with ice cream or candy shops before heading home.

Whether you're visiting for a few hours or making a full weekend out of it, here are 10 family-friendly things to do in Ellicott City.

1. Explore Historic Main Street

The heart of Ellicott City is its historic Main Street, lined with colorful storefronts, locally owned shops and charming stone buildings dating back centuries. Families love wandering through the area because there's always something to discover: toy stores, candy shops, cafés, bakeries and quirky boutiques included. The walkable streets also make it stroller-friendly for younger kids.

- **Location:** Main Street, Ellicott City
- **Best For:** Family strolls and shopping
- **Tip:** Weekday mornings tend to be much less crowded.

2. Visit the B&O Ellicott City Station Museum

Train-loving kids will immediately love the B&O Ellicott City Station Museum, which is the oldest surviving railroad station in America. Families can explore historic train cars, interactive

exhibits and railroad history while learning how trains shaped Maryland transportation. The outdoor train displays are usually the biggest hit with younger visitors.

- **Address:** 3711 Maryland Ave., Ellicott City
- **Hours:** 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Wednesday-Thursday; 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Friday-Sunday
- **Phone:** (410) 313-1945
- **Planning Info**
- **Best ages:** Preschool-elementary age
- **How long families usually stay:** 1-2 hours
- **Cost expectation:** \$
- **One practical tip:** Parking near the museum fills quickly on weekends.

3. Hike Patapsco Valley State Park

Families wanting outdoor adventure will love exploring Patapsco Valley State Park. The massive park offers hiking trails, river views, swinging bridges and picnic areas that make it easy to spend several hours outdoors. Trails range from beginner-friendly walks to more adventurous routes for older kids.

- **Location:** 8020 Baltimore National Pike, Ellicott City
- **Hours:** 9 a.m.-sunset daily
- **Phone:** (410) 461-5005
- **Planning Info**
- **Best ages:** Elementary age and up
- **How long families usually stay:** 2-4 hours
- **Cost expectation:** \$
- **One practical tip:** Wear sturdy shoes; some trails can get muddy after rain.

4. Stop by Little Market Café

Little Market Café is one of the most family-friendly lunch spots near Main Street thanks to its casual atmosphere and cozy

setup. Parents love the coffee and sandwiches while kids usually gravitate toward pastries, smoothies and baked treats. Outdoor seating is especially nice during cooler weather.

- **Address:** 3731 Hamilton St., Ellicott City
- **Hours:** 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday and Sunday; 9 a.m.-8 p.m. Friday-Saturday
- **Phone:** (410) 465-5995
- **Planning Info**
- **Best ages:** All ages
- **How long families usually stay:** 45 minutes-1 hour
- **Cost expectation:** \$\$
- **One practical tip:** Outdoor tables fill quickly during weekend brunch hours.

5. Hunt for books at Backwater Books

Backwater Books feels like the kind of cozy independent bookstore families stumble into and accidentally spend an hour exploring. The shelves are packed floor-to-ceiling with used books, hidden finds and kid-friendly reads. Older children especially love browsing the maze-like setup.

- **Address:** 8156 Main St., Ellicott City
- **Hours:** 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday; 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday; 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Saturday; 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday
- **Phone:** (410) 696-2482
- **Planning Info**
- **Best ages:** Elementary age and up
- **How long families usually stay:** 30-60 minutes
- **Cost expectation:** \$
- **One practical tip:** Bring cash just in case for smaller purchases.

6. Walk the Trolley Trail

The Trolley Trail offers a scenic and family-friendly walking path connecting parts of Ellicott City and nearby communities. The paved trail works well for strollers, scooters and beginner bike riders while offering beautiful wooded scenery along the way.

- **Location:** West end of Edmonson Avenue (at Chalfonte Ave)
- **Best For:** Family walks and beginner biking
- **Tip:** Morning walks are cooler during summer months.

7. Visit Clark's Elioak Farm

Clark's Elioak Farm is one of the area's most beloved family attractions and an absolute must for younger children. Families can feed animals, explore fairy tale displays, ride pony rides and visit playground areas all in one visit. The farm's storybook-inspired attractions feel especially magical for toddlers and preschoolers.

- **Address:** 10500 Clarksville Pike, Ellicott City
- **Hours:** 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday; 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Saturday-Sunday
- **Phone:** (410) 730-4049
- **Planning Info**
- **Best ages:** Toddlers-elementary age
- **How long families usually stay:** 2-4 hours



PHOTO COURTESY CLARK'S ELIOAK FARM

- **Cost expectation:** \$\$
- **One practical tip:** Arrive early during fall weekends; it gets extremely busy.

8. Explore the Ellicott Mills Children's Museum

Tucked inside a historic building near Main Street, the Ellicott Mills Children's Museum offers hands-on exhibits designed specifically for younger kids. Families can explore interactive displays centered around local history, community life and imaginative play. The smaller size makes it especially manageable for toddlers and preschoolers who can get overwhelmed in larger museums.

- **Address:** 3725 Park Ave., Ellicott City
- **Hours:** 1-5 p.m. Saturday-Sunday
- **Phone:** (410) 480-3250
- **Planning Info**
- **Best ages:** Toddlers-preschool age
- **How long families usually stay:** 45 minutes-1.5 hours
- **Cost expectation:** \$
- **One practical tip:** Double-check seasonal hours before visiting since operating days can vary.

9. Spend the afternoon at Centennial Park

Centennial Park is one of Howard County's most popular outdoor family destinations for good reason. The park features a scenic lake, playgrounds, picnic areas, paved walking trails and paddleboat rentals during warmer months. Families often spend an entire afternoon here biking, feeding ducks or letting kids burn energy at the playgrounds.

- **Address:** 10000 Clarksville Pike, Ellicott City
- **Hours:** Sunrise-sunset daily
- **Phone:** (410) 313-7256
- **Planning Info**
- **Best ages:** All ages
- **How long families usually stay:** 2-4 hours
- **Cost expectation:** \$
- **One practical tip:** Arrive earlier on weekends, parking fills quickly during nice weather.

10. Play glow-in-the-dark mini golf at Monster Mini Golf

For families looking for indoor fun, Monster Mini Golf delivers a mix of mini golf, arcade games and neon-lit entertainment that kids absolutely love. The glow-in-the-dark course feels playful rather than scary, making it fun for a wide age range. Beyond mini golf, there are arcade games, laser maze activities and plenty of air-conditioned fun during hot or rainy days. It's especially popular for teens and birthday outings.

- **Address:** 7351 Assateague Dr., Ste. 380, Jessup
- **Hours:** Noon-8:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday; noon-10 p.m. Friday; 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Saturday; 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Sunday
- **Phone:** (410) 579-4653
- **Planning Info**
- **Best ages:** Elementary age-teens
- **How long families usually stay:** 1-2 hours
- **Cost expectation:** \$\$
- **One practical tip:** Weekday evenings are usually much less crowded than weekends.

A sweet taste of the DMV

Discover the capital region's most beloved bakeries, serving everything from buttery croissants to authentic European pastries.

BY JACQUELINE KIM

From cozy neighborhood cafes to award-winning pastry shops, these DMV gems are serving up everything from Parisian-style meringues to hand-stretched Austrian strudels — and they're worth every bite. Here are some of the best spots to get pastries across Washington, DC, Maryland and Virginia to add to your must-visit list.

Washington, DC

Tatte Bakery & Cafe

Tatte Bakery & Cafe originated in Boston in the kitchen of founder Tzurit Or and has since expanded with additional locations throughout Greater Boston, Maryland, Virginia and DC. The mission of the Tatte Bakery & Cafe is to bring communities together with comforting food and pastries.

- **Address:** 1200 New Hampshire Ave. NW, Washington, DC
- **Hours:** 7 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday-Saturday, 8 a.m.-7 p.m. Sunday
- **What to try:** Kouign-Amann, Pistachio Croissant or Halva Bomb

Baked & Wired

Baked & Wired is a family-owned neighborhood bakery located in Georgetown. They are well known for their signature granola and their big cupcakes that range from flavors such as Dirty Chai Cupcake to Almond Orangesicle to Razmanian Devil



PHOTO BY SARAH CULVER



PHOTO BY BIGSTOCK/LUCKY BUSINESS

Cupcake. They serve a variety of baked goods and breakfast items including oatmeal, quiches, donuts, breakfast breads, biscuits and pound cakes.

- **Address:** 1052 Thomas Jefferson St. NW, Washington, DC
- **Hours:** 8 a.m.-4 p.m. daily
- **What to try:** Chocolate Strawberry Cupcake or The Tessita

Un Je Ne Sais Quoi

Un Je Ne Sais Quoi is a bakery located in DC known for its authentic French pastries. They received the RAMMY Award for Pastry Chef of the Year by the Restaurant Association Metropolitan Washington in 2022. They specialize in delicate cloud-like meringues and whipped cream pastries that taste like a bite of Paris.

- **Address:** 1361 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC
- **Hours:** 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday
- **What to try:** Merveilleux, Almond Croissant, Pistachio Croissant or Chocolate Eclair

Nino's Bakery

Nino's Bakery is a French and Italian bakery that serves pastries, sweets and roasted coffee. All pastries are hand-crafted from scratch using French and Italian techniques over the course of three days. Nino's Bakery is committed to bringing bits and flavors of Europe to the United States for a quality experience for customers.

- **Address:** 1310 L St. NW, No. 100, Washington, DC
- **Hours:** 8 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-noon Saturday
- **What to try:** Pistachio Croissant, Blueberry Scone or Sfogliatelle



PHOTO BY NINO'S BAKERY

Maryland

La Poteria Local

La Poteria Local is a Colombian cafe located in Montgomery Village. Its cozy and intimate interior immediately invites customers into another environment outside of the U.S. La Poteria Local serves traditional Colombian flavors along with modern twists, including their signature Puff Pastry Empanadas, and other drinks and treats like their Agua de Panela, their Alto de Letras, their Arepa Toast and Buñuelos.

- **Address:** 19116 Montgomery Village Ave., Montgomery Village
- **Hours:** 7 a.m.-7 p.m. daily
- **What to try:** Beef Empanada (Puff Pastry), Chicken Puff Pastry Empanada, Pandebono or Pan de Waffle - Berries & Arequipe



PHOTO BY SUNFLOWER BAKERY

Sunflower Bakery

Sunflower Bakery is a bakery located in Rockville that is committed to providing employment opportunities to young adults and teens that have learning differences through workforce exposure in the culinary arts. They have provided employment training to over 675 student employees since 2009, and continue to create an impact. They provide training in pastry, hospitality and culinary arts, and then support their graduates in finding competitive employment in the communities where they live.

- **Address:** 5951 Halpine Road, Rockville
- **Hours:** 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Friday, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Sunday
- **What to try:** Hamantaschen and tea bread/loaves

Sunday Morning Bakehouse

Sunday Morning Bakehouse is a bakery located in Montgomery County with breakfast favorites like handmade croissants, seasonal bread and high-quality pastries. The mission of the bakery is to bring the comfort and simplicity of Sunday mornings straight to customers in a cozy atmosphere.

- **Address:** 1869 Grand Park Ave., North Bethesda
- **Hours:** 7 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Saturday, 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday
- **What to try:** Banana Cream Pie Croissant, Tiramisu Donut or Matcha Croissant

Quartermaine Coffee Roasters

If you're in search of premier coffee or tea, Quartermaine Coffee Roasters is a must-try in the DMV area with several locations.

Quartermaine Coffee Roasters was founded in 1991 in Rockville,

MD, by the founders of

Starbucks Coffee and is committed to providing customers with the highest quality roasted coffee. They also serve a variety of fresh juices, smoothies, pastries, cookies and sweets. They also have a location in Bethesda, MD (4817 Bethesda Ave.)

- **Address:** 4972 Wyaconda Road, Rockville
- **Hours:** 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday
- **What to try:** Chocolate croissant or strawberry toaster pastry



PHOTO BY QUARTERMAINE COFFEE ROASTERS

Virginia

Little Austria

Little Austria is a bakery located in Sterling that specializes in traditional and authentic strudels as well as other pastries. The Austrian shop owners, Berni and Helene, are committed to providing customers with authentic

handmade strudels that follow traditional hand-stretching techniques. Be aware that Little Austria is not a walk-in bakery and strudels must be ordered in advance for pick up.

- **Address:** 45915 Maries Road S 102, Sterling
- **Hours:** Allow 48 hours advance notice to get your order ready.
- **What to try:** Traditional apple strudel or apple strudel with mixed berries



PHOTO BY LITTLE AUSTRIA

Bakery Museum & Co

Bakery Museum & Co is a cafe located in Fairfax that serves high-quality drinks, coffees, pastries, cakes and sandwiches in a cozy museum-like setting for a comfortable and casual customer experience. Have a slow start to your morning and allow yourself to get absorbed into the pleasant atmosphere of Bakery Museum & Co and get lost in their variety of menu options.

- **Address:** 11923B Lee Highway, Fairfax
- **Hours:** 8 a.m.-9:30 p.m. daily
- **What to try:** Guava Danish or Basque Cheesecake



BIGSTOCK/LUCKY BUSINESS

Beat the summer heat

Cool off and get outdoors with the family this summer at these natural swimming spots in Maryland and Virginia.

BY STEVIE ROSENFELD

While many people want to beat the heat but still want to get outside, it can be tough to find safe and clean places for swimming in DC. Luckily, we've cataloged some of the best natural, outdoor swimming spots for kids of all ages in Maryland and Virginia.

2-4 YEARS OLD

Maryland

Cunningham Falls State Park

A gorgeous marina with opportunities to hike, fish, canoe and swim, Cunningham Falls is the perfect place for little ones

to meet wildlife and splash around.

■ **Location:** 14274 William Houck Drive, Thurmont, MD

Patapsco Valley State Park

Encompassing the 32 miles of the Patapsco River, there are many recreation areas in this park for kids to explore, make friends and swim in the river.

■ **Location:** 8020 Baltimore National Pike, Ellicott City, MD

Mayo Beach Park

Located at the mouth of the South River, Mayo Beach allows kids to explore the cove, splash in tide pools and build sandcastles. Reservation passes are needed on certain days each month and can be obtained the Thursday before your visit online.

■ **Location:** 4150 Honeysuckle Drive, Edgewater, MD

5-9 YEARS OLD

Virginia

White Oak and Cedar Run Trail

While not ideal for long swims, you can dip your toes in waterfalls and rivers in the White Oak Canyon and Cedar Run trail. The trail itself is quite long if your family is avid hikers, but for kids who don't love walking, the water formations are near the trail's entrance.

■ **Location:** Located in Shenandoah National Park

Overall Run Falls

Only 300 yards from the trailhead, a scenic swimming hole makes this part of Shenandoah truly unique. Swimming here will create a memory kids will have for a lifetime.

■ **Location:** Located in the North District of Shenandoah National Park, near Bentonville and Luray

Maryland

Sandy Point State Park

Home to turtles, lighthouses, kite-flying and incredible water to wade through, Sandy Point State Park is scenic and secluded. Day passes are needed to visit in the summer and are available online.

■ **Location:** 1100 E College Parkway, Annapolis, MD

10+

Maryland

National Harbor

Through the WaveOne Open Water swim program, older kids can improve their swimming skills, build their confidence and maybe enjoy some competition by swimming in National Harbor with people of a variety of ages and experiences.

■ **Location:** 165 Waterfront St., Oxon Hill, MD

Kilgore Falls

This 17-foot-high waterfall, the second-highest vertical drop fall in Maryland, is housed in the environmentally sensitive and beautiful Falling Branch area of Rocks State Park. Patrons are permitted to wade and swim at their leisure, though there are no lifeguards present and jumping into the creek from the falls is discouraged.

■ **Location:** The Falling Branch area of Rocks State Park

Virginia

Whiteoak Canyon

A potentially strenuous hike can be made more relaxing by stopping for a dip at one of the many swimming holes or waterfalls along the path. With no cell service available on this trail, Whiteoak Canyon is the perfect place to unplug and get your feet wet this summer.

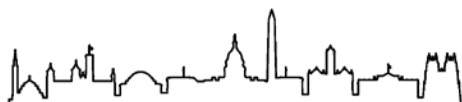
■ **Location:** Shenandoah National Park in Virginia

Lake Laura

A beautiful and secluded lake, Lake Laura is home to a host of activities like boating, fishing, hiking and swimming.

■ **Location:** 1982 Fairway Drive, Basye, VA





DC EVENTS JULY 2026

Great American State Fair

July 1-10. The Great American State Fair is a 16-day national exposition that runs through July 10 on the National Mall, spanning from the U.S. Capitol to the Washington Monument, uniting all 56 U.S. states and territories in a World's Fair-scale event. Attractions include a 110-foot Ferris wheel overlooking the National Mall, the refurbished Smithsonian National Carousel, robotics demonstrations, augmented reality activations and daily themed cultural programming for families. Free, with RSVP recommended.

■ **Location:** National Mall, from the U.S. Capitol to the Washington Monument, Washington, DC

Curious George: Let's Get Curious! Returns to National Children's Museum

July 1-31. Young learners ages 3-7 can join Curious George for hands-on STEM adventures that encourage curiosity, problem-solving and playful discovery. Families can explore interactive spaces including an apartment building with pulleys, a counting-and-sorting produce stand, a construction site, mini golf, a wind-powered art farm and George's space rocket. Included with museum admission; children under 1 and museum members are free.

■ **Location:** National Children's Museum, 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC

Taste of History: Ongoing Food Experience on the National Mall

July 1-31. Families visiting the National Mall can make mealtime part of the outing with Taste of History, an ongoing food kiosk experience near major landmarks and Smithsonian museums. Visitors can explore multiple kiosks, try location-inspired menu items and use mobile ordering for a quicker stop between museum visits. Free to explore; food purchases are available.

■ **Location:** National Mall, multiple locations along Jefferson Drive SW, Washington, DC

The Little Prince

July 2-5. Families can follow the adventures of a curious child from a tiny planet in this puppet adaptation of *The Little Prince*. When a stranded aviator meets the young traveler in the Sahara Desert, he is reminded to see the world through a child's eyes. Based on the beloved classic by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, this production is recommended for ages 4 and up and runs approximately 45 minutes. Tickets are required.

■ **Location:** The Puppet Co. Playhouse, 7300 MacArthur Blvd., Glen Echo, MD

Hershey Super Sweet Adventure

July 2-4. Families can step inside a candy-themed adventure

filled with hands-on games, multi-sensory activities and interactive play inspired by Hershey's iconic treats. Highlights include Reese's, Hershey's Kisses, Twizzlers, Jolly Rancher, Bubble Yum and a finale where guests can personalize a Hershey's Milk Chocolate bar wrapper. Tickets are required.

■ **Location:** Tysons Corner Center, 1961 Chain Bridge Road, Tysons, VA



Spirit of '76 Jubilee

July 2-4. The Capitol Visitor Center is hosting the Spirit of '76 Programming Jubilee to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. The free, family-friendly event features America 250 Capitol tours, a bicentennial road trip, curator talks and special guest presentations from the U.S. Mint, Smithsonian National Postal Museum, Library of Congress and U.S. Botanic Garden on July 2. Stop by on July 4 for complimentary birthday cake while supplies last. All tours, programs and activities are free and open to the public.

■ **Location:** Capitol Visitor Center, 1st St. SE, Washington, DC

The Source Overview

July 3-4. Kids and teens can explore *The Source*, a new experiential research gallery at the Library of Congress. Visitors can dive into Library collections, interact with primary sources and discover how original documents, images and materials help tell stories from the past. Free.

■ **Location:** The Library of Congress, 101 Independence Ave. SE, Washington, DC

Young Washington

July 3-4. Families can learn about George Washington's early life in this short performance tracing his journey from surveyor to commander and first president of the United States. The 30-minute production offers a timely Independence Day weekend outing for kids interested in American history. Tickets are required.

■ **Location:** Miracle Theatre, 535 8th St. SE, Washington, DC

America 250 July Music Performances

July 3-31. Families can enjoy free outdoor music performances every Friday in July at Eastern Market Metro Park. The series features local talent, lively summer sounds and a relaxed Capitol Hill setting where visitors can bring a picnic blanket, pick up nearby food and enjoy an evening in the park. Free.

■ **Location:** Eastern Market Metro Park, 701 Pennsylvania Ave. SE, Washington, DC



July Fourth at the National Archives

July 4. Families can celebrate Independence Day at the National Archives with a patriotic tradition that includes a ceremonial reading of the Declaration of Independence on the museum steps. Free family activities begin at 8:30 a.m., making this a meaningful July Fourth outing in the heart of Washington, DC.

■ **Location:** National Archives Museum, 701 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC

Sleeping Beauty: The Time Traveler

July 4-26. Families can enjoy a time-traveling twist on *Sleeping Beauty* as Rolly is swept back to the Age of Charlemagne and meets Aurora, a brave 12-year-old princess dreaming of adventure. This musical production blends magic, friendship and courage as the pair work to outsmart a mysterious curse. Tickets are required.

■ **Location:** Adventure Theatre, 7300 MacArthur Blvd., Glen Echo, MD



Minecraft Animation

July 6-10 and July 27-31. Kids can turn their love of Minecraft into a hands-on tech camp focused on animation, creativity and computational thinking. Guided by Code Ninjas instructors, campers build digital skills while exploring technology, problem-solving and collaboration through a theme they already enjoy. Registration required.

■ **Location:** Code Ninjas Alexandria, 4694 King St., Suite 15, Alexandria, VA



Bluegrass Forever at the National Postal Museum

July 16. Families can celebrate the Bluegrass Forever stamp with an evening of music, printmaking and hands-on activities at the National Postal Museum. Guests can enjoy live music from King Street Bluegrass, explore museum exhibits and learn about the art behind postage. Free; registration is recommended.

■ **Location:** Smithsonian National Postal Museum, 2 Massachusetts Ave. NE, Washington, DC

Smithsonian Family Day

July 25. The Smithsonian is hosting a free Family Day, bringing together families to celebrate America's 250th birthday through a full day of hands-on activities, live performances and outdoor fun in the Haupt Garden. The historic space will feature theater and dance performances, live music and singalongs, historical re-enactors and educational activity zones for all ages.

■ **Location:** Arts and Industries Building 900 Jefferson Drive, SW, Washington, DC





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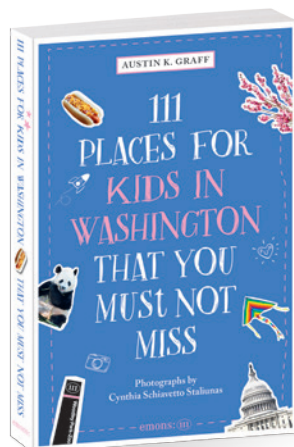
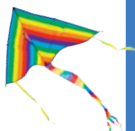
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WASHINGTON, DC FOR KIDS — BEYOND THE OBVIOUS

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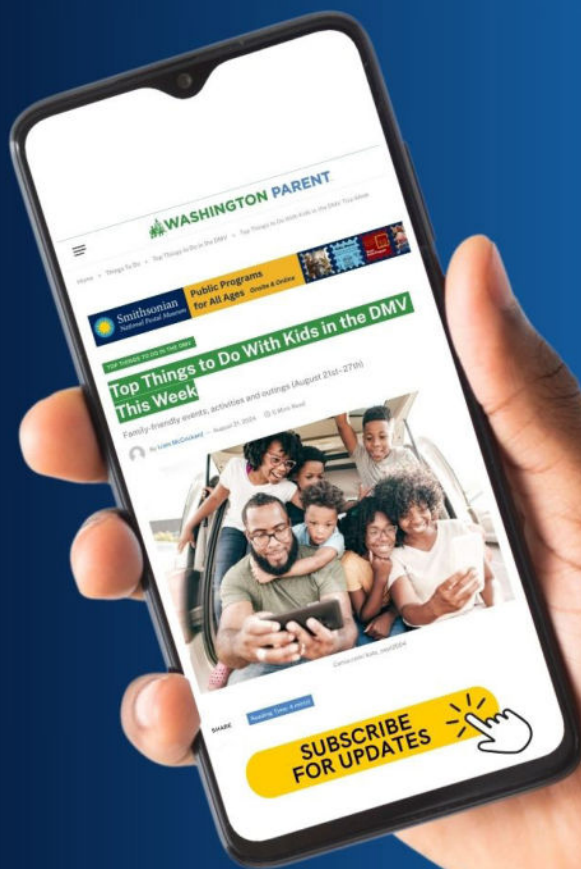
What does one million dollars look like? Where can you see a real moon rock? How can you go undercover as a spy? And which president had a famous Scottish terrier? From hidden parks and quirky museums to hands-on adventures, this guide turns DC into a playground for curious kids and grown-ups alike.

emoons:



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Family-friendly events,
activities and outings are
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Ages 2-6 yrs.
brooksfIELDSschool.org

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

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.

HAPPY 250TH *Birthday* AMERICA!

Wishing everyone
a **Happy July 4th!**

— From —



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