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OCTOBER 2026

**BOO
AT
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ZOO**

**HALLOWEEN
TREATS**

**DÍA DE
LOS
MUERTOS**

**YOUR
GUIDE TO
HALLOWEEN**

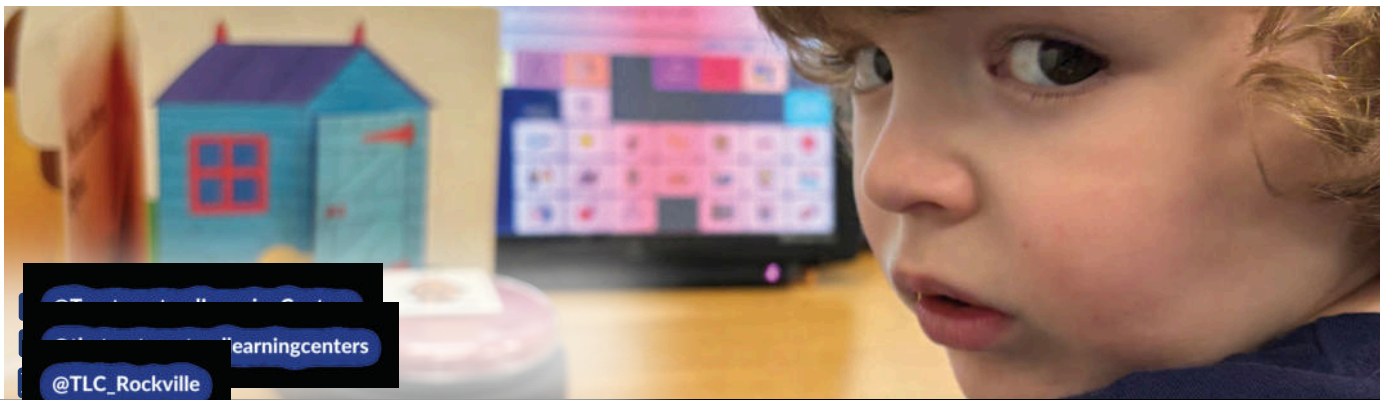




Free Hands-on Community Day

Saturday, October 17, 10 am to 5 pm

NATIONAL
BUILDING
MUSEUM



THE TREATMENT AND LEARNING CENTERS



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Outpatient Services
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Summer Programs
 1390 Piccard Drive, **Suite 210**
 Rockville, MD 20850

The Family Hearing Center
The Outcomes Service
 1390 Piccard Drive, **Suite 120**
 Rockville, MD 20850

The Katherine Thomas School
 9975 Medical Center Drive
 Rockville, MD 20850

☎ (301) 424-5200

✉ info@ttlc.org

🌐 www.ttlc.org

OVERVIEW

The Treatment and Learning Centers (TLC) is a private, non-profit organization founded in 1950 and located in Rockville, Maryland.

Each year, TLC's programs serve individuals with a wide range of differing abilities. Our mission is to improve lives and expand possibilities for these individuals.

TLC FAMILY OF SERVICES

- Speech-Language Pathology
- Occupational Therapy
- Testing, Tutoring, and Counseling
- The Katherine Thomas School
- The Family Hearing Center
- The Outcomes Service
- Early Intervention Services
- Social-Emotional Groups
- Summer Programs

Our Staff

TLC's professional staff has the utmost personal concern to provide the best therapy, education, support, and care possible. Our staff and innovative programs continue to provide a foundation for the achievement of greater personal independence and success for everyone who walks through our doors.



WHO WE SERVE

We specialize in **learning differences, autism, developmental delays, hearing loss, and other challenges** that may interfere with development, learning, and active participation in the community.

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ON THE COVER

Your Halloween Guide is Here!

THE RESULTS ARE IN!

Our readers have spoken.



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3 THINGS TO KNOW THIS MONTH



BRANDI CALHOUN,
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Your October highlights

From a full weekend of Halloween festivities to a folk-music banjo and a baseball team called the Chaos Crew, here's what's worth planning for this month.

This month's three things not to miss include a Halloween season worth planning ahead for, a banjo signed by folk legends and a baseball game where the Lucky Llamas take on the Chaos Crew. Whether you're mapping out a weekend of trick-or-treating and decorated neighborhoods, wandering through 150 objects that tell the story of America's living traditions or looking for a night out where trick plays are encouraged, there's something for everyone. Grab a calendar (and maybe a costume), because some of these events sell out fast.

Don't miss out on fun, local Halloween events

With Halloween landing on a Saturday this year, families in DC, Maryland and Virginia have a full weekend of festivities to plan around. Our roundup of 20 family-friendly ways to celebrate covers community festivals like Boo at the Zoo (Oct. 16-18) and Alexandria's Fall-O-Ween, trick-or-treat events at spots like Mount Vernon and Tudor Place, and neighborhoods known for their decorations, including Chevy Chase, DC and Del Ray. For older kids who like a good scare, there are also ghost tours and haunted houses. Some popular events sell out



BIGSTOCK/ FANVELDMAN



New exhibition celebrates the American Folklife Center

"Alive in Many Hands," a new exhibition from the Library of Congress's American Folklife Center, explores America's living cultural traditions through more than 150 objects, photos, recordings and films. It marks the Center's 50th anniversary and is part of the Library's America 250 celebration. Highlights include an 1890 wax cylinder of Passamaquoddy songs, believed to be the earliest ethnographic field recordings, a banjo signed by Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Lead Belly and Burl Ives, and a sewing machine used to assemble AIDS Memorial Quilt panels. Together, the items show how people share and sustain traditions through music, work, play and community. An online version of the exhibition is also available.

Baseball experience for all ages

For all, a high-energy, co-ed "show baseball" game will come to Prince George's Stadium on Oct. 3, as the finale of its 2026 national two-hour, six-inning event pits the Lucky Llamas against the Chaos Crew in a fast-paced twist on the game, with trick plays, crowd interaction and a festive atmosphere. Players include former professional players and minor league standouts, softball stars and TV personalities. Boom Ball is designed for all ages, sports fans and first-timers alike. For more details are at BoomBallTour.com.



PHOTOS COURTESY BOOMBALLTOUR.COM





Step Into the World of Building

at the National Building Museum's The Big Build!

BY CAROLINE MORALES

Get ready for a day of building, learning, and hands-on fun at The Big Build, a free annual festival at the National Building Museum that invites kids and families to experience the world of construction up close. On Saturday, October 17, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., the museum will be filled with interactive exhibits, industry experts and engaging activities for all ages. Whether you're curious about how things are made or just want to climb inside a real construction truck, there's something for everyone.

A Hands-On Celebration of Design and Construction

The Big Build is more than just a fun family outing. It's an immersive educational event that introduces young people to the many careers and skills involved in the built environment. Participants will have the chance to work alongside professionals in construction, engineering, architecture and the skilled trades. From brick layers to designers and heavy equipment operators, experts from across the industry will be on-site to demonstrate their work and share what makes their work meaningful.

This annual event encourages kids to get their hands dirty (safely, of course) as they explore tools, materials and techniques used to create the buildings and infrastructure that shape our communities. With more than a dozen activity stations and dozens of participating organizations, the museum will be transformed into a bustling workshop of creativity and discovery.





Meet the Makers: Industry Partners and Exhibitors

As you walk into the museum's grand Great Hall, you'll be welcomed by a wide range of exhibitors and activity stations representing different facets of the construction and design fields. Leading firms like DPR Construction and HITT Contracting Inc. will be among the many featured partners bringing hands-on experiences and exciting demonstrations to the event.

Participants will get to try basic carpentry, experiment with making glass mosaics, explore sustainable building practices and ask questions directly to the professionals. The event is designed to make learning approachable and interactive, giving attendees a unique look at what goes into building the world around us.

Each participating organization brings a unique perspective, whether it's engineering the foundations of a skyscraper or installing the systems that make a home livable. Exhibitors will also have giveaways, educational resources, and kid-friendly gear to help everyone get into the builder mindset.

Try It Yourself: Activities for Every Age

One of the most exciting parts of The Big Build is the chance to experience the work firsthand. At activity stations throughout the museum, children and families can suit up with child-sized hard hats and then jump into a wide variety of hands-on activities.

You can test your skills at woodworking, learning how materials are measured, cut, and joined. Or you might get a lesson in tile setting or bricklaying, guided by professionals who use these skills every day.

Inspiring the Next Generation of Builders

While The Big Build is filled with activities and entertainment, it also plays a meaningful role in career exploration and education. All levels of Girl Scouts can work towards their STEM Career Badge at the Big Build and receive a custom National Building Museum fun patch.

These conversations can make a lasting impact. Seeing someone who looks like them operating machinery, designing buildings or managing a job site can help young people picture themselves in those roles in the future. Representation matters, and The Big Build creates space for kids to see a wide range of possibilities.

The festival also highlights the diversity of paths available in the building and design world. Not every builder wears a hard

hat. Some design floor plans on computers, some test building materials in labs and others coordinate complex projects from start to finish. By exposing young people to the range of careers that contribute to the built environment, The Big Build helps open doors and plant seeds for the future.

Why Events Like This Matter

The Big Build offers more than just a fun day out. It encourages families to learn together, to get curious about how things work and to explore careers and skills they might never have considered. These moments can change the way a child sees the world around them.

Understanding how buildings are constructed, how systems work together, and how design choices affect our everyday lives gives people a deeper appreciation for their surroundings. It also introduces the idea that they, too, can be part of shaping the world.

At a time when many industries are experiencing skilled labor shortages, introducing children to hands-on trades and construction careers early is more important than ever. By creating fun, low-pressure opportunities to engage with these topics, The Big Build plays a small but important part in building the workforce of the future.

Plan Your Visit to The Big Build

If you're looking for a free, engaging and educational way to spend the day with your family, mark your calendar for The Big Build.

Event Details:

- **Date:** Saturday, Oct. 17
- **Time:** 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- **Location:** National Building Museum
- **Admission:** Free and open to the public

To learn more and stay up to date with the latest event info, visit [The Big Build](#). We hope to see you there for a full day of building, exploring and inspiring future creators.

Caroline Morales is the National Building Museum's Manager of Youth & Community Programs and oversees fun intergenerational festivals like The Big Build.

EDUCATION

Your kid can play with robots

From beginner builders to experienced coders, these robotics programs across Washington, DC, Maryland and Virginia help kids discover a love of robotics in a fun, educational way.

BY CAYLA GARDNER

Whether your child is building their first LEGO robot or is ready for competitive robotics, the DMV has programs for a wide range of ages and experience levels. From beginner-friendly classes to competition teams, these programs give kids opportunities to practice creativity, teamwork, coding, engineering and problem-solving while having fun.

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WASHINGTON, DC

Capitol City Robotics

Capitol City Robotics offers programs for students from pre-K through 12th grade. Kids can participate in recreational robotics or progress to club and competitive programs as they gain experience. Tuition is offered on an income-based sliding scale, helping make the program accessible to more families.

- **Address:** 3014 14th St. NW, Washington, DC
- **Phone:** (202) 674-1248

iGen Educational Academy

iGen Educational Academy incorporates robotics, coding and other STEAM activities into its enrichment programs. Its Eastern Market and Dupont locations serve children in pre-K4 through fifth grade, with aftercare and other hands-on learning opportunities available depending on location.

- **Address:** 645 Pennsylvania Ave. SE, Suite 300, Washington, DC; 1623 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC
- **Phone:** (202) 257-8410

BRICKS 4 KIDZ



BRICKS 4 KIDZ uses LEGO bricks and hands-on activities to introduce children to STEM concepts. The Washington, DC, program offers options including robotics and coding, after-school enrichment and camps for children starting around age 3. Check the local program's current schedule for availability and pricing.

- **Address:** 1130 6th St. NW, Washington, DC
- **Phone:** (202) 731-5697



PHOTOS COURTESY BRICKS 4 KIDZ

VIRGINIA

RoboThink

RoboThink offers hands-on programs focused on robotics, engineering and coding. Children can build and program robots while developing problem-solving and engineering skills through classes and other STEM enrichment opportunities. Families should check the Fairfax-area program for current schedules, availability and pricing.

- **Address:** 1340 Old Chain Bridge Road, Suite 203, McLean
- **Phone:** (571) 439-1433

CONTINUED...

PHOTO COURTESY KID MUSEUM



EDUCATION

Code Ninjas

Code Ninjas Alexandria offers coding and robotics programs for kids. Its JR program introduces younger children to technology and coding, while CREATE gives older kids opportunities to build their skills through increasingly challenging projects. The Alexandria center serves children ages 5-14 and offers a free introductory session for families interested in learning more.

- **Address:** 4694 King St., Suite 15, Alexandria
- **Phone:** (703) 375-9540

Snapology

Snapology combines building, robotics and coding with play-based STEM learning. Depending on the program, children can work with LEGO bricks and other tools while exploring engineering, technology and problem-solving. Families should check the local Sterling program for current class offerings, age requirements and pricing.

- **Address:** 24570 Dulles Landing Drive, Sterling
- **Phone:** (703) 660-4484

Yantra Robotics Academy

Yantra Robotics Academy offers robotics and coding programs ranging from early robotics experiences to advanced and competitive programs. Options are available for students from pre-K through high school, with competition programs for students in grades 2-12. Program placement varies by age, grade and experience, and competition enrollment may also depend on availability and instructor approval.

- **Address:** 44031 Pipeline Plaza, Suite 205, Ashburn
- **Phone:** (201) 673-2418

MARYLAND

Rockville Science Center

Rockville Science Center offers hands-on STEM learning through classes, six-week class series, teams, workshops and camps. Topics vary and can include engineering, coding, programming, 3D printing and other science and technology subjects. Financial assistance is available for eligible families.

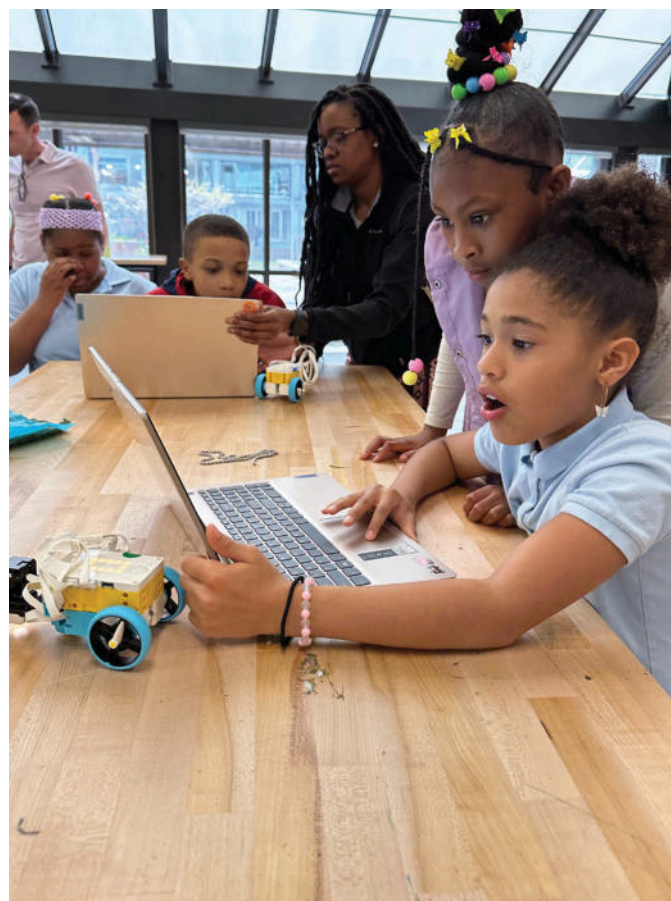
- **Address:** 130 Rollins Ave., Suite F-2, Rockville
- **Phone:** (240) 386-8111

UP Robotics

UP Robotics offers weekly robotics classes and competitive teams for students at different grade and experience levels. Robot Explorers, for grades 1-3, introduces children to building and beginner coding and costs \$185 every four weeks. Intro to Robotics, for grades 3-6, costs \$255 every four weeks and gives students more time for engineering and programming projects. The FLL Challenge Class, for grades 3-8, costs \$275 every four weeks and introduces competition-style robotics without requiring students to join a tournament team.

Students ready for competition can also explore FIRST LEGO League, VEX IQ and FIRST Tech Challenge teams.

- **Address:** 7801 Woodmont Ave., Floor 2, Bethesda
- **Phone:** (301) 578-5374

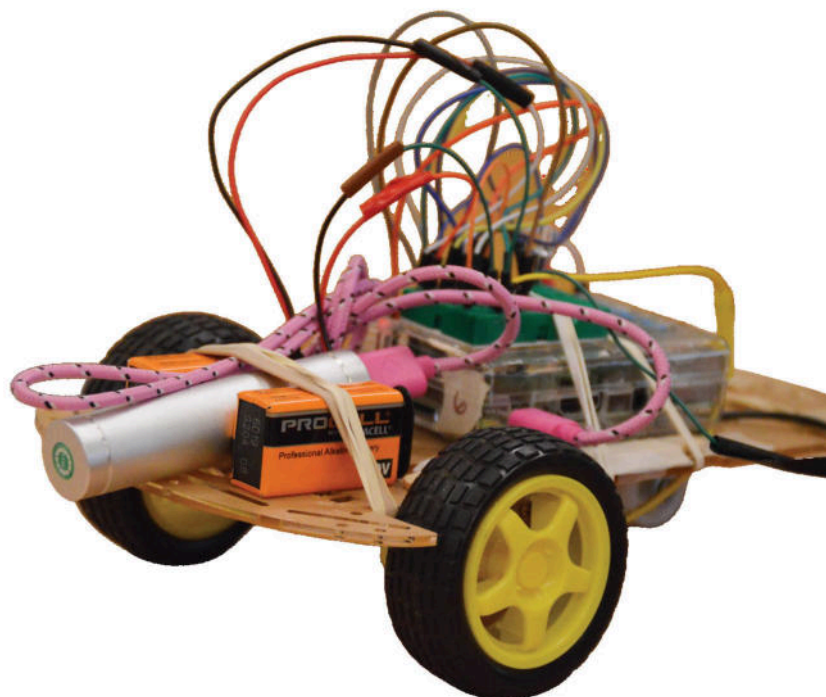


PHOTOS COURTESY BRICKS FOR KIDZ

KID Museum

KID Museum's after-school programs give students in kindergarten through eighth grade opportunities to explore coding, engineering, design and other maker skills through hands-on projects.

For fall 2026, Session 1 runs Tuesdays from Sept. 8-Oct. 20, with no class Oct. 13. Session 2 runs Tuesdays from Oct. 27-Dec. 15, with no classes Nov. 3 or Nov. 24. Each six-week session costs \$315 for members and \$345 for nonmembers. KID Museum also offers free and reduced-cost participation for families facing financial barriers.





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Prince George's County private school guide

A guide to private schools in Prince George's County, including boarding schools and schools offering special education

BY STEVIE ROSENFELD

With so many options, it may be difficult to find where your child belongs. Fortunately, we've compiled some of the best private schools in Prince George's County to help you make the right decision for your family.



Mt. Zion Preparatory Academy

About the school: Mt. Zion prioritizes helping students develop local and global connections so they can be active and culturally aware citizens. Students are trained to be leaders and encouraged to speak their mind during STEAM courses.

What students and parents are saying: "Being at Mt. Zion may be one of the best decisions I made. The faculties care about their students and their grades," one alum on Niche said.

- **Address:** 6511 Princess Garden Parkway, Lanham
- **Noteworthy attributes:**
 - 9-12 preparatory academy
 - Tuition assistance and financial aid available
 - Boarding and day-school options
 - STEAM-focused



Fairhaven School

About the school: Fairhaven is founded on the Sudbury education model, which allows students to vote on activities and school management to encourage independent thinking. Students are free to choose their daily activities so they can learn as a by-product of practical, everyday experiences rather than in a strict classroom setting.

What students and parents are saying: "My two sons have thrived in ways that are less measurable and far more important than anything we noted when they were in 'regular' school," a parent wrote on Great Schools.

- **Address:** 17900 Queen Anne Road, Upper Marlboro
- **Noteworthy attributes:**
 - Mixed-grade school for ages 5-19
 - Year-round enrollment
 - Self-directed education



High Road Academy of Prince George's County

About the school: A special-education school with small class sizes and student-centered instruction, High Road Academy helps students overcome common barriers to classroom learning and supports their unique academic, behavioral and emotional needs. Enrollment begins with a referral from the local school district based on the child's IEP. The academy uses science-based instruction to help students reach their goals.

What students and parents are saying: "High Road has allowed him to flourish as a student and as an individual. He now takes pride in his accomplishments," one parent wrote on Great Schools.

■ **Address:** 5100 Philadelphia Way, Suite J, Lanham

■ **Noteworthy attributes:**

- Grades 3-12 special education school
- Extended school year
- Individualized Education Program supportive
- Small class sizes



Elizabeth Seton High School

About the school: Emphasizing leadership skills, this all-girls Catholic high school offers high-level courses and personalized support systems. In addition to AP and dual-enrollment courses, Elizabeth Seton offers novel courses in practical skills that students need to thrive in the workplace, such as rhetoric, professional etiquette, internships, public speaking and more.

What students and parents are saying: "Seton challenged me to believe in myself before my grades ever did," a student said on Niche.

■ **Address:** 5715 Emerson St., Bladensburg

■ **Noteworthy attributes:**

- All-girls Catholic high school
- Over 40 extracurricular clubs and organizations
- 100% college acceptance
- Financial aid available



The Foundation School

About the school: Supporting students with disabilities and learning challenges, the Foundation School emphasizes career and college readiness while helping students develop the social and emotional skills necessary to return to their home district. The process begins with parents and local school-system personnel discussing placement at the student's IEP meeting, followed by a referral to the school. The Foundation School also offers a year-round program that combines traditional education with social skill and emotional regulation training.

What students and parents are saying: "Coming to The Foundation Schools gave me the new start I needed and I was ready. Things just seemed to keep getting better," one student said in their graduation remarks.

■ **Address:** 1330 McCormick Drive, Largo, with additional locations throughout Maryland

■ **Noteworthy attributes:**

- Grades K-12 special education school
- College and career readiness
- Technology integration
- Speech and communication programs



The Children's Guild School

About the school: The Children's Guild School uses a transformation education model to help students grow in an enriching environment where values are key. The school teaches students and parents about the inner workings of the human brain so they can better think through problems rather than react to situations. The school teaches children and young adults with a range of disabilities.

What students and parents are saying: "The class student to teacher ratio is low. There is hands-on handling of problems and therefore they do not call us to come and get our child. Looking at the nature of the children we think the school is excellent," a parent wrote on Great Schools.

■ **Address:** 5702 Sargent Road, Chillum

■ **Noteworthy attributes:**

- Grades K-12 special education school
- College and career readiness
- Extended school year programs



St. Vincent Pallotti High School

About the school: A Catholic college preparatory school, St. Vincent Pallotti emphasizes faith and service by offering opportunities for specialized retreat and community outreach programs. The high school also features small class sizes, a range of sports and extracurriculars and college scholarship opportunities.

What students and parents are saying: "The teachers obviously care a lot about the student and their success. I feel easily equipped for my future because of my experience," a student wrote on Niche.

■ **Address:** 113 St. Mary's Place, Laurel

■ **Noteworthy attributes:**

- Catholic high school
- Advanced programs
- Small class sizes
- Scholarships available



Sheppard Pratt School

About the school: A nonpublic special education school, Sheppard Pratt School offers year-round instruction in small classes in addition to weekly recreational outings and community learning. In addition to vocational and life skills training, the school offers transition services to help students enter higher education, a budding career or trade school.

■ **Address:** 4819 Walden Lane, Suite 4880, Lanham

■ **Noteworthy attributes:**

- Ages 5-21 special education school
- Full-year instruction
- 2:1 staff-to-student ratio
- Therapy services available

CONTINUED...



BIGSTOCK/ RDO81



Al-Huda School

About the school: A faith-focused Islamic school, Al-Huda School encourages students to use their knowledge to build community and form connections. The campus is located on 10 acres of wooded parkland for a tranquil learning environment, while students participate in motivational programs like Sports Day, spelling bees and essay contests.

What students and parents are saying: "We feel like one big family. I like how small classes are so teachers have time to focus on every student's needs," a student on Niche wrote.

- **Address:** 5301 Edgewood Road, College Park
- **Noteworthy attributes:**
 - K-12 Islamic school
 - Daycare and preschool services available
 - Writing and robotics clubs
 - In-house bookstore



Friends Community School

About the school: Adjacent to Greenbelt National Park, Friends Community School combines intellectual and moral education to create reflective and engaged students. This Quaker school has mixed-grade elementary programs to help students learn with and from peers, as well as student-interest electives in the middle school.

- **Address:** 5901 Westchester Park Drive, College Park
- **District:** N/A
- **Noteworthy attributes:**
 - Quaker elementary and middle school
 - Outdoor space
 - Financial aid and scholarships available
 - Real-world exploration and field trips



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LOWELL SCHOOL: Here for your family's journey

Join Lowell School's Open House on Oct. 17 to see how progressive education prepares students for high school and beyond.

BY LOWELL SCHOOL



Finding a school that truly challenges your child while nurturing their unique strengths is one of the most vital decisions you will make as a parent. Whether they are 2.5 and entering school for the first time, or a teenager in middle school starting to think about high school, you want the same thing for them: an educational environment where academic rigor goes hand in hand with meaningful support, and is provided by a community of educators who see and respect their individuality.

From the moment a Lowell student learns their letters and colors to the moment they tackle their first algebra class, we are actively equipping them to think critically, engage purposefully and live authentically.

Academic rigor built on purposeful and proven progressive pedagogy

At Lowell, we intentionally set a high bar for intellectual growth and provide a student-centered, active and dynamic journey. At every stage of development, students are encouraged to explore subject matter through an inquiry-based, hands-on and deeply meaningful curriculum. Inquiry is always expected, and learning is never passive. No matter their age, our students engage directly with complex concepts, developing strong analytical reasoning and broad perspectives.

Progress requires push and must be measured, but it can never be reduced to a single letter grade. Lowell students are evaluated through thoughtful, comprehensive assessments that reflect the whole child.

We are dedicated not only to preparing your child for the challenges they face today but also for the world of opportunities that await them in high school, college and beyond. That's why the true measure of a Lowell education is how confidently students step into their future.

Expert educators guiding, inspiring and preparing students for the future

Academic quality begins with exceptional teachers. From the time they are 2.5 until they graduate from eighth grade, Lowell students develop a genuine love for learning from experts who respect them as pupils and as individuals.

Our extraordinary faculty design innovative, interdisciplinary lessons while modeling adaptability, focus and drive for their students. In a single morning, a Lowell teacher—in the pre-primary, primary, or middle school—might navigate a reflective conversation with the class, help students discover and explore a new interest and lead an advanced math or science exploration.

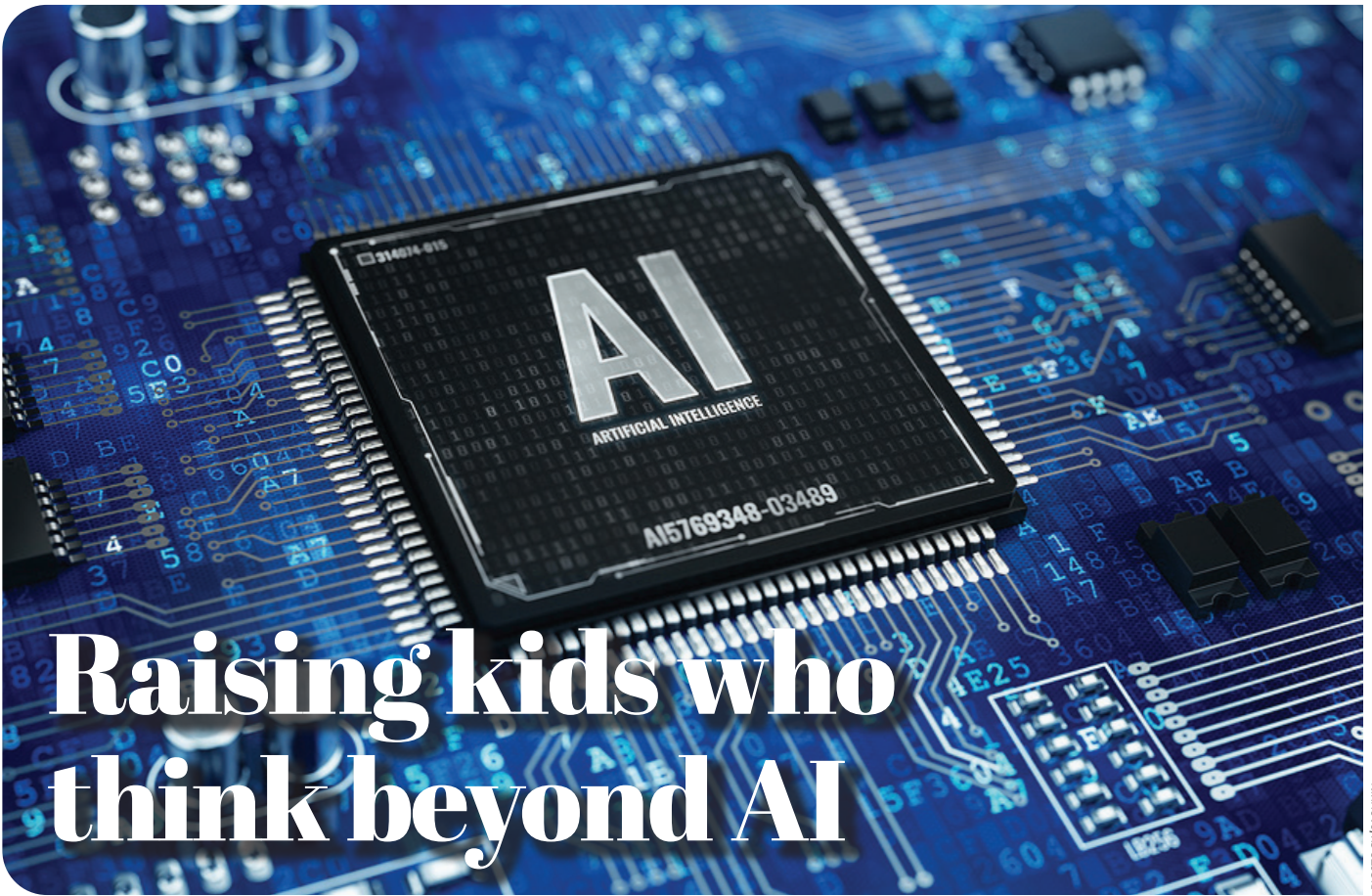
Lowell graduates enter high school as intelligent, resilient and community-driven citizens ready to better the future for everyone. They possess not only the content knowledge to excel in advanced coursework but also the critical thinking skills, self-advocacy and confidence required to lead.

Take the next step in your family's journey

Visit our beautiful campus, meet our dedicated educators, and see how the power of a progressive education can prepare students to excel. The most curious, compassionate young people are learning and growing here, and we can't wait to meet you.

Register and join us on Oct. 17 from 9:30 to 11 a.m. for an Open House, or visit our website to learn more about how Lowell School can be here for your family.

Founded in 1965, Lowell School is a co-ed progressive school serving students from ages 2.5 through eighth grade. Our beautiful and serene 8.5-acre campus serves as the backdrop for a community where all are welcome. Lowell School: Where progressive education prepares students for high school and challenges them to hold themselves and others to the highest ambitions and ideals throughout life.



Raising kids who think beyond AI

AI can help kids brainstorm, explain concepts and organize information — but it can't learn for them, and Verizon's Parenting in a Digital World has five tips for making sure it doesn't try.

BY RAY PASTORE, PH.D., FOR VERIZON'S PARENTING IN A DIGITAL WORLD

"Just ask your phone."
It's a common suggestion parents get from their children. Artificial intelligence (AI) now powers many of the tools kids use every day, from search engines and virtual assistants to chatbots and homework help. However, learning how to use these tools effectively and understanding that the answers aren't always correct is something kids are still learning.

Parents don't have just one opinion about AI and technology, according to recent research conducted in early 2026 by Verizon and Morning Consult. Their feelings are complex. They aren't rejecting AI, and they're not ready to fully embrace it, either.

- **71%** of parents say technology like AI expands learning opportunities.
- **63%** say technology like AI makes learning more engaging and personalized.
- **65%** of parents worry about overreliance and future readiness.

How can parents help students use AI without letting it do the thinking for them? Help them learn when to use these tools, when to question them and when to figure something out on their own. AI offers tremendous potential, but it's not without risks.

Verizon's Parenting in a Digital World shares five ways parents can help children become responsible users of AI.

Teach kids that AI can guide their learning, but can't learn for them.

AI can help brainstorm ideas. It can explain a concept, help organize information or offer a place to start to solve a problem. But it should never replace the thinking process. Encourage kids to see AI as something that supports that process, not skips it.

For gamers, an easy comparison is a gaming walkthrough. These guides can show you where to go, explain a strategy or help you get past a difficult level. But AI can't replace decision-making and skillful gameplay. For more examples:

- Coaches don't play the game for you.
- Teachers don't take the test for you.
- GPS doesn't drive the car for you.

Teach kids to question AI answers, not just collect them.

AI can often make mistakes and sound confident even when it is wrong — known as AI hallucinations. That means critical

thinking is more important than ever. Kids should understand that AI is designed to generate helpful responses, not necessarily correct ones.

When AI gives an answer, encourage these questions:

- “How do we know this is true?”
- “Can we find another source that confirms it?”

Show kids that a question can change the answer they get. Different prompts can produce very different responses. That matters because getting an answer is not the same as understanding it.

This is an important skill for kids to develop, not just for school but for whatever comes next. The jobs for the next generation will almost certainly use AI in ways that can't be predicted today. But employers will still need people who can solve problems when there isn't an obvious answer.

Teach kids that where they share information matters.

A common misconception is that kids should never share personal information online. That's not realistic. Much of life happens online now; for example, online banking, online school enrollment and online healthcare through secure patient portals.

AI tools are designed to collect and process information. Kids should understand that not everything belongs online. Teach kids never to enter personal information such as passwords, addresses, financial information, school details or private family matters into AI systems. Just as parents teach kids to be cautious when sharing information online or in games, parents should teach the same habits when using AI.

- Privacy and digital safety remain important skills regardless of how technology evolves.

Teach kids there's a difference between using AI to create something and using AI to mislead someone.

- Today's kids are growing up in a world where videos, images, audio and written content can be generated in seconds.
- Talk openly about deepfakes, AI-generated images and manipulated videos. Help kids understand that seeing something online doesn't automatically make it true.
- Talk about honesty, ethics and what it means to mislead someone online.
- Help children understand the difference between creating responsibly and misleading others.

Teach kids AI can't replace childhood.

One of the biggest mistakes we can make is letting AI become the answer to every question.

Kids need time to be bored. Research from the American Academy of Pediatrics and curiosity researchers at the University of Virginia suggests that child-directed play and screen-free downtime help develop creativity, executive function and curiosity — skills that technology can support but shouldn't replace. AI can be a helpful tool, but it shouldn't take away opportunities for children to think for themselves.

AI may change how kids learn, but it shouldn't change why.

It's okay to “just ask your phone.” Just don't let that be where learning ends. Students today will almost certainly find creative uses for AI. The goal isn't avoidance — it's understanding. When parents stay involved, kids do not have to choose between using AI and building their own skills. They can do both.

This article was produced by Verizon's Parenting in a Digital World and reviewed and distributed by Stacker.

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Where the DMV's next hockey stars get their start

From first spins to advanced skills, these DMV camps and clinics are worth lacing up for. These top local programs help skaters build confidence, sharpen skills, and have fun on the ice.

BY SANYA BATHIA

Whether your child is taking their first steps on the ice or shredding it up with their skates, the DMV has plenty of opportunities to learn, play and improve. These local camps allow all levels of skaters to compete, build up their confidence, and sharpen their skills. So grab the stick, lace up the skates and get ready to hit the ice; the DMV's next generation of hockey players is already on the move.

VIRGINIA

The St. James Ice Hockey

This prestigious ice hockey clinic prides itself on being a premier destination for developing hockey players. No matter their age, The St. James program allows kids to play competitively without being part of a club and learn beginner-friendly skills for the sport. The St. James was named as a Washington Parent Picks winner in the Hockey & Skating category.

- **What people are saying:** "Went to watch a friend's child play ... seriously considering adding ice hockey as an activity for the tweens. Never disappointed when we visit," shared Kevin M. in a Yelp review.
- **Hot tip:** It's advised to book slots or RSVP to the camp in advance.
- **Address:** 6805 Industrial Road, Springfield, VA
- **Contact:** (703) 239-6870

ColdRush

At the Ashburn Ice House, ColdRush has been helping athletes achieve their ice hockey dreams for three decades now. With a handful of their previous students going on to become NHL coaches, ColdRush can provide the experience to make you stand out as a player.

- **What people are saying:** "Wendy, you are amazing! I love this! I love the energy you bring!! These kids are so lucky to have you!" shared CsLorenzen12 on Instagram.
- **Hot tip:** When signing up, the instruction interest sheet needs to be filled out by a parent and includes questions about the playing level of the child.
- **Address:** 21595 Smith Switch Road, Ashburn, VA
- **Contact:** Lessons@ColdRushHockey.com

Washington Capitals Youth Hockey

Who better to learn ice hockey from in the DMV than the Washington Capitals? Their youth hockey program focuses on training the little ones to get comfortable on the ice. Their Rising Stars Academy, focuses on mixing fun and precision with the game of ice hockey.

- **What people are saying:** "Took my 16-year-old son here and was delighted to see how much fun he was having shredding up the ice. Definitely keeping this as an after-school activity for him," said Janice B in a Yelp review.
- **Hot tip:** The Washington Capitals classes expect your child to

already know how to skate before they join on-ice hockey classes. Make sure you have them in generic skating classes before they fine-tune their skills with the Washington Capitals.

- **Address:** Location varies based on program
- **Contact:** (202) 266-2200

MedStar Capitals Iceplex

MedStar's hockey program works directly with the Washington Capitals. With a plethora of clinics and development programs, MedStar is an inclusive and supportive space to pick up the sport of ice hockey.

- **What people are saying:** "I want to give a special thanks to Ben Kwon of the hockey department. He has been exceptional with my son both on and off the ice. His mentorship and instruction has made my son a better player and young person," shared Alan P in a Google review.
- **Hot tip:** They have a dedicated league for training women, which might be a good option if you don't love the idea of co-ed training.
- **Address:** 627 N. Glebe Road, Suite 800, Arlington, VA
- **Contact:** (571) 224-0555

SkateQuest

Reston's premier twin-rink ice center has been a fixture in the community for more than 30 years, offering everything from Learn to Skate group lessons and stick-and-puck sessions to competitive hockey through the Reston Raiders youth program and Future Caps Learn to Play partnership. SkateQuest has also helped train elite talent, including U.S. figure skating champion Ilia Malinin, making it a serious option for families with skaters who want to push past the basics. They were also named a Washington Parent Picks finalist in both Hockey & Skating and Skating Rinks.

- **What people are saying:** "Our child had a great experience at SkateQuest's Summer Ice Skating Camp. The rink is clean and well maintained, and the camp is well organized, with a daily schedule of ice lessons, games, crafts/activities and free skate opportunities. We also liked that this camp had an aftercare option until 5 p.m. and the availability of a daily hot lunch for purchase," said Theresa C on Yelp.
- **Hot tip:** With two full ice sheets, a pro shop and on-site café, SkateQuest is built for families spending a long day at the rink — but its popularity with serious skaters means lesson and league spots can fill up fast, especially for younger age groups.
- **Address:** 1800 Michael Faraday Court, Reston, VA
- **Contact:** (703) 709-1010

MARYLAND

Rockville Ice Arena

Rockville Ice Arena's Learn to Play Hockey program gives beginners the skills, confidence and excitement they need to get started. With expert instruction and a fun, supportive environment, players learn the fundamentals of skating, stickhandling, passing and shooting. The program is for kids who have some ice skating experience.

- **What people are saying:** "I play hockey there. The staff are super nice! I would recommend it. Sometimes they turn the hockey rink into a roller skating rink," said Aaron C on Yelp.
- **Hot tip:** If you are planning on enrolling your child into one of the seasonal camps instead of regular classes, sign up fast because

spots fill up quickly, and so does the waitlist.

- **Address:** 50 Southlawn Court, Rockville, MD
- **Contact:** (301) 315-5650

Gardens Ice House

With five ice rinks — one Olympic-size and two NHL-size rinks — Gardens Ice House has the best facilities and classes to help transform your ice hockey skills. Start your Saturday morning by lacing up your skates and refining your skills.

- **What people are saying:** "Skated in a large hockey tournament, the rink took great care of the players and I could tell they had good training. Pro shops are well stocked with plenty of staff. Three ice rinks on site, lots of spectator seating," said Jack S on TripAdvisor.
- **Hot tip:** Gardens Ice House has a separate program to teach children how to skate.
- **Address:** 13800 Old Gunpowder Road, Laurel, MD
- **Contact:** (301) 953-0100

Cabin John Ice Rink

Montgomery Parks' flagship ice facility is the largest county-run ice complex in the DC metro area, with three rinks, including NHL, Olympic and studio rinks — under one roof. Cabin John offers a full slate of programming for young skaters, including Learn to Skate group lessons, Future Caps Learn to Play partner sessions, youth hockey leagues, Stick 'n Puck and Pickup Hockey sessions, and figure skating instruction, all backed by a pro shop, café and party rooms on site. Cabin John Ice Rink was named a Washington Parent Picks finalist in the category of Hockey & Skating.

- **What people are saying:** "Really brought back memories of skating as a kid. There are two rinks. One was being used for hockey, the other for public skating. Nice warming room with food for sale," Tim said on TripAdvisor.
- **Hot tip:** With three rinks running simultaneously, Cabin John rarely has the scheduling conflicts smaller single-sheet rinks face between lessons, league practice and public skating — a real advantage for families juggling multiple kids or activities in one visit.
- **Address:** 10610 Westlake Drive, Rockville, MD
- **Contact:** (301) 765-8620

WASHINGTON, DC

Fort Dupont Ice Arena

The historic home of the Fort Dupont Ice Hockey Club has turned into a sanctuary for younger kids, ages 5 and older, in teaching them how to hone their skills on the ice. Focusing on beginner skaters with their Kids on Ice program, Fort Dupont Ice Arena is a great place to get started with the sport in the heart of DC.

- **What people are saying:** "We love Fort Dupont Ice Arena! All of our girls are involved (whether skating or coaching). The staff is absolutely incredible. The coaches and volunteers are dedicated to their craft. It's simply a joy to be at the rink. You will feel at home when you walk through the doors," shared Tomeka G on Facebook.
- **Hot tip:** Their Kids on Ice program offers a plethora of ice-based sports.
- **Address:** 3779 Ely Place SE, Washington, DC
- **Contact:** (202) 204-2290

The DMV is top choice for early education

A new WalletHub study ranks all 50 states and DC on early childhood education, and the DMV sweeps the top of the list.

BY MIRANDA SIMPSON



Every year, personal finance website WalletHub analyzes early childhood education systems across all 50 states and the District of Columbia to help families locate where their children have the best chance at a strong academic start. Children enrolled in early education programs are more likely to be academically prepared for future grades, have higher graduation rates and higher earning potential than those who are not enrolled, according to the National Education Association.

About the study

To determine the rankings, WalletHub compared all 50 states and DC across three key dimensions – Access, Quality and Resources and Economic Support – using 12 relevant metrics, each graded on a 100-point scale. Access metrics include the share of school districts offering a state pre-K program, enrollment rates for three- and four-year-olds, the presence of waiting lists for child care assistance, and pre-K program growth. Quality metrics include pre-K quality benchmarks met, income requirements for state pre-K eligibility, and school safety plan and audit requirements. Resources and Economic Support metrics cover total spending per child enrolled in preschool, changes in state spending per child, Head Start program spending, and monthly child care co-payment fees as a share of family income. Data was collected as of June 30, 2026, from the National Institute for Early Education Research, the Education Commission of the States, and the National Women’s Law Center.

All three DMV locations landed in the top 11 — making the region one of the most impressive clusters of early education strength anywhere in the country. Here’s a closer look at each.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA: RANKED NO. 1 IN THE COUNTRY

The District of Columbia is at the very top of WalletHub’s 2026 rankings with an overall score of 77.43. DC earned a perfect No. 1 ranking in both Access and Resources & Economic

Support, meaning no state in the country does more to make early education available to families or invests more financial resources in getting children there.

In the access category, DC leads the country in the enrollment of three- and four-year-olds in pre-K, pre-K special education or Head Start programs, with 77% of DC three-year-olds and 95% of DC four-year-olds enrolled. That enrollment is also growing rapidly: DC saw a 56% increase in three-year-old enrollment and a 50% increase in four-year-old enrollment between the 2001-02 and 2024-25 school years.

DC also spends the most money per child enrolled in preschool of any state or district in the country, at about \$27,000 per year.

The one area where DC has room to grow is Quality, where it ranks No. 20. While not a bad score, it is the category where DC trails both Maryland and Virginia.

DC at a glance:

- **Overall rank:** No. 1 (score: 77.43)
- **Access rank:** No. 1
- **Quality rank:** No. 20
- **Resources & Economic Support rank:** No. 1
- **Three-year-old enrollment:** 77%
- **Four-year-old enrollment:** 95%
- **Spending per child enrolled in preschool:** about \$27,000/year

MARYLAND: RANKED NO. 3 IN THE COUNTRY

Maryland’s No. 3 overall ranking has a score of 74.45, built primarily on exceptional strength in Quality and Resources. Maryland ranks No. 2 in Quality and No. 3 in Resources & Economic Support, with a No. 14 Access ranking that reflects solid statewide reach.

Maryland has one of the highest quality rankings in the country, also meeting a high number of pre-K quality benchmarks, which cover everything from teacher qualifications and class sizes to

curriculum supports and continuous quality improvement systems.

Maryland's financial investment in early education is equally impressive. The state has the 15th-highest spending per child enrolled in preschool in the country, at nearly \$12,000 per year.

Maryland at a glance:

- **Overall rank:** No. 3 (score: 74.45)
- **Access rank:** No. 14
- **Quality rank:** No. 2
- **Resources & Economic Support rank:** No. 3
- **Spending per child enrolled in preschool:** nearly \$12,000/year

VIRGINIA:

RANKED NO. 11 IN THE COUNTRY

Virginia's No. 11 overall ranking with a score of 60.08 displays that Virginia performs consistently across all three categories – Access (No. 23), Quality (No. 8), and Resources & Economic Support (No. 24) – making it one of the more balanced early education systems in the top quarter of the country.

Virginia's No. 8 Quality ranking is particularly notable. The state meets the pre-K quality benchmarks, including requirements around teacher qualifications, class sizes, and health screenings. Virginia also has school safety plans in place, contributing to its strong quality score.

Where Virginia has the most room to grow relative to its DMV neighbors is in the Access category, with a No. 23 ranking that

means that statewide reach and enrollment rates are not yet at the level of Maryland or DC. Income requirements for state pre-K eligibility are also a factor, as they determine how many families qualify for state-supported programs in the first place. For Northern Virginia families specifically, proximity to DC-area resources and strong local school district investment can offset some of the statewide limitations.

Virginia at a glance:

- **Overall rank:** No. 11 (score: 60.08)
- **Access rank:** No. 23
- **Quality rank:** No. 8
- **Resources & Economic Support rank:** No. 24

What this means for DMV families

With all three DMV locations ranking in the top 11 in the country, families in the region are in a strong position when it comes to early childhood education. DC leads the nation in making pre-K available and affordable. Maryland leads in quality and investment. Virginia is a consistently solid performer in every category measured.

Only 11 states currently offer universal pre-K programs, though many are working toward it. The DMV, with DC already leading the country and Maryland and Virginia both in the top tier, is well-positioned to be part of that next wave of expansion. For parents with children approaching preschool age, that's good news worth paying attention to.



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PARENTING

Lauryn Ricketts on motherhood, the second time around

Four years after sharing her journey through loss to motherhood, Storm Team4's Lauryn Ricketts opens up about life with two boys — and what actually surprised her most.

BY BRANDI CALHOUN

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PHOTOS COURTESY LAURYN RICKETTS

Four years ago, Washington Parent introduced readers to Lauryn Ricketts, the Storm Team4 meteorologist whose road to motherhood was paved with heartbreak before it led to joy: a stillbirth, a miscarriage, and finally, on Jan. 27, 2022, a healthy baby boy named Crew.

Since then, Ricketts' life has taken her across an ocean and back. Now she's home in the DMV with her husband, a Marine Corps officer, and two sons — Crew, now a preschooler, and Cole, born May 29, 2026 — and she's ready to talk about what the jump from one child to two has actually looked like.

Spoiler: it's not what anyone warned her about.

"How wrong everyone was"

Ask Ricketts about the biggest surprise of going from a family of three to a family of four, and she doesn't hesitate. "How wrong everyone was," she said. "Honestly."

Crew was born in the thick of COVID, and just six weeks later, Ricketts' husband was reassigned to Prague. She ended up parenting solo — packing up their apartment by herself, then moving to a country where she'd spent all of five days, with a newborn, no grasp of the language or the trams, and no car. "I had to navigate a brand new life in a brand new country with a brand new baby," she shared.

So when people told her the jump from one kid to two would be the hard part, she wasn't buying it — and she was right not to. "My personal experience having a second has been a breeze so far," she said, "especially being back in America." What she wasn't prepared for was more mundane: "Putting kids in the car. Also the grocery store. How do you do that with more than one little kid? I still haven't mastered the car seat/grocery cart/toddler."

A day in the life of Storm Team4's newest mom of two

Mornings belong to Crew, mostly because he sleeps like a teenager. "It gives me a TON of time to get stuff done before he wakes up," Ricketts said, "but waking him up 85% of the time is more like awakening a bear from hibernation." Her husband is usually out the door before sunrise, which means Ricketts handles the morning shift at home — unless she's the one on air, in which case she's up and out by 2:30 a.m.

On a normal day, she gets Crew off to preschool, packs his lunch, and spends the rest of the day with Cole. She credits NBC4 for generous leave — four months of maternity and paternity leave, plus two more from DC's paid family leave program — but with a second baby and a strong support system behind her, she chose to go back to work a little early, partly to help cover for fellow Storm Team4 meteorologist Jessica Faith, who had her own baby about a week after Cole was born. "It's been a lot for our Storm Team4," Ricketts said.

On the days she works a day shift in DC, mornings get considerably more hectic — everyone is out the door before 8 a.m. for preschool and caretaker drop-offs. Two sets of grandparents living close by make it manageable. Evenings are for getting outside, whatever the season calls for: the playground, bikes, soccer, t-ball, the pool. "Cole just comes along for the ride," she said. And by 8:30 p.m., the whole house is asleep. "My friends joke about my husband and my sleep schedule constantly," Ricketts laughed. "Eventually that will change as the kids get older, but for now, we are banking our sleep while we can."

CONTINUED...

Making sure Crew still feels like Crew

With a newborn soaking up so much attention, is Ricketts protecting any one-on-one time for her older son? “Oh my gosh, no — but after this question, I think I’m going to have to start!” she said. In practice, though, she and Crew already share plenty: building LEGO sets, solo beach trips, board games, the pool and soccer. He’s embraced his role as a big brother, she said, and the family regularly reminds him of a fact that clearly still delights him — he visited 16 countries before he turned three, adventures his baby brother, for financial reasons alone, will likely never replicate. “Most of our pictures in our house are of all of our travels with our firstborn,” she admitted. “That does make me feel a little bad for Cole, but — you know, second child. I think all of that makes Crew feel special. I think. I hope.”

No more moving, and a different kind of maternity leave

Ricketts’ first maternity leave was upended by an overseas relocation in the tail end of the pandemic, with her husband largely absent during it. This time is different by design. “We are not moving,” she said, “ever again if I can help it — because moving is the worst.” Instead, the family is grounded near where she and her husband grew up, leaning on a deep bench of support: two sets of grandparents, longtime childhood friends in the neighborhood, and colleagues — Amelia, Chuck, Doug, Ryan and Gary among them — who step in without hesitation when the overnight shift calls. “We all have each other’s backs,” she said, “so it is a very low-stress work environment. We honestly do have the best team.”

That support system looks nothing like the one she had in Prague, where it began and ended with one person — a Ukrainian friend and nanny named Mariya. “She single-handedly taught me to be a mother in a country where I didn’t know the language, the customs, the rules,” Ricketts said. “She was our family there.” Leaving Prague meant leaving Mariya behind, too, and Ricketts still feels that loss. But being back near two sets of grandparents “who adore their grandchildren” — plus a “village” of old friends — has softened the transition considerably.

Her advice for other DMV moms

Ricketts is candid about what she didn’t recognize the first time around: postpartum depression that went unnamed for months after Crew was born. “It was just too blurry for me to think rationally, and my husband didn’t know what that looked like,” she said. This time has been markedly different — “almost non-existent,” she said, though she’s careful not to declare victory too soon. Her advice to other working moms expecting a second child is simple: “Give yourself some grace... Recognize



that, whether it is good or bad... you have to be right before you can get your family on the right track.”

Still holding both truths

Ricketts’ path to motherhood included years of loss before Crew arrived — heartbreak she wrote about candidly in her first Washington Parent profile. Asked what it’s like now to hold two healthy boys, she doesn’t offer a tidy answer. “There are several times where I am holding both of them and I have to pinch myself,” she said. “I remember bawling on the couch six years ago just wondering when and if this was ever going to happen.”

But gratitude and grief still sit side by side for her. She thinks often of friends still trying to conceive well into their 40s, and of the doctors she credits with making her family possible — Dr. Abbasi at Columbia Fertility, along with nurses Gwen and Anna, and Dr. Hamersley at MFM in Rockville. “I’m incredibly thankful and still somewhat heartbroken at the same time,” she said. “Heartbroken from those that are in the place I was, and heartbroken because I am still processing my own grief at times. But incredibly ecstatic when I see my boys. It’s a hodgepodge of emotion.”

What does the future look like?

The Ricketts boys are roughly four years apart — Ricketts had Cole at 42, after waiting through a long postpartum recovery and their years overseas, drawing on embryos the family had already saved. For now, the age gap hasn’t gotten in the way of a bond: “Crew adores Cole, and Cole always smiles when he sees Crew,” she shared. Whether that lasts, she knows, is anyone’s guess. “Will that always happen? Absolutely not. However, I would love for them to be great friends, obviously. Hopefully the age difference is not too great — that is something I think about a lot.”

For a family that has weathered an international move, a pandemic and infertility, Ricketts sounds, more than anything, at peace. Grounded — literally and otherwise — in the place she grew up, surrounded by the people who’ve shown up for her, she’s settling into the rhythm of a family of four.

Teen jobs:

What rules should we know before they clock in?

Before your teen clocks in for their first job, here's what parents need to know about the rules in DC, Maryland and Virginia.

BY STEVIE ROSENFELD

Getting a job as a teenager is a great way to learn responsibility, gain professional experience, and pick up new skills. But because of child labor laws, it's worth knowing what's legal — and what isn't — before your teen starts working. Here's a breakdown of federal rules and the specific requirements in DC, Maryland and Virginia, including how teens can get work permits.

Federal law basics

The U.S. Department of Labor sets 14 as the minimum age for nonagricultural employment, with exceptions including casual babysitting, newspaper delivery, acting and certain work for a business entirely owned by a teen's parents.

The parental-business exception also has an important nuance: children under 16 can't work in manufacturing or mining, while anyone under 18 remains barred from federally declared hazardous occupations.

Teens 14-15 face hour restrictions tied to the school calendar:

When school is in session:

- No more than three hours on a school day
- No more than 18 hours per week
- Work hours limited to 7 a.m.–7 p.m.

When school is not in session:

- No more than eight hours per day
- No more than 40 hours per week
- Work hours limited to 7 a.m.–9 p.m. (June 1 through Labor Day)

This age group is also barred from hazardous work, baking operations and outdoor sales, including sign spinning and door-to-door sales.

The U.S. Department of Labor says teens 16 and older can work unlimited hours in any non-hazardous job under federal law — though individual states may impose their own limits.

WASHINGTON, DC

Minors in D.C. can't work more than six consecutive days a week, more than 48 hours a week, or more than eight hours a day — rules designed to keep work from interfering with school. Additionally, 16- and 17-year-olds can't work before 6 a.m. or after 10 p.m.

Work permits: Under DC Code § 32-207, employers generally must obtain and keep a work/vacation permit for any minor under 18, with some exceptions.

Under D.C. Code § 32-209, the minor must appear in person to apply with an employer statement and proof of age.

Applicants under 16 also need written parental or guardian consent and a physician-signed certificate of physical fitness. A school record is required only if a child under 16 is withdrawing from school specifically to work.

Note: DC's Department of Employment Services says that where federal and local rules differ, employers must follow whichever is more restrictive.

MARYLAND

Maryland requires a work permit for every minor under 18, and applications are handled online. According to the Maryland Department of Labor, a permit isn't issued until the teen has an actual job offer, and a new one is needed each time they change jobs. The process: the minor applies and prints the permit, then the minor, a parent/guardian and the employer all sign it.

Key rules:

- Minors 14-15 can't work before 7 a.m. or after 7 p.m. during the school year (extended to 9 p.m. from June 1 through Labor Day).
- Minors 16-17 can't combine school and work for more than 12 hours in a day — so on a typical six-hour school day, they can work no more than six hours.
- All minors are entitled to at least eight consecutive hours free from work and school.
- Minors 14-17 generally can't work more than five consecutive hours without a 30-minute break.

VIRGINIA

According to the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry, Virginia requires 14- and 15-year-olds to obtain an Employment Certificate before starting work, and the application shouldn't begin until there's a firm job offer. The process is electronic, with separate sections for the youth, employer, and parent/guardian. Once reviewed and approved, the certificate goes to the employer and becomes valid after the youth signs it.

Key rules:

- As in DC and Maryland, minors ages 14-15 can't work past 9 p.m. during the summer (from June 1 through Labor Day).
- Teens, guardians and employers each complete their own portion of the form.
- Under Virginia Code § 40.1-80.1(B), all minors get a 30-minute break after five consecutive hours of work.



BIGSTOCK/LSAFY

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

Books to Help Kids Handle Bullying

To mark National Bullying Prevention Month, these books for every age — from toddlers to teens — model kindness, self-advocacy and how to move from bystander to ally.

BY MARY QUATTLEBAUM

Physical, relational, cyber — all forms of bullying, all with a dire impact on young people. For 20 years, National Bullying Prevention Month in October has spotlighted bullying as an issue of grave concern.

One in five youngsters report being bullied, according to a study cited by the National Bullying Prevention Center in Minneapolis. Bullying can affect a child's academic performance, motivation and physical and mental health—as it occurs and even after ending. Less well known is the effect on bystanders. While not targets themselves, they must still navigate a toxic environment and wrestle with feelings of helplessness.

This month highlights the need to “prevent childhood bullying and promote kindness, acceptance and inclusion,” says the center's website, which features resources for educators, parents and other concerned adults.

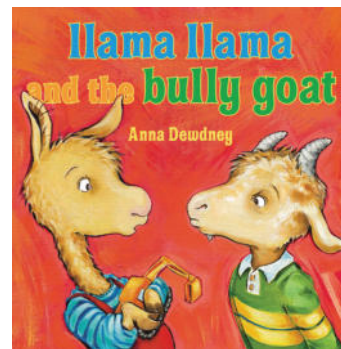
The center notes that the most common form of bullying is relational: spreading rumors and mocking or excluding others. Cyberbullying is an especially virulent type of relational bullying. Social media and texting can help intensify the attacks, in reach and frequency. And for young people, there is often no respite, what with their near-constant access to cell phones.

Yes, prevention involves recognizing and calling out bullying—but also learning to self-advocate and to prioritize kindness and inclusion. These books model healthy ways of dealing with bullies and of evolving from mere bystander to ally for a bullied child.

Tots to age 7

Llama Llama and the Bully Goat

By Anna Dewdney
Viking, 2013, \$18.99



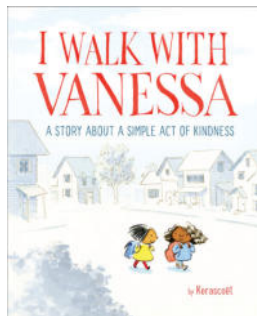
Bullying can start at a young age. Effective teachers and caretakers are alert to such behavior and intercede. But what to do when bullying occurs when grown-ups are absent or otherwise engaged? In this rhyming story from the popular Llama Llama series, the titular character demonstrates action a child might take. Gilroy, a young goat, makes fun of the other animal children in the classroom. Teacher quickly sets boundaries: “Calling names is not OK.” But during recess, Gilroy escalates his bullying. He mocks Little Llama and a fellow student, stomps on their toys and pushes. Using Teacher's earlier words, the children tell Gilroy to stop, that this is not OK. They then walk away and inform Teacher, who removes the little goat from their vicinity but sits calmly beside him as he resets. Gilroy learns to modify his behavior and, with Teacher's assistance, re-enters the play space. Through this helpful tale, youngsters learn how to behave respectfully and how to self-advocate.

I Walk with Vanessa

By Kerascoët

Schwartz & Wade, 2018, \$17.99

Expressive ink-and-watercolor illustrations show the power of kindness in this wordless picture book. The art depicts Vanessa, shy and uncertain on her first day at a new school. On her solitary walk home, Vanessa is bullied by a tough boy her age—an interaction noticed by another girl. That night the girl wonders what she might do, how she might be more than a bystander. The next morning, she goes to Vanessa's house and invites the new student to walk to school with her. As they travel, increasing numbers of children join them — talking, laughing and inadvertently keeping the bully from further intimidating Vanessa. There is strength not only in numbers but in simple acts of kindness. Back matter discusses how children “might help someone who is being bullied” and adults might further explore the story with them.



may be new or need help. For this story, the first-person point of view is an especially powerful perspective. Young readers are in Zahra's head, experiencing her emotions and privy to her decision-making process. As with the great classic “Each Kindness” by Jacqueline Woodson, readers know what the unkind protagonists are thinking and feeling and witness up close the hurtful impact of their choices. In this way, young readers are encouraged to ask themselves: What might I do in a similar situation? How might I try to make amends?

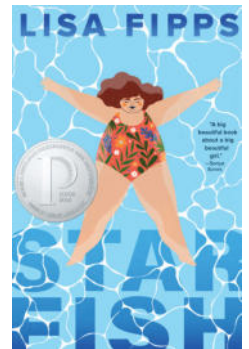
Tweens

Starfish

By Lisa Fipps

Nancy Paulsen Books, 2023, \$17.99

Winner of a 2021 Printz Honor, this moving novel in verse follows Ellie, who is fat-shamed at home and school. Through therapy, though, and with the support of her father and a new friend, Ellie begins to face down the bullies. She learns to advocate for herself, refusing to meekly accept the strictures of her critical mother and pediatrician. Slowly, she starts to question the rules she has internalized, rules about minimizing herself, physically and emotionally. Author Lisa Fipps based this book on her own childhood experiences, and young people and adults alike will empathize with Ellie and cheer her hard-won victories.



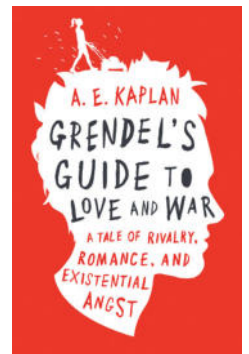
Teens

Grendel's Guide to Love and War

By A.E. Kaplan

Knopf, 2017, \$17.99

Set in Virginia, by Virginia native A.E. Kaplan, this coming-of-age novel has heart as well as humor. Tom Grendel has had enough! The quiet 17-year-old protagonist is fed up with the late-night partying of his teen neighbors. (Their mother is off on an extended journalism assignment.) Even though the noise triggers his PTSD-suffering vet father, the neighbors refuse to tone it down. Their stubbornness soon escalates to bullying, but Tom fights back with an arsenal of pranks. Kaplan cleverly modernizes and upends a classic text—the Old English “Beowulf”—making the original monster, Grendel, into sympathetic first-person narrator Tom. You needn't be familiar with the source material to appreciate this lively novel, but the curious might check out Seamus Heaney's robust translation (1999) and John Gardner's poignant re-imagining “Grendel” (1971).



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 and is a popular school and conference speaker. maryquattlebaum.com

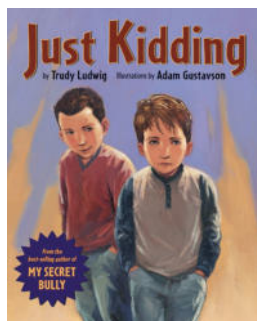
Just Kidding

By Trudy Ludwig

Illustrations by Adam Gustavson

Tricycle Press/Random House, 2006, \$15.95

This classic offers sage advice for youngsters ages 5 to 11 who are being verbally bullied through teasing. Vince frequently taunts D.J. and doesn't stop even when D.J. tells him to or leaves the situation, visibly upset. Vince's response is “I was just kidding,” but D.J. feels the cutting edge of Vince's mean jokes. Talking and role playing with his dad and older brother prepare D.J. to deal with his bully and to reach out to a trusted adult. And he takes decisive action when Vince begins to bully another boy. This thoughtful, nuanced book includes a foreword for adults by bullying prevention consultant Stan Davis on how to listen to and respond to a bullied child. Backmatter written for young people lists “Teasing Do's and Don'ts” and helpful resources.



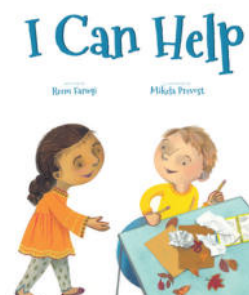
I Can Help

By Reem Faruqi

Illustrated by Mikala Prevost

Eerdmans, 2021, \$17.99

In this sensitive, award-winning book, Zahra enjoys helping Kyle, a friendly boy with disabilities. She appreciates his generous spirit and sense of humor. But when two schoolmates shame her for her kind actions, Zahra distances herself from Kyle. She no longer wants to be associated with a kid whom others label as weird. Later, when she wants to apologize and resume the friendship, it is too late. She has moved to a different school. Because she cannot make amends directly to Kyle, Zahra decides she will reach out to others who



Child care: Find your home away from home



BIGSTOCK / FANVELDMAN

From safety and staffing to accreditation, here's what to look for — and where to start your search — when choosing child care for your family.

BY DONNA SAWYER

Selecting child care outside the home can be a time-consuming and overwhelming activity for parents. There are many questions to ask and answers to find before making this very important choice. What are some of the things you want and need for your child — and yourself? What guidelines should you keep in mind when seeking a home away from home for your young child?

High-quality child care: What to look for

1. Safety: Your child's safety is the top priority. A high-quality child care environment, whether in someone's home or in a classroom, is set up in an organized way so that children are able to move comfortably. Indoor areas are well-defined and stocked with appropriate materials to be used. The outdoor area is enclosed in such a way that children cannot go beyond the boundary and is located away from traffic. In both scenarios, adults are stationed (and move when necessary) so that children are visible and heard at all times.

An important component of safety is cleanliness. A clean environment is healthy and safe for children and adults. Look for an accessible sink (or sinks) with soap and paper towels for handwashing; accessible toilets and/or a diaper-changing station; designated locations for dirty/soiled materials for cleaning.

2. Security: A flexible daily routine or schedule is generally posted so that parents and visitors will see what a typical day is like. Children need to know what to do and when/where to do it. They will learn that there are times during the day when all of the children will be with an adult — such as group times, story times and meals. At other times, they may choose

independent activities and work with friends. Consistent routines help children feel safe (they know what is coming next) and secure (they know that they are cared for).

3. Nurturing Staff: Adults who work with and care for children interact with children and show interest in what they are doing. They engage in dialogue by asking open-ended questions, demonstrating empathy and allowing children to express themselves. They label emotions so that children associate words with “big” and, sometimes, scary feelings. Adults model how to communicate with each other and with children and teach children how to advocate for themselves in a positive, verbal way.

4. Age/Level Appropriate Materials: High-quality child care environments offer a variety of hands-on materials for children to explore and use throughout the day: puzzles, manipulatives, art/writing materials, building blocks, dress-up clothing and props, books, musical instruments and puppets. There are quiet areas and noisy/active areas in the setting. An important area to look for and ask about is a “cool down” or “chill out” area where children can go when feeling overwhelmed or needing some alone time. This quiet spot can have “feelings” and breathing strategy pictures, books and squishy toys to help the child calm down.

5. Positive Discipline: Discipline is an important way for adults to teach and for children to learn. It is not punishment. Young children are learning how to function in the world. They will test boundaries and make mistakes. Adults are “firm and friendly” when setting limits. They assure children, when they make mistakes, that there will be other opportunities to try again. Children are not shamed or blamed. Rather, when everyone is

calm, a conversation takes place about what happened and how the situation could be handled differently next time. Kids may need comforting and to know that it is OK to make mistakes and always appropriate to ask for help when needed.

6. Accreditation: Many child care programs go through a process of accreditation so that families know that their child will receive high-quality care. The curriculum that is used is based on research showing its effectiveness with young children. There is a strong family and community connection. Staff who work with children are trained and provided with opportunities to enhance their careers with professional development.

The decision to place your child in a program that you feel comfortable about is very important. Take time to investigate and visit sites. Find out who the caregivers are and what is being offered to the children. Meet and talk with parents to get their insights. It's an exciting time for your family; you want your child to grow, learn and thrive!

Where to look in the greater DC area

- DC Child Care Connections
- Montgomery Child Care Association
- Child Resource Center
- Arlington DHS Child and Family Services
- Fairfax County early childhood programs and services

Donna Sawyer is a parent educator and facilitator for the Parent Encouragement Program (PEP) Family Resiliency Program. For more information about PEP's parenting programs, go to pepparent.org.

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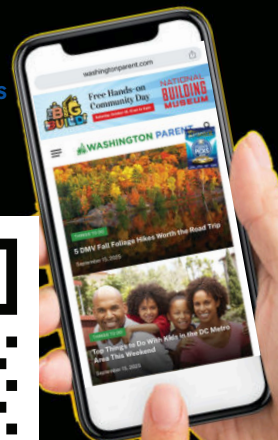


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BIGSTOCK / ZHURAVLEV

Rethinking screen time as a reward

Using screen time as a reward can work in the moment — but experts say it can quietly reshape how kids feel about everything else, from homework to family time.

BY BEA MOISE, BCCS FOR VERIZON'S PARENTING IN A DIGITAL WORLD

For many families, it starts with a familiar bargain, “Do this, and then you can have screen time.”

Child development experts say that approach can work in the moment. But over time, using screens as a reward can change the role screens play in a child's day. If screens become the payoff, then homework, chores and family routines can start to feel like obstacles to the thing children want most.

That's when behavior can begin to shift. Experts say it doesn't necessarily mean a child is being difficult on purpose. Instead, the brain's reward system may be doing exactly what it's designed to do: teaching children what feels most worth working for.

This topic is explored in more detail by Bea Moise, a cognitive specialist for Verizon's Parenting in a Digital World, and explores the downside of using screen time as a reward and provides alternative approaches to build motivation.

Why using screen time as a reward can backfire

Kids don't just follow rules; they also respond to what feels good. Child development experts say that over time, the brain learns exactly what's worth working for. At the center of this is dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with motivation, pleasure and reinforcement.

Highly stimulating screen activities, like fast-paced games, social media or short videos, trigger the release of dopamine. That isn't necessarily a problem on its own. But when screen time consistently becomes the primary reward, other activities and everyday responsibilities can begin to feel less meaningful.

Over time, parents may notice that:

- Screen time can become the prize.
- Homework, chores or family time start to feel like barriers to the reward.
- Motivation becomes transactional: “What do I get for this?”
- Cooperation can turn into negotiation, resistance or frustration.

Signs screen time may be shaping children's behavior

If screen time has become closely tied to rewards or daily negotiations, parents may notice patterns such as:

- Frequent bargaining or pushback around screen time.
- Less interest in offline activities they once enjoyed.
- Trouble focusing on homework or sticking with tasks.
- Big emotions when it's time to turn off a device, including irritability or frustration.

Strategies experts recommend to reduce screen time struggles

The goal is to change the relationship children have with screens. One way to do that is by making screen time more predictable, with clear limits, smoother transitions and rewards that don't involve devices.

1. Phase out screen time as a behavior-based reward

Rather than saying, "Do this, and you get more screen time," make screen time part of a consistent routine instead of a reward for behavior. This can help reduce the idea that screen time is the ultimate prize and make everyday activities feel more worthwhile on their own.

2. Create transition rituals

The goal is to change the relationship children have with screens. To do that, make screen time a predictable thing — with clear limits, smoother transitions and other rewards that don't involve devices.

Experts suggest the following:

- A 5-minute warning: "Okay, I'll set a timer for 5 minutes. Start wrapping up."
- A physical reset: "Okay, time's up. Grab a snack (stretch, walk)."
- A consistent next step: Move from screens to a similar next activity each day, like dinner, reading, crafts or outdoor time.
- Transitions can help the brain shift from high stimulation to lower stimulation without as much frustration or resistance.

3. Make screen time predictable

Experts say children often handle limits better when they know what to expect. Rather than using screen time as a reward, they recommend establishing a consistent routine with clear expectations.

Some approaches experts commonly recommend include:

- Setting clear start and stop times, such as 30 to 60 minutes after school.
- Allowing more flexibility on weekends while maintaining consistent boundaries. For example, screens might be put away after a set time each morning.
- Avoiding tying screen access to grades, chores or daily behavior.

4. Avoid using screens as emotional regulation tools

Families will say it's tempting to hand over a device when a child is bored, upset or overwhelmed. But when screens become the primary way children calm down, they may have fewer opportunities to practice other coping skills.

Rather than relying on screens to ease difficult emotions, encourage children to learn to:

- Name their emotions
- Take a break
- Find new ways to solve problems beyond looking online for answers

5. Model the behavior you want to see

Experts say children don't just follow rules; they also notice the screen habits of the adults around them.

Some strategies experts recommend include:

- Taking a family digital wellness class together.
- Scheduling regular screen-free family time.
- Talking openly about personal screen boundaries, such as saying, "I'm putting my phone away."
- Creating a family technology agreement to set shared expectations and healthy habits.

Build self-motivation instead of screen time

When screen time consistently becomes the reward, it can unintentionally become the thing children want most. But when screen time is part of a predictable routine, it becomes less central. It's just another part of the day, rather than the main event.

Rather than focusing on perfect screen rules, child development experts emphasize consistent boundaries, smoother transitions and opportunities for children to build motivation that doesn't depend on a device.

Ultimately, experts say the goal isn't simply to help children earn screen time. It's to help them develop the skills to manage screen time with greater confidence.

This article was produced by Verizon's Parenting in a Digital World and reviewed and distributed by Stacker.

WASHINGTON, DC FOR KIDS — BEYOND THE OBVIOUS

111 FUN, SURPRISING PLACES
FOR FAMILIES

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 pups alike.

emon

THINGS TO DO

Fall festival season is here!

Explore the best family-friendly festivals to soak up the fall in the DMV area. From traditional activities like corn mazes to an eclectic chocolate festival, this list is nothing short of jam-packed.

BY SANYA BATHIA

IN THIS SECTION

- Ghosts, ghouls and a month full of fun **38**
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The leaves are changing, and there is a chill in the air. Fall is officially in full swing across the DMV! With the season comes a lineup of family-friendly festivals filled with seasonal food, entertainment and activities. From pumpkin picking and chocolate to international cuisine and live performances, there is something for everyone to enjoy.

FEATURED FALL FESTIVALS

In this section, Washington Parent's advertising partners share their top fall festivals to experience.

Stamp & Scream Family Festival

Spooky stamps meet Halloween fun at the National Postal Museum's Stamp & Scream Family Festival. Families can dress up, get creative with hands-on art projects and join a museum-wide costume parade, with something festive around every corner.

Kids can make take-home jack-o'-lanterns in a bag, try spooky silhouette printmaking, pose for a family portrait in a stamp-shaped photo frame and hunt for hidden critters in the kid-friendly forest installation. Story Time with DC Public Library, a book bike with free reading materials and activities from the National Museum of African American History and Culture round out the day.

Costumes are encouraged, but faces must stay visible (no masks or face coverings) and fake weapons aren't allowed. Story Times are at noon and 2 p.m. and the costume parade starts at 1 p.m.

- **Date:** 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 31.
- **Address:** National Postal Museum, 2 Massachusetts Ave. NE, Washington, DC
- **Cost:** Free
- **Indoor or outdoor setting:** Indoor
- **Crowd level:** Moderate
- **Reservation requirements:** No registration required
- **Website:** <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/stamp-scream-family-festival>



DMV Chocolate and Coffee Festival

Get ready to be wowed by the plethora of vendors at the annual DMV Chocolate and Coffee Festival over two weekends in Maryland and Virginia. From chocolate making classes and presentations to coffee-flavored everything, grab a cup of joe and a bar of chocolate because there is something for everyone at the festival.

Kids under 12 get in free with a ticketed parent. Families can make coffee filter crafts, take photos with festival mascots Chunk & Bean, and sip, sample and shop unique and fun gifts.

- **Date:** Maryland: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 7; 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 8; Virginia: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 14; 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 15.
- **Address:** Maryland: 18031 Central Park Circle, Boyds, MD; Virginia: 21100 Dulles Town Circle, Sterling, VA



PHOTO COURTESY GREAT COUNTRY FARMS

CONTINUED...

THINGS TO DO

- **Cost:** \$14.99 for prepurchased tickets, \$20 at the door, \$35 for VIP (does not include ticket service fee)
- **Indoor or outdoor setting:** Fully indoor event
- **Crowd level:** Typically welcomes around 12,000 to 14,000 attendees and hosts over 200 vendors.
- **Reservation requirements:** Tickets are required to enter the event and can be purchased online.
- **Website:** <https://dmvchocolateandcoffee.com/>

MORE FALL FESTIVALS

This section features some of the best festivals around the DMV in October that locals and visitors alike consistently attend and enjoy.



Messick's Fall Festival

Perfect for a festive fall day with the family, Messick's Fall Fair is filled with fun and elaborate activities. From ziplines, corn mazes, a petting zoo, hayrides and even a candy cannon, you are sure to have a jam-packed day at this October festival.

- **Date:** 10 a.m.-5 p.m. all weekends, Sept. 19-Oct. 25
- **Address:** Messick's Farm Market, 6025 Catlett Road, Bealeton, VA
- **Cost:** General admission is \$16.19, senior admission \$10.15 for 55 and older
- **Indoor or outdoor setting:** Outdoor farm setting
- **Crowd level:** More relaxed during September weekends and very packed during October weekends.
- **Reservation requirements:** Tickets online required to enter the event

Pumpkin Harvest Festival

Nothing screams fall festival like picking your own pumpkin and enjoying the orange leaves outdoors. Great Country Farms covers all the classics at their Fall Pumpkin Harvest Festival, where you can not only pick your own pumpkin, but also enjoy some



cider donuts, live music and frolic through a corn maze.

- **Date:** 9 a.m.-5 p.m. daily, Sept. 19-Oct. 31
- **Address:** 34355 Snickersville Turnpike, Bluemont, VA
- **Cost:** Weekday advance pricing is \$12 per child and \$14 per adult with a \$1 ticketing fee online; weekend advance pricing is \$14 per child and \$16 per adult; weekday on-site pricing is \$16 for ages 3 and older; weekend on-site pricing for ages 3 and older is \$18.
- **Indoor or outdoor setting:** Outdoor farm setting
- **Crowd level:** Small to moderate crowd. Go early to avoid the rush.
- **Reservation requirements:** Tickets are needed to enter the event. Can be bought in person for \$16-\$18 but are cheaper online.

DogFest

Bring your family and four-legged friends to Reston Town Center Pavilion for a fun-filled day celebrating dogs and the life-changing work of Canine Companions! Enjoy games, activities and plenty of tail-wagging moments while supporting their mission to provide expertly trained service dogs to people with disabilities.

- **Date:** 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Oct. 3
- **Address:** 11900 Market St., Reston, VA
- **Cost:** Free
- **Indoor or outdoor setting:** Outdoor
- **Crowd level:** Small to moderate
- **Reservation requirements:** Registration is available online.



Taste of the Harvest

Explore DC's flavor-filled food festival this fall, filled with seasonal dishes and tastings from Black-owned businesses and mom-and-pop shops from around the DC area. End the lovely community event with some live performances and s'mores. You couldn't ask for a better fall night for your belly.

- **Date:** 2-8 p.m. Oct. 3
- **Address:** THEARC, 1901 Mississippi Ave. SE, Washington, DC
- **Cost:** Free
- **Indoor or outdoor setting:** Outdoor setting
- **Crowd level:** Usually a busy and family-oriented crowd
- **Reservation requirements:** RSVP is encouraged
- Autumn Glory

Autumn Glory

Take a deep breath of the crisp fall air and watch the colors change with the family this year at the annual Autumn Glory Festival. Travel + Leisure ranked Oakland No. 2 Best Town for Fall Colors in America, so you don't want to miss this wholesome family getaway.

- **Date:** Oct. 7-11; parade at 1 p.m. Oct. 10
- **Address:** Takes place primarily in Oakland, MD, and throughout Garrett County, MD

- **Cost:** Free
- **Indoor or outdoor setting:** Outdoor, but the scenery can be seen while driving in your car
- **Crowd level:** Usually a busy and family-oriented crowd at certain vendor events
- **Reservation requirements:** Some events may require reservations. Check out the full lineup for more information.

Centreville Day Festival

Centreville Day is packed with family fun, from the rock wall, giant slide, Monkey Bridge and historic train to the Trick-or-Treat Trail and hands-on Eco Expo with bees and worms. Families can enjoy the American Legion Parade, live entertainment, historic buildings and reenactors, plus Pets in the Park.

- **Date:** 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Oct. 17
- **Address:** 5714 Mt. Gilead Road, Centreville, VA
- **Cost:** Free
- **Indoor or outdoor setting:** Outdoor
- **Crowd level:** Medium to large
- **Reservation requirements:** None

World Heritage Festival

Experience the world in the heart of Downtown Frederick at the World Heritage Festival, a vibrant celebration of cultures, traditions and community. Set along the scenic Carroll Creek Park, this family-friendly festival brings people together through the universal languages of music, dance, food, art and creativity.

- **Date:** 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Oct. 10
- **Address:** Carroll Creek Park, Frederick, MD
- **Cost:** Free
- **Indoor or outdoor setting:** Outdoor
- **Crowd level:** Large
- **Reservation requirements:** None

Oktoberfest Renaissance Festival

Steins meet swords at this one-of-a-kind mashup of German beer hall tradition and Renaissance revelry. Trade your dirndl for a cloak (or wear both) and enjoy jousting, axe throwing, archery, stein hoisting and a costume contest with cash prizes, all fueled by Oktoberfest brews and hearty German fare. Stick around after 8 p.m. for Shipgarten After Dark with DJ Bianca Diamond.

- **Date:** 1-6 p.m. Oct. 17
- **Address:** 7581 Colshire Drive, McLean, VA
- **Cost:** Free
- **Indoor or outdoor setting:** Outdoor
- **Crowd level:** Large
- **Reservation requirements:** None

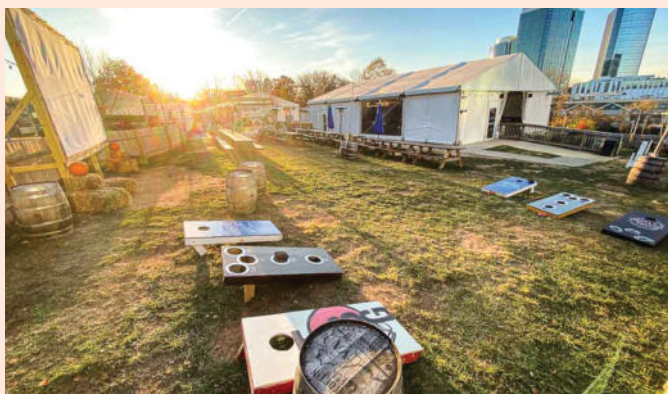


PHOTO COURTESY OKTOBERFEST RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL

Asian Night Market

Get ready for a vibrant evening at the DMV Asian Night Market at National Harbor. Enjoy over 70 food and craft vendors, mouthwatering street food and desserts, cultural performances, live entertainment and a lively waterfront atmosphere with the family.

- **Date:** Noon-8 p.m. Oct. 24
- **Address:** 137 National Plaza, Oxon Hill, MD
- **Cost:** Free admission. Charges may apply for food, drinks, desserts and merchandise from vendors.
- **Indoor or outdoor setting:** Outdoor
- **Crowd level:** Medium to packed
- **Reservation requirements:** Reserve a spot on Eventbrite



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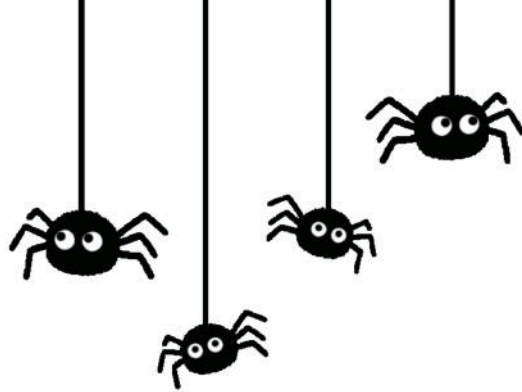
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a month full of fun

Check out these 20 ways to celebrate Halloween across the DMV — from costume parades to candlelit ghost tours.

BY TIFFANY BLACKWELL

Halloween falls on a Saturday in 2026, which means families across DC, Maryland and Virginia can take advantage of a full weekend's worth of activities.

Whether your crew wants a costume parade down Main Street, a neighborhood famous for its porch decor or a ghost story that's just spooky enough, we have it covered.

Below, we've rounded up 18 family-friendly ways to celebrate — organized by community festivals, trick-or-treat events, famous decorated neighborhoods, as well as family-friendly ghost tours and haunted houses for the braver goblins.

HALLOWEEN COMMUNITY FESTIVALS AND PARTIES

Halloween Eye Spy Trains

Wheaton and Cabin John Regional Parks, MD

Kids ride the miniature trains and spot pumpkins, ghosts and black cats along the route. This year's roundups list weekends from Oct. 3 to Nov. 1. Tickets are \$6 at Cabin John and \$9 at Wheaton (includes a carousel ride).

- **Date:** Weekend, Oct. 3-Nov. 1
- **Address:** Cabin John Train, 7410 Tuckerman Lane, Rockville, MD; 2002 Shorefield Road, Wheaton, MD



BIGSTOCK/FAWELDMAN

Halloween Outdoor Movie Night Rockville, MD

Grab a blanket and settle in for an outdoor screening of "Hocus Pocus" at The Milton at Twinbrook Quarter. The event is a relaxed, low-key way to kick off the season without fighting a crowd and also includes free popcorn, face painting and Halloween treats.

- **Date:** 5:30 p.m. Oct. 9
- **Address:** Milton at Twinbrook Quarter, 850 Festival St., Rockville, MD

Boo at the Zoo Washington, DC

The Smithsonian's National Zoo throws one of the region's most beloved family Halloween parties, taking place this year Oct. 16-18. Kids in costume can collect treats at trick-or-treat stations scattered around the zoo, watch animals enjoy pumpkin enrichment and stroll past Halloween scenes along the Olmsted Walk. The event is included in the zoo's regular admission. Admission is \$35 per person, members get 15% off, and parking is \$30 in advance or \$40 the day of. Members also get early entry at 5 p.m.

- **Date:** 6-8:30 p.m. Oct. 16-18
- **Address:** Smithsonian's National Zoo, 3001 Connecticut Ave NW, Washington, DC



PHOTO COURTESY SMITHSONIAN'S NATIONAL ZOO AND CONSERVATION BIOLOGY INSTITUTE



Halloween event will feature spooky arts and crafts, interactive games along with local vendors and entertainment.

- **Date:** 10 a.m.-1 p.m. Oct. 17
- **Address:** Manassas Park, 100 Park Central Plaza, Manassas Park, VA

Halloween Party and Costume Parade

Chevy Chase, MD

Come dressed up for the costume parade at 6 p.m., then stick around for refreshments, crafts, games and a trip through the Haunted House. Trippy Tacos food truck will be parked on-site from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., serving up tasty bites for purchase. Want to skip the line? Pre-order details will be shared in the weekly Village blast emails and posted on the Village website homepage. Prefer to order in person? Walk-ups are welcome too!

- **Date:** 5:30-7 p.m. Oct. 28
- **Address:** The Village Hall, 5906 Connecticut Ave., Chevy Chase, MD

Del Ray Halloween Parade

Alexandria, VA

The 30th annual parade is at 2 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 25, on Mount Vernon Avenue, starting at E. Bellefonte Avenue. Kids, pets and decorated strollers march, and it ends with music and awards at the Mount Vernon Recreation Center field. USA Today has named it one of the country's top Halloween parades.

- **Date:** 2 p.m. Oct. 25
- **Address:** Starting at East Bellefonte Avenue, Alexandria, VA

Ghost Town at Burke Lake Park

Fairfax Station, VA

Billed as a "not spooky" Halloween event, this Ghost Town is a fun and light way for everyone to get into the Halloween spirit. It's a strong pick for preschoolers and other younger kiddos who aren't a big fan of frights. Online tickets are \$20 and include the train, carousel, mini golf, crafts and themed activity areas.

- **Date:** 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Oct. 24-25
- **Address:** Burke Lake Park, 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station, VA

Leesburg Kiwanis Halloween Parade

Leesburg, VA

Running since 1957, this is one of the oldest Halloween parades in the eastern United States. In recent years it's been



PHOTO COURTESY KIWANIS CLUB OF LEEBSBURG



PHOTO COURTESY KIWANIS CLUB OF LEEBSBURG

held before Halloween so families can enjoy both the parade and trick-or-treating without a scheduling conflict. Floats, marching bands and community groups will make their way from Ida Lee Park down King Street to Fairfax Street. The parade, which is also a food drive for Loudoun Hunger Relief, is free to attend and to march if you would like to participate.

- **Date:** 6:30 p.m. Oct. 28
- **Address:** Ida Lee Park, down King Street to Fairfax Street, Leesburg, VA

Fall-O-Ween

Alexandria, VA

The City of Alexandria's family Halloween celebration at John Carlyle Square Park will be full of fun for the whole family. The event features a kids' costume parade, a pet costume parade, a festive marketplace, holiday arts and crafts plus a Día de los Muertos celebration woven into the day. Prizes will be given out for best costumes and there will be plenty of food and drinks for everyone to enjoy.

- **Date:** 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Oct. 31
- **Address:** John Carlyle Square Park, 300 John Carlyle St., Alexandria, VA

Trick-or-Treating at Mount Vernon

Mount Vernon, VA

George Washington's estate goes full 18th-century for the Halloween afternoon. Kids can collect candy in special Mount Vernon treat bags as they wander the historic grounds, watch a costume parade at 4 p.m., catch a Punch & Judy puppet show and an 18th-century baking demonstration and snap a photo at the straw-bale selfie station in front of the Mansion. Tickets for candy-collecting guests ages 12 and older are \$31 for the public or \$24.80 for members; ages 11 and younger are \$26 for the

CONTINUED...



PHOTO COURTESY MOUNT VERNON LADIES ASSOCIATION



PHOTO COURTESY MOUNT VERNON LADIES ASSOCIATION

public or \$20.80 for members. Guests 12 and older not collecting candy are \$30 for the general public; members not collecting candy are free but must register.

- **Date:** 2-5 p.m. Oct. 31
- **Address:** George Washington's Mount Vernon, 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Mount Vernon, VA

COMMUNITY TRICK-OR-TREAT AND TRUNK-OR-TREAT EVENTS

Manassas Haunted Happenings

Manassas, VA

Historic Downtown Manassas hosts its long-running trick-or-treat morning where kids can visit local vendors, enter a costume parade and contest and more.

- **Date:** 10 a.m.-noon Oct. 24
- **Address:** Historic Downtown Manassas, 9431 West St., Manassas, VA



PHOTO COURTESY HISTORIC MANASSAS

Falls Church Halloween Carnival

Falls Church, VA

A City of Falls Church tradition for more than 30 years, this event includes carnival-style games, an inflatable bounce house, obstacle course, candy and more. It is typically split into two timeslots in order to allow all families the opportunity to participate: from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. and from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

- **Date:** 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. and 3:30-5:30 p.m. Oct. 24
- **Address:** City of Falls Church Community Center/Cherry Hill Park, 223 Little Falls St., Falls Church, VA



PHOTO COURTESY CITY OF FALLS CHURCH

Halloween Trick or Treat Trail

Arlington, VA

Join The Village at Shirlington for their annual Halloween event, featuring a trick-or-treat trail through the neighborhood. Dress in your spookiest or most creative costume and enjoy a fun afternoon for the whole family, complete with candy, prizes and plenty of Halloween spirit. RSVP to receive a digital map highlighting participating shops and restaurants where candy will be available.

- **Date:** 2-4 p.m. Oct. 24
- **Address:** Village at Shirlington, 2700 South Quincy St., Arlington, VA

Trick or Treat at Tudor Place

Washington, DC

Enjoy more treats than tricks at this annual fall event on the Tudor Place grounds. Costumes encouraged. Celebrate our annual Trick or Treat at Tudor Place, a favorite fall tradition for families in Georgetown. Wander the gardens collecting treats, show off your costume, and enjoy coffee, cider, crafts, games, and facepainting. The event is held outdoors, rain or shine.

- **Date:** 10 a.m.-noon Oct. 31
- **Address:** Tudor Place, 1644 31st St. NW, Washington, DC

A Spooky Good Time

Fort Washington, MD

This spooky good time includes trick or treating, a costume contest, a haunted hayride and a haunted house, so there's something for every level of fright. It's for ages 3 to 17 and costs \$5 per child for residents and \$7 for nonresidents.

- **Date:** 6-9 p.m. Oct. 31
- **Address:** Tucker Road Athletic Complex, 1770 Tucker Road, Fort Washington, MD

NEIGHBORHOODS FAMOUS FOR DECOR AND TRICK-OR-TREATING

CHEVY CHASE, DC

Rittenhouse Street between Broad Branch Road and Utah Avenue NW is a perennial favorite — wide sidewalks, close-together houses and reliably generous candy givers make it an easy route for younger trick-or-treaters. Afterward, families often walk up Connecticut Avenue, where some local shops tend to hand out treats to kids in the early evening.

DEL RAY/OLD TOWN ALEXANDRIA, VA

Del Ray's tight-knit blocks are already primed for Halloween thanks to the neighborhood's parade right before the big night, and residents keep the spooky momentum going with decorated homes on Halloween. A short drive away, Old Town Alexandria's brick sidewalks and colonial-era homes help to create an atmospheric and very walkable trick-or-treat route, especially along the residential blocks off King Street.

FAMILY-FRIENDLY GHOST TOURS AND HAUNTED HOUSES

Loudoun Museum Hauntings

Leesburg, VA

This annual 80-minute walking-tour fundraiser leads guests through historic downtown Leesburg with guides sharing spine-tingling (but not gory) stories about the town's historic homes, cemeteries and buildings, including the Loudoun County Courthouse. Other stops include Johnston House/Embark Center, Leesburg Presbyterian Church, Shoes Cup and Cork, St. James Cemetery and Charles Hamilton Houston Courthouse.

- **Date:** Oct. 22-24
- **Address:** Loudoun Museum, 16 Loudoun St. SW, Leesburg, VA

Ale

Alex

Se run lantern-led ghost walks through Old Town's cobblestone streets nightly throughout October. The stories lean toward spooky storytelling rather than gore, making them a good but not so scary option for families with older kids who like a good legend. Tickets are required for the tours.

- **Date:** Dates and times vary based on tour
- **Address:** Meeting location varies

Halloween Nights Fun at the O Street Museum Mansion

Washington, DC

Explore the mansion at the O Street Museum on the days leading up to Halloween. The 100-room mansion decorates each year specifically for Halloween and includes over 80 secret doorways hidden throughout. The night includes a costume contest as well as an available cash bar and all proceeds go to support the museum as well as resident artists.

- **Date:** 4-10 p.m. Oct. 23-Nov. 1
- **Address:** O Street Museum Mansion, 2020 O St. NW, Washington, DC



©CHIPDUNCAN FOR THE O MUSEUM



PHOTO COURTESY THE WHARF

Honoring loved ones

From communal altars to intricate face painting, the DMV is going all out this year for Día de los Muertos.

BY SANYA BATHIA

festival is designed to celebrate them through color and joy while remembering them as they lived! The festival is built on the philosophy that, as long as they are remembered and celebrated, they are always with you. It is a lovely way to keep people in your soul and let them know they are never forgotten.

The festival is rooted in the belief that, during this period, the border between us and the spiritual world disappears, allowing you to embrace loved ones who have passed away and show your gratitude for life and celebration.

syrup of piloncillo (unrefined cane sugar) and cinnamon.

- **Favorite foods of the deceased:** Families often prepare whatever dishes or treats the person loved in life, since ofrendas are meant to welcome their spirit back with familiar comforts. This could be anything from tequila to a favorite candy.

The idea behind the ofrenda foods is that the spirits return to enjoy the essence or aroma of the food, and afterward, the family eats the meal together, turning mourning into a celebration of memory and connection.

CELEBRATE WITH YOUR FAMILY THIS YEAR IN THE DMV

Community Exhibit: Altar del Día de los Muertos

The Meadowside Nature Center helps bring people together this Día de los Muertos while embracing what the festival is truly about. To help remember your loved ones and keep them with you, the Rockville nature center has a community altar where people can bring photos, artwork and plants to honor and commemorate family members who have passed away.

- **Tip:** Visitors may contribute copies of photos, objects, flowers and plants, artwork, and nonperishable food in sealed containers. Bring only items that can be left at the nature center.
- **When:** 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Oct. 28-31
- **Location:** Meadowside Nature Center, 5100 Meadowside Lane, Rockville, MD
- **Cost:** Free

The Wharf Fiesta

Walk along the water and participate in jam-packed activities for kids and adults at The Wharf. With sugar skull decorating, cultural performances, face painting and a walk through Modelo beer gardens for those older than 21, there is an abundance of activities for a fun family Sunday.

- **Tip:** Garage 3, located at 602 Water St. SW, is closest to the event. You can also ride the Metro to Waterfront Station and walk five minutes to The Wharf.



PHOTO COURTESY THE WHARF

- **When:** 3-6 p.m. Nov. 1
- **Location:** The Wharf, 664 Maine Ave. SW, Washington, DC
- **Cost:** Free; food and drinks are not included.

Día de los Muertos Festival

Just a two-hour drive away, step into the spirit of Día de los Muertos with a vibrant, high-energy show by the Latin Ballet. Expect colorful performances, craft tables and a celebration that is equal parts heart and hype. It is a festive way to honor tradition, move to the rhythm and soak up the talent of the Latin Ballet. Admission ranges from free, with a pay-what-you-can ticket option, so grab your spot and join the party!

- **Tip:** Embrace the season with family fun and come to the event dressed up! Halloween costumes are encouraged.
- **When:** 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Oct. 24
- **Location:** The Perkinson Center for the Arts & Education, 11810 Centre St., Chester, VA
- **Cost:** Free, or pay what you can

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THE NORTH AMERICAN TOUR

STRATHMORE

SAT, OCT 31
& SUN, NOV 1



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TRICK-OR-TREAT WITH US ON HALLOWEEN!
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THINGS TO DO



PHOTOS ©SMITHSONIAN'S NATIONAL ZOO AND CONSERVATION BIOLOGY INSTITUTE

Trick-or-treating goes wild at Boo at the Zoo

The popular annual event allows kids to come in after hours and celebrate the spooky season with tricks and treats around every exhibit.

BY SANYA BATHIA

Halloween comes early at the Smithsonian's National Zoo this year, with the return of Boo at the Zoo — three nights of trick-or-treating, costumed critters and candy-fueled fun for the whole family. From Oct. 16-18, families can wander candlelit, cobweb-strewn paths past Halloween-decked exhibits, snag treats at stations scattered across the grounds and catch glimpses of the zoo's animals enjoying their own seasonal enrichment (yes, that includes elephants and jack-o'-lanterns).

Here's everything you need to know to plan your visit, from tickets and parking to what to eat.





Why families will love it

Kids will be enamored by the variety of Halloween-decorated exhibits, ranging from the Elephant Community Center and Small Mammal House to the Reptile Discovery Center. Guests receive a souvenir goodie bag and can fill it with sweets, snacks and other surprises at treat stations throughout the zoo. This way, kids get both Halloween excitement and a chance to see animals in a special setting while learning something new about them in the process.

"When we got to the zoo, we all (adults included) got to trick-or-treat. We were given a trick-or-treat bag when we arrived (one of those reusable give away bags) and we just walked through the park and got our goodies," shared travln-beegees on TripAdvisor. "There were at least 30-plus stations of candies and goodies (like chips, juice, cookies). There were decorations throughout the zoo...The kids definitely had fun and want to make it an annual tradition!"



What families can expect

Once inside, families can wander the grounds in costume, stopping at treat stations tucked throughout the zoo to fill a keepsake goodie bag with candy and small surprises along the way. Spooky-but-sweet touches are everywhere, from skeleton scenes to Halloween decor, giving the whole visit a festive, more-treats-than-tricks feel. Kids can burn off energy at a dance party, and this year brings a new addition: a pumpkin patch photo backdrop for family pictures.

Beyond the trick-or-treating, ticket holders get after-hours access to indoor animal habitats that are normally closed by evening, including the Small Mammal House, Elephant Community Center and Reptile Discovery Center, so there's still plenty of wildlife to see even after dark. For an extra fee, families can also hop on the Conservation Carousel or take a ride on the National Zoo Choo Choo train.

Feed your own little monster with a snack from one of the regular park food stands. Typical on-site foods include made-to-order sandwiches, wraps, Sbarro pizza and salads at the Zoo Cafe Market & Deli.



Planning your visit

- **Time:** Starting time is 6 p.m. with the last entry being at 8 p.m.
- **Date:** Oct. 16-18
- **Location:** 3001 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, DC
- **Cost:** \$35 per ticket for nonmembers, 15% off for zoo members
- **Tickets:** Tickets for the event can be bought online through the event page. It's advised to buy them beforehand, as they can sell out the day of the event because of its popularity.
- **Parking:** Parking is not included with a ticket. Event parking costs \$30 per vehicle in advance or \$40 the day of the event. Regular member and daytime parking passes are not valid for Boo at the Zoo. Additionally, there may be street parking available in the nearby Cleveland Park neighborhoods if you are up for a 20-minute stroll.
- **City transit:** It's recommended to take the Metro to the Woodley Park-Adams Morgan Red Line stop, which is a 10-minute walk to the zoo gates.

Frequently asked questions

- **Can I wear a costume?**
Yes, costumes are encouraged, but adults cannot wear full-face masks and guests should not bring props that look like weapons.
- **Are there food allergies to worry about?**
The zoo notes that the event is not nut-free, so families should check ingredient labels carefully.
- **What are the entry rules?**
Guests should plan to enter together, and 8 p.m. is the event's last-entry time.
- **Is Boo at the Zoo rain-or-shine?**
Pack an umbrella and check out the exhibits because the zoo has indicated that the event is held rain-or-shine.
- **Can I bring my dog?**
Pets are strictly forbidden, but an exception is made for certified and trained service animals.

Desserts to die for this Halloween



BIGSTOCK/BADMAN PRODUCTION

Eight bakeries serving up the spookiest, sweetest treats in DC, Maryland and Virginia.

BY SANYA BATHIA

Halloween is one of the sweetest times of the year, and the entire DMV area is full of bakeries and dessert spots offering festive, spooky treats. From creatively decorated cupcakes to pumpkin-inspired pastries, there's no shortage of ways to indulge in seasonal sweets.

For this guide, we curated reliable local sources, including popular bakery websites, verified social media pages and community reviews to ensure each location featured is well-known, highly rated and offers unique Halloween-themed desserts. Whether you're looking for vegan options, family-friendly activities or Instagram-worthy creations, these spots have you covered.

Georgetown Cupcake

Georgetown Cupcake is renowned for its gourmet cupcakes made from the finest ingredients. During the Halloween season, customers can select from any of their October flavors on the Flavor Bar on the website and build their own box. They can choose from one of the curated Halloween assortments. These seasonal treats are perfect for those looking to indulge in a spooky yet delicious dessert.

- **Address:** 3301 M St. NW, Washington, DC
- **Hours:** 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Saturday; 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Sunday
- **Phone:** (202) 333-8448

Astro Doughnuts and Fried Chicken

Astro is known for their festive treats and Halloween is no exception! Astro Doughnuts and Fried Chicken is coming out with their limited-edition seasonal boxes featuring pumpkin-glazed rings, candy apple flavors and marshmallow-topped creations. Make sure to get your adorable on-theme sugar fix with them this Halloween season.

- **Address:** 1308 G St. NW, Washington, DC
- **Hours:** 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday; 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday; 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday
- **Phone:** (202) 809-5565

The Cakeroom

The Cakeroom offers a variety of cakes and cupcakes, including seasonal flavors. During Halloween, they feature



PHOTOS COURTESY GEORGETOWN CUPCAKE



treats like chocolate and vanilla cupcakes with cute Halloween sugar toppers and jack-o'-lantern cakes decorated with edible spiders. Their spooky designs and delicious flavors make them a popular choice for Halloween desserts.

- **Address:** 2006 18th St. NW, Washington, DC
- **Hours:** 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 9 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday; 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Saturday; 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Sunday
- **Phone:** (202) 450-4462

Heidelberg Pastry Shoppe

Heidelberg Pastry Shoppe is known for its traditional European pastries and cakes. During Halloween, they offer themed treats like pumpkin-shaped cookies and cakes decorated with spooky designs. Their high-quality pastries make them a great choice for Halloween desserts.

- **Address:** 2150 N Culpeper St., Arlington, VA
- **Hours:** 6:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday; 8 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday; 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Sunday; closed Monday
- **Phone:** (703) 527-8394



PHOTO COURTESY HEIDELBERG PASTRY SHOPPE

Amphora Bakery

Amphora Bakery goes all-out for Halloween with its festive "Halloween Collection," featuring decorated cakes, themed cupcakes, cookies and cake pops designed to spook and delight. Their custom buttercream and fondant creations are perfect for parties or trick-or-treat



PHOTO COURTESY AMPHORA BAKERY

gatherings, with fun seasonal designs that capture the spirit of the holiday. Advance notice is recommended for custom or large orders, and local delivery is available through DoorDash and Uber Eats, making it easy to grab last-minute treats. With its wide range of spooky sweets, Amphora is a go-to spot for Halloween desserts in Northern Virginia.

- **Address:** 294 Sunset Park Drive, Herndon, VA
- **Hours:** 8 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday-Friday; 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday; closed Sunday
- **Phone:** (703) 964-0500

Tiffany's Bakery

Tiffany's Bakery in Clinton, Maryland, has been delighting customers for three generations with beautifully crafted cakes perfect for any celebration. From birthday and sculpted cakes to themed children's designs and elegant wedding tiers, they offer creative options in a variety of flavors and styles. Their Halloween collection features spooky treats like ghost and bat sheet cakes, festive cupcakes and even elaborate spiderweb round cakes. With seasonal colors and customizable designs, Tiffany's makes it easy to create a dessert that's as fun or frightful as you want, making it a must-visit spot for Halloween sweets.

- **Address:** 8902 Simpson Lane, Clinton, MD
- **Hours:** 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday; 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday
- **Phone:** (301) 877-9700 or (301) 535-5077

Best Buns Bread Company

Head over to Best Buns Bread Company this Halloween for a plethora of themed desserts. From jack-o'-lantern and ghost cookies to a spiced apple Danish, the Halloween spirit is sure to stick around.

- **Address:** 4010 Campbell Ave., Arlington, VA
- **Hours:** 6 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Friday and 7 a.m.-9 p.m. Saturday-Sunday
- **Phone:** (703) 578-1500

Starry Night Bakery

Starry Night Bakery in Westminster, MD, is a whimsical dessert shop full of character, specializing in custom cakes, cupcakes, cheesecakes, sweets & treats, and party trays. They offer a wide array of seasonal and holiday-inspired items like the Pumpkin King Cake, Pumpkin Patch cake, Boo-berries dessert and other fall favorites. Alongside traditional sweets, they also have keto, vegan and gluten-free options to accommodate dietary preferences.

- **Address:** 330 140 Village Road, Westminster, MD
- **Hours:** 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesday-Friday; 10 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday; Closed Sunday-Monday
- **Phone:** (410) 871-9131



PHOTO COURTESY AMPHORA BAKERY



PHOTO COURTESY AMPHORA BAKERY

ARTECHOUSE brings a new world of digital art to DC



PHOTO COURTESY ARTECHOUSE

ARTECHOUSE is welcoming visitors back to DC with its new SUBMERGE Project, featuring immersive digital worlds and interactive installations from artists pushing the boundaries of technology and art.

BY SANYA BATHIA

Welcoming visitors back to DC for its new SUBMERGE Project, ARTECHOUSE reopened after over a year of being closed. The venue temporarily closed in May 2025 due to nearby construction, and reopened on Sept. 11, 2026.

Blending art and technology, ARTECHOUSE brings its latest immersive experience, SUBMERGE Project, to DC. Known for its innovative projects and collaborations with brands including Dubai World Expo, Microsoft and BMW, ARTECHOUSE invites visitors to experience digital art at its most imaginative.

What to look forward to

Step into this exhibition to interact with art, see new installations and watch a large-scale show, “Beyond the Render,” which is what the exhibition is anchored around.

■ **“Beyond the Render”:** This 45-minute experience features the 14 worlds from 13 artist teams. Families can explore underwater worlds, experience immersive versions of Emmy Award-winning creations and journey through futuristic landscapes. The program also includes a stained-glass-inspired music box, titled “1685,” that wowed audiences at Coachella. The piece, by David Ariew and Chelsea Evenstar, was accompanied by an orchestral score by Zedd.

■ **Media Lab:** With three main exhibits, the Media Lab offers an opportunity for kids and adults to tap into their creative side and interact with the art.

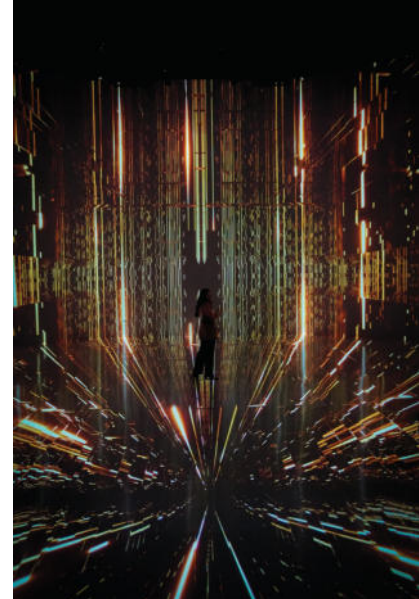
■ **Clay Pillar:** Visitors can use clay and their spontaneity to prompt AI into creating images based on what has been said and what their clay masterpiece reflects

■ **Octologue:** Fancy having a debate with renowned philosophers? ARTECHOUSE lets you do just that between AI and seven sculptural figures representing different philosophical perspectives, allowing you to be the eighth.

■ **Evolution and Concept Split:** With the creativity of visitors and the power of AI, visualize things you didn’t know had a visual concept. Be creative!

■ **Auxiliary Gallery:** Step away from the traditional-style gallery and into a world of creative adventure. Visitors can interact with several works throughout the exhibition, including a flamingo-filled dance floor, a responsive sculpture and a circular screen that transforms movement into shifting fields of color.

Other installations use motion and generative AI to create evolving digital scenes, including a space junkyard and personalized artwork inspired by iconic art movements. At the



end of the exhibition, visitors can chat in real time with an AI-powered penguin ambassador about the artists, the experience and the technology behind the show.

Helpful tips for parents

- **Lots of fun:** This exhibit is on the longer end with lots of different activations which can have your trip ranging from 45 minutes at the minimum to a longer day of fun adventure. It's good to keep that in mind when planning out the day with the family!
- **Getting hungry?:** ARTECHOUSE doesn't serve food but it is located in Southwest DC, near the National Mall and the Wharf. For the National Mall, your best bet is the food trucks and simple concessions like Good Stuff Eatery near the Air and Space Museum — easy, fast and forgiving of restless kids since you can eat outside on the grass. On the Wharf, places like Hank's Oyster Bar or Del Mar have kids' menus and waterfront patios where little ones can wander a bit while you eat, plus there's usually ice cream and casual grab-and-go spots nearby if a sit-down meal feels like too much.
- **Skip the car:** ARTECHOUSE doesn't offer on-site parking and parking downtown can be difficult and expensive. Opt for the Smithsonian and L'Enfant Plaza stations which are both an easy 5-10 minute walk from the exhibition.



Planning your visit

- **Time:** Noon-10 p.m. Thursdays; 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays; noon-8 p.m. Sundays
- **Date:** Opened Sept. 11, 2026
- **Location:** 1238 Maryland Ave. SW, Washington, DC
- **Cost:** \$24-\$27 for general admission, \$17 for youth (4-15 yrs old), children 3 and younger are free, \$21-23 for ID Special (Student, Senior, Military, First Responder), \$32 Flexible entry (arrive anytime during operating hours)
- **Tickets:** Get your tickets here
- **Parking:** Not offered on site. SP+ and Federal Parking are garages close by.
- **City transit:** Smithsonian and L'Enfant Plaza Metro stations

FAQs

How long should we allow for the visit?

Tickets are purchased for individual hour-long sessions; however, when space allows, visitors are welcome to remain past their hour-long session.

Can I bring food and drink inside?

No, no outside food, drink or gum is allowed in ARTECHOUSE. However, sealed clear bottled water is permitted in non-exhibit areas, and ARTECHOUSE XR Bar beverages are permitted on the main exhibition floor in approved tumblers.

Is photography/videography allowed?

Yes, just no flash photography.

Is the space accessible?

Yes, mobility devices such as wheelchairs and walkers are allowed on the exhibition floor. However, some exhibitions feature flashing lights and loud noises.

Can I bring my bags and/or strollers with me?

Suitcases, luggage, large backpacks and bags larger than 16 inches are not permitted in the exhibit space and cannot be checked or left with staff. Strollers are not permitted on the main exhibition floor; however, at ARTECHOUSE DC, they can be left in the coatroom or locker area. These areas are not attended and ARTECHOUSE does not take any responsibility for any lost, missing, stolen or damaged items.



DC EVENTS OCTOBER 2026

Hispanic Heritage Month: “Corazón y vida: Lowriding Culture”

- **Now through Oct. 15.** Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month at the National Museum of American History, where families can check out a bilingual exhibit detailing 80 years of lowrider culture in Mexican American and Chicano communities. Snap photos of two showstopping Chevy Impalas—El Rey, a candy red 1963 beauty covered in murals and Gypsy Rose, a 1964 classic with hand-painted roses. Kids who love cars will make a beeline for these stars, and the English and Spanish signs make it a breeze for bilingual families. While you’re there, don’t miss ‘Entertainment Nation,’ another fully bilingual exhibit packed with pop culture fun.
- **Location:** National Museum of American History, 1300 Constitution Ave. NW, Washington, DC

SUBMERGE Project at ARTECHOUSE

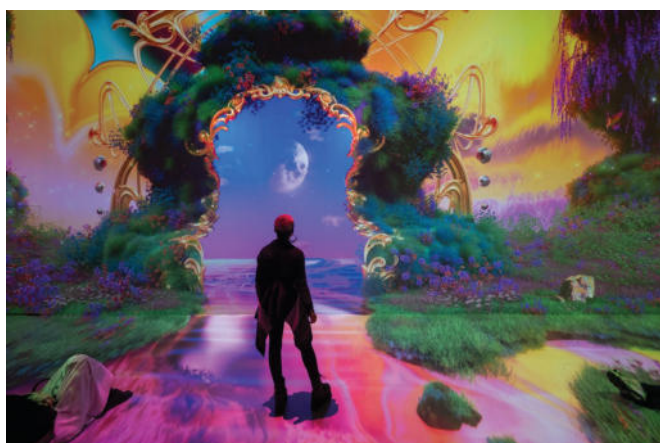


PHOTO COURTESY ARTECHOUSE

- **Now open.** ARTECHOUSE DC is back with a brand-new digital art show, SUBMERGE Project at ARTECHOUSE, featuring “Beyond the Render.” Settle in for a 45-minute journey through 14 short, three-minute pieces projected on a massive, wraparound screen. Kids who get antsy during long shows will love the quick pace and ever-changing scenes — think underwater adventures and futuristic landscapes. After the show, families can dive into 18 interactive installations, from flamingos that move when you do to a droid that trades places with visitors and a wall of color that ripples with every wave.
- **Location:** ARTECHOUSE DC, 1238 Maryland Ave. SW, Washington, DC

Waterford Fair

- **Oct. 2-4.** Step back in time at the Waterford Fair, where families can watch artisans craft everything from pottery to jewelry right before your eyes. Living historians, a juried art show and tours of historic homes fill the village with activity from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. Kids 12 and under get in free, and little ones love watching the artisans work up close—it’s way more exciting than your average craft show.
- **Location:** Throughout the village of Waterford, VA



PHOTO COURTESY CITY OF COLLEGE PARK

College Park Day

- **Oct. 3.** College Park’s biggest bash of the year takes over the aviation museum and airport from noon to 6 p.m. Families can enjoy free museum admission, sample treats from a variety of food vendors and take advantage of free parking and shuttles. The festival is just a short stroll from the College Park Metro on the Green Line, and the fun happens rain or shine.
- **Location:** College Park Aviation Museum, 1985 Corporal Frank Scott Drive, College Park, MD

Brunswick Railroad Days

- **Oct. 3-4.** All aboard for Brunswick Railroad Days! This two-day festival celebrates the town’s railroad roots with live music, local crafts, tasty food, model train displays and plenty of hands-on activities for kids. The fun runs from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days and shines a spotlight on local performers, artists and artisans.
- **Location:** Throughout downtown Brunswick, MD

“Disney On Ice: Spotlight Magic!”

- **Oct. 8-12.** Mickey, Minnie, Donald, Daisy and Goofy take center stage in this brand new Disney On Ice adventure, featuring more than 30 favorite characters gliding across the rink. Showtimes are easy to fit into your schedule, with evening and morning options throughout the weekend. Want to make it extra special? The Magical Pass upgrade gets you premium seats and a character meet-and-greet before the show. Everyone age 2 and up needs a ticket.
- **Location:** EagleBank Arena, 4500 Patriot Circle, Fairfax, VA

Morven Park International & Fall Horse Trials

- **Oct. 8-11.** Morven Park is one of just five places in the country to catch this top-level eventing competition, where you can cheer on national and international riders—including Olympians—in dressage, show jumping and cross country. Saturday is cross country day, and families can snag tailgate spots with a view of the action. Don’t miss the vendor village packed with local artisans and food, and let the kids get up close to the horses for a truly memorable weekend.
- **Location:** 41580 Sunday Morning Lane, Leesburg, VA

City of Fairfax 50th Annual Fall Festival

- **Oct. 10.** Fairfax's fall festival turns 50 this year, and families can celebrate with more than 400 art, craft and food vendors, plus kids' activities and live entertainment all over historic downtown from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free, but if your kids love rides, grab a \$30 wristband for unlimited fun or pick up single ride tickets for \$3 or \$5. Don't miss Sparky's Harvest Bash at Fire Station 3, where little ones can climb aboard a fire truck, meet volunteer firefighters and snap a photo with Sparky—all for free. The festival happens rain or shine, and free shuttles from George Mason University and Fairfax High School make parking a breeze.
- **Location:** Downtown Fairfax, 10415 North St., Fairfax, VA

Springfield Fall Festival

- **Oct. 10.** Springfield's outdoor fall festival is back for its fifth year, filling the Town Center with food vendors, local restaurants, costumed characters, live music, a magic show and performances by local youth groups from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Kids can jump into interactive activities and win prizes between acts, and parents will appreciate the easy access to restrooms and extra food choices inside the mall.
- **Location:** Springfield Town Center, 6500 Springfield Mall, Springfield, VA

The Big Build

- **Oct. 17.** The National Building Museum's annual STEM festival is all about hands-on fun — kids can grab real tools and try their hand at building. Check the museum's website for this year's

hours and registration details.

- **Location:** National Building Museum, 401 F St. NW, Washington, DC

18th Annual American Indian Festival

- **Oct. 17.** Celebrate Native American culture, heritage and traditions with a day of free fun from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Families can enjoy live music, dancing, crafts, Native food vendors, storytelling, archery and more. Additional lineup details are still forthcoming.
- **Location:** Patuxent River Park, 16000 Croom Airport Road, Upper Marlboro, MD

Riversdale Harvest Fest

- **Oct. 17.** From 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., families can dig into seed saving with the site's historic gardener, cozy up for story time and wrap up the morning with a harvest scavenger hunt — prizes included. It's a relaxed, easy outing that's perfect for pairing with a picnic on the lawn.
- **Location:** Riversdale Historic Site and Museum, 4811 Riverdale Road, Riverdale Park, MD

Halloween Family Fun Day

- **Oct. 17.** Reston Community Center's Halloween bash runs from noon to 2 p.m. at Hunters Woods. Kids 8 and under are invited to dress up and join in for games and family-friendly performances. Registration is required, and an adult needs to stay with each child.
- **Location:** RCC Hunters Woods, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston, VA

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DC EVENTS OCTOBER 2026

Turkish Festival

- **Oct. 18.** Pennsylvania Avenue NW transforms into a Turkish street festival from 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., with delicious food, live music, folk dancing, craft vendors and a Turkish coffeehouse. Kids can dive into games and crafts in the children's tent, where past favorites have included mosaic making, coloring and face painting.
- **Location:** Pennsylvania Avenue NW between Third and Sixth Streets, Washington, DC

Fall Harvest Family Days at Mount Vernon

- **Oct. 24-25.** Step back in time at George Washington's farm, where colonial harvest fun runs from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The main event is wheat treading at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. — watch horses separate grain from stalks inside a 16-sided barn. Kids can meet farm animals, play colonial lawn games and check out a Revolutionary War camp. There's also a storytime reading of "Farmer George Plants a Nation," followed by a farm scavenger hunt.
- **Location:** George Washington's Mount Vernon, 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Mount Vernon, VA

Air & Scare

- **Oct. 24.** Get ready for a spooky day at the Smithsonian's Udvar-Hazy Center from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Families can trick-or-treat for free candy and snacks, make creepy crafts, try out spooky science experiments and enjoy story times and puppet shows for little ones. Snap photos with Star Wars characters and check out the new costume runway show. No ticket is needed for indoor fun, but the outdoor activities require a free timed ticket (released Oct. 1 at 7 p.m.). Plan to spend about 90 minutes. Costumes are welcome for kids 15 and under, but leave costume weapons at home. Parking is \$15, and lines can be long, so the Fairfax Connector bus 983 is a smart option.
- **Location:** Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, 14390 Air and Space Museum Parkway, Chantilly, VA

Boo at the Pool

- **Oct. 24.** Reston Community Center's Halloween swim party splashes into Hunters Woods from 12:30 to 4 p.m. Kids, ages 6 months to 9 years, can show off their poolside costumes, dive for treats and head home with a goody bag. The event is divided into four 30-minute sessions. A parent/caregiver must accompany non-swimmers in the water.
- **Location:** Terry L. Smith Aquatic Center, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston, VA

"At Home in Space"

- **Opens Oct. 30.** The National Air and Space Museum's newest gallery lets families step into space exploration with hands-on exhibits tracing more than 40 years of living and working in space. Kids can check out a real space shuttle engine, see Sally Ride's tennis racquet, spot Guy Bluford's flight suit jacket, build with a prototype Women of NASA LEGO set and meet Robonaut 1A, a humanoid robot. Admission is free, but you'll need a timed entry pass for the DC museum. Open daily from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
- **Location:** National Air and Space Museum, 650 Jefferson Drive SW, Washington, DC



PHOTO COURTESY MYSTERY MANSION

Mystery Mansion

- **Oct. 30-Nov. 1.** The Woman's Club of Chevy Chase transforms its clubhouse into a not-too-scary haunted house just right for kids ages 3 to 12, and parents are welcome to join the fun. Fairytale Isle tickets are \$20; the Tunnel is a \$5 upgrade requiring a Fairytale Isle ticket; Bonfire Bash is \$10. All tickets include access to Bonfire Bash. Be sure to buy tickets in advance.
- **Location:** 7931 Connecticut Ave., Chevy Chase, MD

Trick-or-Treating at Mount Vernon

- **Oct. 31.** Celebrate Halloween at George Washington's home, where kids can trick-or-treat around the historic grounds from 2 to 5 p.m. with a special Mount Vernon treat bag (required). Little ones can join a costume parade at 4 p.m., catch 18th-century magician Peter Gardiner at 3 and 4:30 p.m., listen to fife and drum music at 2:30 p.m. and even meet George and Martha Washington.
- **Location:** George Washington's Mount Vernon, 3200 Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Mount Vernon, VA



DMV Chocolate & Coffee Festival

- **Nov. 7-8 and 14-15.** Join over 200 vendors and 14,000 fellow chocolate and coffee lovers from DC, Maryland, Virginia, and beyond! Sample delicious treats, discover new favorites and enjoy a fun-filled day with family and friends at one or both festival locations.
- **Location:** Nov. 7-8: Adventist HealthCare Fieldhouse, 18031 Central Park Circle, Boyds, MD; Nov. 14-15: Dulles Town Center, 21100 Dulles Town Circle, Sterling, VA



PHOTO COURTESY DMV CHOCOLATE & COFFEE FESTIVAL

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