



NEIGHBORHOOD
Parents Network

MARCH 2024 ISSUE

PARENT TO PARENT



Spring & Summer Travel Edition!

*Finding (Screen-free) Fun
at Family Camp*

*Tips for Traveling with Picky
Eaters or While Breastfeeding*

Making Travel Au-Some



BRITISH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
OF CHICAGO, LINCOLN PARK
A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL

VISIT US!

Come experience
our vibrant
international
school for ages 15
months to 11 years
old.



Contact us to book a tour at:
admissions@bischicagolp.org.

www.bischicagolp.org

OUR MISSION

Empowering a diverse community of families by providing support and resources designed to solve the challenges of parenting in Chicago.

PARENT TO PARENT

Sitaara Jones, Managing Editor
sitaara@nnpnparents.org

Amy Johnson,
Executive Director
execdir@nnpnparents.org

Jana Kline,
Advertising Operations Manager
jana@nnpnparents.org

Peggy Fink, Designer
nldesign@nnpnparents.org

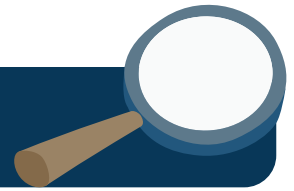
Parent to Parent contains articles and information straight from our NPN member community.

For information about editorial submissions, email:
newsletter@nnpnparents.org

For advertising, email:
advertising@nnpnparents.org

We look forward to hearing from you!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



FEATURE

Returning Home from Vacation: 5
Five Tips to Ease the Transition
Dear Teacher, We're Taking Our..... 6
Child Out of School for Vacation
Making Travel Au-some..... 8
Finding (Screen-free) Fun..... 10
at Family Camp
Making Staycations Magical 12
Day Camp Search in Chicago:..... 14
Tips from the Trenches!

Ask a Camp! Family Camp..... 16
Opportunities

Getting Into Harvard Doesn't 17
Mean Skipping Vacations or
Prepping During Preschool!

ASK AN EXPERT

Traveling While Breastfeeding:..... 18
A Physician's Guide

Fueling Healthy Adventures:..... 19
Nurturing Picky Eaters on the Go

From the Executive Director

Dear Members,

Welcome to our spring issue of Parent to Parent! As we continue to share resources online and connect in-person at playdates, networking breakfasts, support groups and more, we are thrilled to share parent-to-parent advice in print as well. NPN is with you in every format.

In this issue, we consider one of our favorite parts of life—vacation. Learn about traveling while breastfeeding and traveling with a picky eater. Contemplate family camp and a staycation. I'm grateful for our contributors (Chicago parents just like you!) who are willing to share their personal experiences with us. After all, sharing parent-to-parent advice is what this newsletter is all about.

After reading these articles, I'm wondering if you have any vacation plans this year. Are you mulling over sunny destinations or a family adventure? Please tell us on the discussion forum at nnpnparents.org if you feel like sharing. We'd love to hear.

Finally, did you know that NPN is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization? Your membership keeps NPN running, but membership fees alone aren't enough to cover all of NPN's costs. If you enjoyed this newsletter, consider donating \$20 to NPN at nnpnparents.org/donate. When you are finished reading Parent-to-Parent, please share it with a friend to help NPN continue to grow.

NPN is proud to be an inclusive organization and welcomes families of all cultures and backgrounds, regardless of gender, gender identity, race, ethnic origin, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, age, or ability. You are a welcome and valued part of the NPN community and we're glad you're here.

Amy Johnson
Executive Director



Photo courtesy Amy Johnson

**Donate
HERE!**





1st week of daycare **FREE**, and **NO** enrollment fee!

Reach out to our school locations to schedule a tour:

EDGEWATER

5427 N Broadway St, Chicago
773-516-4307

TOUHY & HARLEM

7652 W Touhy Ave, Chicago
773-853-2045

LAKEVIEW

1240 W Belmont Ave, Chicago
773-697-9017

IRVING PARK

3620 W Irving Park, Chicago
872-208-3448

LINCOLN SQUARE

2255 W Lawrence Ave, Chicago
773-754-8524

LINCOLN & JERSEY

6100 N Lincoln Ave, Chicago
773-942-6577

MOUNT PROSPECT

1738 E Kensington Rd,
Mount Prospect
224-257-4106

WEST LOOP

336 S Halsted St, Chicago
312-496-3549

Redeem with the code:

ONEWEEKFREE*

*Valued at \$450+. Valid through 6/30/2024

©LadyBug IP Systems, LLC. All rights reserved

FEATURE

Returning Home from Vacation: Five Tips to Ease the Transition

By Rachael Fritz

Vacations are awesome. But what's more awesome are the everyday moments that create your life with your children.

If you're like most parents, returning home from a vacation with children can leave you feeling like you need a vacation from the vacation. With a little planning though, you can re-enter your routine with ease and even work in some much needed "vacay recovery." Here are some top notch tips for helping you (and your kiddos) get back into the swing of things.

- 1** Plan a buffer day for the family: It can be tempting to try to squeeze in as much away-time as possible, but returning home on a Saturday vs. a Sunday can make all the difference for you and your kids. Have a loose plan on how you'll spend your first day back and keep it low key. My kids love to have pajamas and a movie day! If you're really on your A-game, you might decide to pull out some old toys or games to keep kids entertained while you unpack luggage and prepare for the week.
- 2** Plan a buffer day for YOU: This is great if you have school aged kiddos. If you can swing it, take the Monday off! Send the kids back to school and take your own pajama day. Resist the temptation to be productive and truly relax. No, you really don't need to get back to work. This is your permission to take the extra day for YOU.
- 3** Hire a service to clean while you're away: The hustle and bustle to get out the door for vacation can sometimes leave your home in disarray. There is nothing better than coming home to a clean house. You'll be so happy to walk into a clean home, with beds made, dishes cleaned, and toys tidied. From here on out, make it part of your vacation budget!



Photo courtesy Rachael Fritz

- 4** Pre-plan grocery delivery: Place a grocery delivery order for the day you return home. Consider quick meals like frozen pizza or pasta. Of course take-out is always an option too, but even a small delivery of groceries to set you up with the essentials can put your mind at ease as you head into the week.
- 5** Order prints of your vacation photos: If you see a dip in your mood upon returning from a vacation (this happens to my husband!), you might consider a fun activity for the family to reflect on the trip once you've returned home. Order prints of your vacation photos and have a scrapbooking night as a family. You don't need to get fancy with materials either. Put the photos in a pile and let everyone cut, glue, and chat while you remember the fun you had!

Vacations are awesome. But what's more awesome are the everyday moments that create your life with your children. My name is Rachael Fritz and I work with parents who feel defeated and give them the tools and parenting techniques they need to fall in love with parenthood. If you're looking for this kind of transformation, visit www.parentingonmars.com. You can also find me on Instagram [@parentingonmars](https://www.instagram.com/parentingonmars).

FEATURE

Dear Teacher, We're Taking Our Child Out of School for Vacation

By Matt Beardmore

The memories and experiences gained through travel can sometimes be more valuable than the lessons learned inside a classroom.



Photo courtesy Matt Beardmore

It used to be a painful exercise when I had to write a note to our son's teachers to let them know we would be taking our son out of school for a family vacation. The guilt would sink in and I would start to think we were bad parents for not putting enough focus on his education. I would write and re-write these emails and would get a knot in my stomach after hitting send as I wondered what his teachers must be thinking of us for prioritizing a trip over the classroom.

But as we've traveled more and I've gotten more practice writing these types of emails, I've come to a few basic conclusions:


- **Travel is education.** The memories and experiences gained through travel can sometimes be more valuable than the lessons learned inside a classroom.
- **Our son is still very young** and him being absent for a handful of days each school year is not going to have an impact on him learning the class material.
- **The time we enjoy together on vacation is crucial for our family.** The reliance on technology, work stresses, and constant running around the city for errands, after school activities and birthday parties takes a toll. It is a huge release to be able to leave all this behind and just focus on each other.

Some will argue that vacations are no reason to take a child out of school, and I am also very aware that just being able to take a vacation is a privilege. But if you are able to take a trip and decide to do so during your child's schooldays, here are a few tips on how to write that note to your child's teacher:

- **Before you send that email, review the school's policies.** What is considered an excused absence vs. an unexcused absence? What, if any consequences, will there be if your child accumulates too many unexcused absences?

- **Communicate well in advance of your trip.** Telling your child's teacher a day or two before you plan on taking your child out of school for a trip is not best practice, and it's not respecting the teacher's time. We like to give our son's teachers at least a month's heads-up when we need to take him out of school so they can modify their lesson plans for him, if necessary.
- **Focus on academics.** Your child's teacher is concerned about your child's academics, not your family spending a week at Disney World or Spring Training in Arizona during the middle of March when school is in session. So, let your child's teachers know that your child will be making up any assignments they'll miss. If assignments are posted online in Google Classroom or another platform, even better. Your child can still complete/submit work on time when they're gone.
- **Be honest.** There's no reason to make up a story about why your child is going to be absent. You're taking a trip. At the same time, as mentioned above, you don't need to share your vacation itinerary with your child's teachers.

.....
Matt Beardmore, owner of MB Writing and Editorial Services (www.mbwritingandeditorial.com), and is a professional writer and editor. His work has appeared in the New York Times, Fodor's Chicago Travel Guide, Chicago Tribune, Chicago Sun-Times, ESPN the Magazine, and numerous other national and local publications. Matt lives in Chicago with his wife and their young son.

 jccchicago
**EARLY CHILDHOOD
EDUCATION**

Growing Good Kids

FREE Apachi Day Camp

for full-day, year-round 3's;
20% discount off camp for half-day students.

Full & half day programs 6 weeks to 4 years.

Schedule a tour:
jccchicagoearlychildhood.org

New families
could save up to
\$2,000
With the help of
JUF Right Start
*See site for details



Florence G. Heller JCC | 524 W. Melrose St., Chicago | 773.938.8340

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE WITH REGISTRATION

JCC Chicago is a non-profit organization inspired by Jewish values, bridging traditions and generations to create a more vibrant, connected community.
JCC Chicago is a partner with the Jewish United Fund in serving our community. ©2024 JCC Chicago EC227Y



**MONTESSORI
ACADEMY
OF CHICAGO**

INSPIRING LEADERS *of* TOMORROW

AT THE VANGUARD OF MONTESSORI EDUCATION
SUPPORTED BY A LOVING PARENT COMMUNITY,
FOCUSED ON NURTURING ENGAGED GLOBAL CITIZENS.



ENROLLING NOW!



SCHEDULE A TOUR TODAY!

1335 West Randolph Street, Chicago, Illinois 60607

312.243.0977

montessoriacademychicago.org

nnpnparents.org • 7

FEATURE

Making Travel Au-some

By Meghan Moran

Traveling can be an exciting opportunity for children to see the world in a new way and certainly will come with many hiccups.

Traveling with children can be fun, exciting and challenging and traveling with a special needs child adds a whole new dynamic. I'm a mom of three: I have one 3 year old son and 5 year old boy/girl twins and my oldest son, Owen, has autism. To get ready for a trip, whether that be an outing in the city, a car trip or a flight, I **prepare well in advance, know my resources, plan for the day and embrace a positive attitude.**

Prepare in advance: Clear expectations, visuals and schedules help Owen process new outings. When preparing for our trip to Florida, we worked with Owen's incredible and life changing therapy team at Chicago Pediatric Therapy and Wellness Center and utilized a social story. To our delight, Shannon Hurst, Owen's Occupational Therapist, even went as far as to create a mock trip to Florida to help him prepare. During this mock trip, Owen boarded a flight with his own ticket, practiced wearing headphones to block out loud noises, engaged in a few typical Florida activities while working through sensory challenges such as using sunscreen, playing in the sand and wearing a bathing suit and sandals, and practiced boarding a flight home. This mock trip approach helped Owen know what to expect and equipped him with the tools to navigate uncomfortable situations, such as counting when applying sunscreen and wearing sandals when walking on the beach.

Know your resources: Did you know that airports offer a variety of services such as TSA Cares to assist travelers with diverse needs? On the TSA Cares website, you can submit a request for assistance through the screening process and indicate any foreseeable challenges. For Owen, it is imperative that he carry his comfort item through security so I request that a hand scanner is used. We have been very fortunate flying out of O'Hare and have worked with extremely compassionate TSA Cares representatives. Additionally, airlines offer accessible travel options. Since most airplanes can be overwhelming sensory experiences, you can request to board early to get settled and some airlines even offer special perks like a children's activity packet with a sensory calming strip.

When traveling locally, seek out sensory friendly kid attractions. One of our favorites is Lincoln Park Zoo. They do a fantastic job hosting sensory friendly events throughout the year, including a sensory friendly evening during Zoo Lights. Like many other museums, sporting venues and concert arenas, they have a partnership with KultureCity, a non-profit that is dedicated to "creating sensory accessibility



Photo courtesy Meghan Moran

and inclusion for those with invisible differences". When dining out, be sure to indicate your family's needs when you make your reservation. Request a table or quieter spot in the restaurant that might suit your child best and provide the restaurant with any relevant allergy information.

Plan for the day of: Preparation is key for any type of travel and if possible, allow your child to engage in gross motor play prior to and during the trip. If you're driving, take a minute to walk around the rest stop. If you're in an airport and see an empty gate, take advantage of open space. Be sure to throw some extra clothes in for the unexpected spill or accident. And of course pack many highly preferred snacks, as you can't go wrong with snacks. YumEarth has Elderberry lollipops infused with vitamins and they are allergy friendly—a win win, boost your child's immunity while giving them a calming treat. Additionally, Melissa & Doug mess free coloring sheets and workbooks as well as fidget tools provide entertainment for those long trips and potential delays.

Embrace a positive attitude: Traveling can be an exciting opportunity for children to see the world in a new way and certainly will come with many hiccups. It has been helpful for us to break down the travel day into steps and explain each part to our children and celebrate as we make it through the various parts of the day. And yes, there are moments when I look at my husband and wonder, "Why did we sign up for this? Are we crazy?" and then we remember, we are turning therapeutic moments into valuable experiences and making lifelong memories.

.....
Meghan Moran is a former Spanish teacher, avid runner, country music fan and Autism Speaks and Girls on the Run advocate and volunteer. She ran the 2023 Chicago Marathon with Autism Speaks Team Up. Meghan lives in the Lincoln Park neighborhood with her husband Kyle and children, Owen, Caroline and Conor.



SAINT CLEMENT SCHOOL
anchored in faith



Saint Clement School is a 2020 National Blue Ribbon School!

**Located in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood,
we are an engaged community of leaders and
learners bringing together Catholic-based values
and modern academic practices to educate the
spirit, mind, and body of children from
PreKindergarten 3 to 8th grade.
Guided by our five anchors.**

— Belong, Learn, Pray, Serve, & Share —



**Coffee &
admissions
tour!
April 16, 2024**



FEATURE

Finding (Screen-free) Fun at Family Camp

By Emma Berndt

How relatively easy it was for all of us to disconnect from our devices was one of the happy surprises from camp.

As soon as we arrived at Family Camp in Michigan last summer I started to lose track of time. We had decided to take a family vacation at a kids sleep away summer camp for a few days. Ostensibly it was to introduce our two kids to camp. But I was also curious to experience the classic American summer camp that I had seen in movies like "The Parent Trap" for myself—the kind with cabins and scenic ponds and bonfires around which we'd roast marshmallows and sing camp songs.

We arrived at camp a bit late and so we dropped our stuff off in our cabin and headed to dinner at an array of outdoor picnic tables. As we started talking about the next few days and all the activities we wanted to try, I instinctively reached for my phone to check the time. And, I realized I'd left it at the cabin—something that I would do for the rest of family camp.

How relatively easy it was for all of us to disconnect from our devices was one of the happy surprises from camp. At home, my boys typically default to watching screens or playing video games during down time. We set screen time limits but then find ourselves having to play screen time police, a role we do not relish.

At family camp, the only devices available were the phones my husband and I had brought with us. And, because all meals and activities were already arranged and on-site it was easy to break the habit of constantly checking them. No need to look up directions, make dinner reservations, text the babysitter, or even keep track of time—our days revolved around a loose schedule of participating in various sporty activities, eating meals and, yes, roasting marshmallows around a bonfire!

For the boys, the chance to try new things made them forget their devices quickly. When I asked my kids recently whether they had missed their screens at camp my older son replied "it just wasn't on my mind." And, it's true. With so many activities within walking distance of our cabin, we all discovered newfound interests. My younger son discovered his love of archery and spent hours trying to hit a bullseye. And, the boys and I all tried water skiing for the first time— an exhilarating and slightly terrifying experience. At night, we'd all fall into our twin beds exhausted from our active days.



Photo courtesy Emma Berndt

We also quickly learned that the best way to discover things at camp was to explore. One night, we emerged from our cabin and noticed a number of families heading through a path in the woods that we hadn't seen before. We decided to follow these families and discovered a shortcut to dinner! This tiny discovery felt huge, like we'd gained inside camper knowledge. And the fact that we'd gained it through our own powers of observation—not our phones—felt so satisfying.

With more space from our screens, we all surprised ourselves and each other. My boys invented an imaginary game, incomprehensible to adults, that completely absorbed them for long stretches (and which they continue to play to this day). And, I slowly gained confidence that I was ready to re-enter the paid workforce after five-and-a-half years as a stay-at-home mom. Something about radically changing the scenery and rhythms of our day, and finding out we could adapt, made me feel confident that I could do this in other areas of my life too.

For families looking to plan an unplugged vacation, the best advice that I have is to approach it with a sense of adventure. Embrace getting out of your comfort zone and try to find somewhere with lots of things to keep you occupied during the day. We loved attending family camp at Lake of the Woods and Greenwoods Camp. But there are plenty of other places that offer family camp including the YMCA Family Camp Nawakwa in Wisconsin and YMCA Family Camp Pinewood in Michigan. For those families wanting a true camping in a tent experience, the Chicago Park District offers a Family Camping program with campfires and s'mores of course!

.....
Emma Berndt is a Senior Advisor at the University of Chicago's TMW Center for Early Learning and Public Health and loves to write about all things parenting. She lives in the Lincoln Park neighborhood with her husband Eric, and sons Nathan (10) and Jacob (6).

**Coming
Soon**



KIDDIE ACADEMY,
EDUCATION. CARE. CARE.

Kiddie Academy of Lincoln Park Now Enrolling

We instill a lifelong love for learning and important life skills at every Kiddie Academy, and a brand new Academy is about to open in Lincoln Park.

Contact us to learn how our approach to early childhood education and Learning Essentials curriculum can make a difference in your child's life.

1645 W. Fullerton Ave.
Chicago, IL 60614
(312) 600-0550
lincolnpark@kiddieacademy.net

EARLY CHILDHOOD MUSIC EDUCATION on Chicago's Northside

**MERRY
MUSIC
MAKERS**



Music Together®

Group classes for babies, toddlers, and big kids with the grownups who love them!

Curriculum developed by early childhood experts, taught by trained teachers. Classes support development and provide an excellent musical foundation in children.

Try a free class!



*make-ups must be used during the session that classes are missed

UNLIMITED* MAKE-UPS,
UNLIMITED FUN!

CLASSES SEVEN
DAYS A WEEK

MULTIPLE LOCATIONS

SUMMER CAMPS

SUMMER JAM SWIM CAMP

Dive into summer! A unique blend of musical exploration and aquatic adventures. Kids aged 6-12, full-day.

MINI JAM TOT CAMP

A musical adventure tailored just for your little ones with storybook themes and sensory exploration. Tots aged 3-5, half-day.



MERRYMUSICMAKERS.COM

312-264-0569 CALL/TEXT

ride in bliss®
personal car service



**Top-Rated &
Certified
Child-Friendly
Transportation**

www.rideinbliss.com

(847) 845-1151

Try Ride in Bliss and get 10% off:

NPNSPRING24

Valid Until 31st May 2024

Receive 10% off any trip involving the Airport in Chicago and the surrounding area — one use per customer only. Can be used only when booking online at www.rideinbliss.com

DISCOUNT
**10%
OFF**



**rogers park
montessori school**
in andersonville

Visit us on campus!

Schedule a tour at rpms.org



curiosity ignited in the classroom,
confidence unleashed in the world

FEATURE

Making Staycations Magical

By Fiona Royer

It can truly be the best of both worlds; you get out and about while having home comforts greet you at the end of the day.

Fairytales Can Come True—*The Princess and the Frog*

We all know our family would have a great time on vacation at The Most Magical Place on Earth, but does a STAYcation have the same spellbinding appeal? With a few simple tricks, you too can enchant the kids and keep everyone's spirits high.

A Little Thought for Others Makes all the Difference—*Winnie the Pooh*

The first rule of thumb for any time off is to plan ahead. Enlisting suggestions from everyone in the family helps create a schedule that makes all feel included. Then have choices in the event you need to switch up your plans. And don't forget to note transportation options and remember your Ventra card!

What... are you eating?—*Ratatouille*

Have a good supply of snacks on hand and do your restaurant research. Modern-style food courts like Aster Hall at 900 North Michigan Shops offer something to suit all palates. Alternately, head over to Hamburger University on West Randolph and sample some of McDonald's global menu items for the surprise factor. Or combine neighborhood exploration with cuisine sampling, such as traveling to Chinatown and taking in a post-lunch stroll in Ping Pong Memorial Park.

Have a Nice Day—*Hercules*

Do you have an actor-in-the-making or a budding scientist? Be sure to focus on their interests when looking for activities. There are plenty of children's show venues in Chicago such as Apollo Theater or Chicago Children's Theater. For artists or engineers, check out the Free Museum Days for Illinois residents or reserve a Digital Museum Pass online through Chicago Public Library. Don't forget that the staycation is your vacation too! The current immersive experience craze can be enjoyed by littles dancing to the music and grown-ups appreciating the graphic interpretation.

You're Never too Old to be Young—*Snow White*

Sloomoo Institute offers slime making for all (surprisingly therapeutic), while a trip to Lincoln Park Zoo (free) will always bring out the child in you. Haven't yet ridden the Ferris Wheel? Head over to Navy Pier and act like a tourist. Just strolling and watching the boats alone is a relaxing activity. Our lakefront should never be underestimated as an inexpensive destination.

The Cold Never Bothered Me Anyway—*Frozen*

Don't let the weather get you down during a winter staycation. Chicago has two beautiful conservatories where you can warm up: Garfield Conservatory and Lincoln Park Conservatory, both with inspiring exhibits that would



Photo courtesy Fiona Royer

appeal to the whole family. Movies are another good option for snuggling up inside. Check out the free screenings at Chicago Public Libraries, or the Kid Flix series at Gene Siskel Film Center. And if the icy climes don't bother you, there is ample ice-skating to be had both indoors (at McFetridge Sports Center) and outdoors (at venues throughout the city).

Fill the World with Sunshine—*Snow White*

Who cannot take pleasure in a sunny day in Chicago? During the summer months the beaches are a treat. Favorites include the child-friendly Montrose Beach with its good parking, bathrooms, and proximity to Montrose Point Bird Sanctuary. At sunset, grab your lawn chairs and take in something on the schedule with Movies in the Parks. Another firm favorite is Millennium Park with the Crown Fountain 'splash pad' and the neighboring Maggie Daley Park, providing everything from mini golf to a play garden.

Adventure is Out There—*Up*

Isn't a traditional vacation all about going and trying something new? So, seek out somewhere you've never been before or something you've never tried. Have you camped out in a Chicago park? You can do that through the Chicago Park District! What about trying your hand at fishing? You can do that with them too! Or how about hopping on a water taxi and following your nose?

The Only Limit is Your Imagination—*Big Hero 6*

So, never feel like a staycation is second best to a vacation. It can truly be the best of both worlds; you get out and about while having home comforts greet you at the end of the day. In the words of Merida, in *Brave*: "you control your destiny – you don't need magic to do it."

Fiona Royer lives in Lincoln Park with her husband, Randall, and their three young children. Originally from the U.K. with a business and creative background, she works in the Chicago philanthropic community. She loves her adoptive city of Chicago!

SACRED HEART SCHOOLS

educating the Head and the Heart



As Chicago's oldest independent school, Sacred Heart is a Catholic SK-8 school for children of all faiths.

Our students benefit from a uniquely single-gender and co-ed environment that nurtures each student as they grow in learning, service, faith, community, and

For more information,
contact admissions@shschicago.org
or call 773.751.7656.




**SACRED
HEART**
shschicago.org

Sacred Heart Schools
6250 N. Sheridan Rd.
Chicago 60660

FEATURE

Day Camp Search in Chicago: Tips from the Trenches!

By *Starrin Kinser-Petersen*

There are so many resources to find camps it can send your head spinning! It can be overwhelming to even start the process. I'm hoping some of the tips I've learned along the way can help you and your family.



Photo courtesy Starrin Kinser-Petersen

In Chicago, we are lucky to have a glut of options for summer day camp from preschool kids through teens and teens. It can be overwhelming to even start the process of locating camps your child may be interested in and is the right fit for your family. Some people need camp to cover an entire summer of childcare, others need a few weeks, and many need it for both! I'm hoping some of the tips I have learned along the way can help you and your family optimize the variety of choices available in the city.

How to Get Started:

Get Organized! The first thing I do is lay out my summer schedule week by week on a calendar. Start by identifying the weeks you want to book camps and fill in weeks you may be on vacation, planned time off and make sure to check when the next school year begins.

Next, Budget! I break my budget down by child as they don't all go to the same camps and it helps me decide if a camp is "worth it." Some camps even offer bus transportation and lunch programs with discounts for multi-week commitments.

***Bonus Tip:** check with your insurance to see if their childcare offerings cover camp. Some do have relationships with national camp chains and can offset your summer camp costs. Camps may also offer payment plans and financial assistance.

Start Searching: Now, how do you find all of these day camps?!? You can start by identifying the camps, the weeks the camp is offered, cost, and sign up dates! Many camps will post early bird discounts and these can add up and really save you some money. Don't forget that many camps offer sibling discounts, too!

Don't Get Overwhelmed! There are so many resources to find camps it can send your head spinning. I always use the handy NPN Camp Directory to help get me started. NPN provides a robust offering of many great camps in the city and it's a one stop shop for contact information, pricing and timing. Beyond using your own community resources like parenting threads and personal relationships, here are my other tips for identifying camps:

- **Your School/Current Daycare:** Your school may offer their own camps! This is an especially great option for the younger kids who are comfortable in this environment or camp newbies.

- **High Schools and Universities:** Check high school and university websites starting in early winter for camps they offer. This is a nice opportunity for your middle school students to check out some high schools they might be interested in.
- **Current Activities:** Are your children involved in an activity that they love? This is a chance to get more time with an organization they enjoy and with instructors they know. Some will even give a discount for current enrolled students.
- **Museums:** Art, Science, Exploration! Take advantage of our world class museums in Chicago. And don't forget the smaller, neighborhood museums.
- **Child Focused Providers:** This is your child's chance to dip their toe into music, cooking classes, art, theater or even martial arts! Use the summer to encourage your child to try new things.
- **Chicago Park District:** This is by far one of the most affordable options in Chicago. The sign up can be a bit cut-throat and doesn't happen until May but can pay off if you secure one of the coveted spots.
- **Health Clubs, Yacht Clubs and YMCAs:** Many membership clubs offer camps to non-members during the summer months. Be sure to check for member and non-member prices.

Happy Summer Camp Searching! You can always find more tips and information in the NPN Forum where parents have active conversations about various camps they suggest for all age ranges.

.....

Starrin Kinser-Petersen has been a member of NPN for over a decade and loves raising her family of 5 in Chicago. Starrin has a diverse professional background including marketing and start-up experience as well as coaching girls youth basketball. She finds joy in connecting and building community and understands the importance of needing a strong support system while navigating raising children in the city. She and her husband can often be found bouncing around from a sporting event, to a park meet up and on to a choir performance all in one day.



Ready for the Future!

Apply Today for Rolling Admission



Visit Our Website

AGE 3 THROUGH 8TH GRADE | [CATHERINECOOKSCHOOL.ORG](https://catherinecookschoool.org)

Campbell Holzhauser

CONCIERGE LAW

Protect Your Family's Legacy with

Campbell Holzhauser Concierge Law



As a parent, you plan for your family's needs every day, from the smallest detail to the biggest dreams. But have you secured the future with a legal plan that evolves with you?

At Campbell Holzhauser, our Concierge Legal Services are tailored to provide parents with unwavering support and expert guidance through every chapter of life.

866-566-9494/630-355-8100 assistant@campbellconcierge.law

What We Offer:



On-Demand Legal Counsel

Our attorneys are ready to assist you whenever you need, providing the assurance that you're never alone in making important decisions.



Comprehensive Estate Planning

With a focus on protecting your loved ones, we handle everything from wills to trusts, ensuring your wishes are honored and your children's futures are secure.



Business Representation

Entrepreneurs are also parents. We align your business objectives with your personal values, offering strategic legal insights that safeguard both your company and your family.



Collaborative Approach

Our team coordinates closely with your financial planner, accountant, and other professionals to create a harmonious strategy for your estate and business matters.



Exclusive Client Commitment

We serve a select group of clients to guarantee that our services are always personalized and attentive to the unique needs of your family.

Why Choose Us?

In a world of uncertainties, **one thing is sure**: our commitment to you and your family's well-being. Campbell Holzhauser stands as a pillar of strength, providing legal services that adapt as **your family grows and your needs change**. From safeguarding your children's inheritance to advising on the latest tax implications for your business, **we ensure that your legal affairs are in order** so you can focus on what truly matters — your family.

Discover the peace of mind that comes from knowing you have a legal team by your side for all of life's expected and unexpected events.

Let's build a secure tomorrow, today. Visit www.campbellconcierge.law to learn more about our unique Concierge Legal Services.

FEATURE

Ask a Camp! Family Camp Opportunities

By **Scott Lakin**, Director of Programs,
Camp Newaygo in Newaygo, Michigan



Photo courtesy Scott Lakin

More than the convenience and value, spending time together outdoors away from technology is often just what a family needs to grow together.

The affordable, pack-and-go option for family fun this summer!

Summer break is looming and finding an easy, fun, affordable family trip can feel like a daunting item on your to-do list. Amusement parks, road trips, or camping at campgrounds take so much planning or costs add up quickly. Before you settle for the same old trip to visit relatives, check out all inclusive, affordable Family Camps at one of the region's many Summer Camps!

Spending time as a family, however you define it, in the outdoors is the perfect way to launch into the summer season or reset before heading back to school. Family camp programs are a bargain and pack in plenty to do. For those who shutter at the thought of bugs and dirt, summer camps have grown over the years and now offer a variety of updated lodging options. Many camps have hotel style lodging, heated and cooled dormitories and still offer some rustic cabins for those who love to "rough it."

For busy families, there is nothing more appealing than signing up in one spot, packing your car, and arriving to a few days of fun that are fully planned. Summer camp family programs include your lodging, meals, and activities. Once you drop your bags on your beds, everyone gets to relax—no more coordinating meal prep, making dinner reservations, or trying to sort through activity choices and costs.

Meals at family camps are a breeze because summer camps have kitchen staff that are professionals at feeding kids and families. Classic, summertime meals fill the menu while also having plenty of options for dietary restrictions and selective eaters. The best part? The meals are all scheduled and prepared for you—just arrive at the dining hall and enjoy!

Finding activities that everyone will love on a trip is a huge challenge. At camps during youth sessions, hundreds of kids with a variety of interests all have a blast. During family camps, most activities offered during youth camps are open—often with multiple options at once! One parent can take kids down to the beach to swim, the other can work on a craft project, and all of the activities have staff nearby to help out. Many times, family camp experiences inspire kids to fall in love with a camp, gain some independence, and decide they want to attend camp all on their own next year!

More than the convenience and value, spending time together outdoors away from technology is often just what a family needs to grow together. Camps offer programs as broad as weeklong family camps and as unique as Mom, Grandma, Auntie, & Me weekends. Don't miss the chance to camp together this summer—it's worth the drive and you'll make lifelong memories.

.....

Scott Lakin is the Director of Programs at Camp Newaygo, a summer camp and retreat center in Newaygo, Michigan. Camp Newaygo offers experiences for families year-round including Family Camp and Mom, Grandma, Auntie, and Me Weekends in addition to mini sessions and full weeks of Girls' Overnight Summer Camp.

FEATURE

Getting into Harvard doesn't mean skipping vacations or prepping during preschool!

By Grace Lee Sawin



Photo courtesy Grace Lee Sawin

Here in Chicago, we are lucky to have a breadth of school options that can all spark a lifelong quest for knowledge.

Hoping your preschooler ends up at an Ivy League school? The biggest predictor of student success is engaged, involved parents.

Parenting a toddler can be hard enough without the pressures of finding that “perfect” school for your curious, inquisitive, rambunctious and eager little one. You’ve heard the rumors before: “Get into the right school now so that your path to Harvard is assured. If you miss your window, you’ve missed your chance!” But is that really true? Is there even such a thing as a “golden ticket” to those coveted universities? Are we doomed to let go of those lofty dreams if we send our child to the up-and-coming school down the street? Does it really all start with preschool?!

Rest assured that the biggest predictor of student success is engaged, involved parents versus a hefty tuition bill or a storied, exclusive school. As parents, our main job is to make sure our child is thriving, growing, staying inquisitive and learning how to get along with others in whatever environment they find themselves.

While rumors abound among new parents (especially from the exclusive and pricey enclaves of New York City) that a child’s path to educational nirvana starts with the right brand-name preschool, the real skinny is that it simply isn’t true. Here in Chicago, we are lucky to have a breadth of school options that can all spark a lifelong quest for knowledge. Plus, the diversity of our city makes for a rich educational experience in its own right.

Angst-ridden nights worrying about how and when to get into the “right” preschool become unnecessary when parents realize that not only do kids at “top” high schools come from all pathways (public, private, well known, under the radar, selective, traditional, etc.), but the coveted colleges only accept a small number of students from each high school, no matter the caliber of students. In the end, the goal for parents is to find schools that allow your child to unleash their potential and develop their self-confidence, no matter the name on the school’s door.

But what about entry years and getting into a certain school? Is it worth the anxiety? While it’s true that more spots can be available if you apply when a program starts,

there is always attrition and families can and do make school changes based on a child’s evolving needs and desires as he/she grows. The array of Chicago school choices means that finding a great school fit at any time along your child’s school journey is possible.

From the play-based preschool to the Reggio-inspired elementary to the international baccalaureate high school, all experiences shape each child’s unique skills, interests and goals, which combine into the thoughtful, empathetic and well-rounded high schooler that the coveted universities are looking for.

With the expansion of Chicago Early Learning’s Universal Preschool, parents can relax in knowing that there are affordable (free) full day options to start their child on a path to academic success. Parents with a child who will be 4 by September 1st can apply starting 4/9/24 for a PK4 seat anywhere within the city. Or a family can forgo preschool altogether and simply provide enriching experiences (such as a cool vacation experience) because the single most important factor in a child’s educational success is having involved, engaged parents providing opportunities in many forms to their children from birth through high school and beyond.

Whenever parents begin their child’s formal education, they can research different types of school options at NPN’s Preschool & Elementary School Fair to learn about the many offerings in and around Chicago. Remember: If a child begins his/her early education at a school that feels right for your family but isn’t necessarily a “big name” draw, don’t fret or feel pressured to make a change. That “happy fit” preschool is creating the spark that will go on to shape the innate curiosity and interests of your future college-bound child, wherever they ultimately attend!

Grace Lee Sawin is a co-founder of Chicago School GPS. Chicago School GPS helps Chicago families navigate the often confusing world of public and private school searches, from preschool to high school and beyond, so that they can arrive at their school destination, no matter when they begin their journey.

ASK AN EXPERT

Traveling While Breastfeeding: A Physician's Guide

By Dr. Cindy Rubin

As a physician specializing in breastfeeding, I often hear the concerns of new mothers about the challenges of traveling while breastfeeding. Here's your guide to navigating the world with your little one in tow, milk supply in check, and a sense of humor intact.



Photo courtesy Cindy Rubin

Breastfeeding in Public

First, let's tackle breastfeeding in public. Since your baby could get hungry anywhere, you will likely need to improvise, and you may have to choose some less-than-ideal spots to nurse or pump. Many countries and states protect the rights of breastfeeding mothers, so check local laws before you go.

If you prefer privacy, there is nothing wrong with using a nursing cover or simply using your outer layer of clothing or a small blanket as a cover. You may find yourself in a place where it is not considered acceptable by a local person's religion or culture to openly breastfeed, so it can be helpful to have a covering of some sort handy just in case.

High-Flying Milk: Breastfeeding on an Airplane

Breastfeeding (or pumping) on an airplane can be tricky. The good news is that feeding your baby on the way up and down (especially down!) can help prevent problems with pressure equilibration in your baby's ears. That rhythmic swallowing your baby does while nursing (or taking a bottle) can prevent the ear discomfort that sometimes occurs on planes during the descent.

Whether to purchase a ticket for your baby to have a guaranteed seat for your little one can depend on several things. Cost is an important factor, of course, but having your baby secured in a TSA-approved car seat during the flight is the safest way to fly.

Many prefer holding their baby during the flight. It's important to be aware that if you do buy a ticket for a baby and bring a car seat, your baby needs to be buckled into the car seat for take-off and landing – they cannot be held by you. So if you do want to be able to hold or feed your baby specifically during those times, it is better NOT to have a ticket.

Pumping En Route: Keeping the Flow Going

Portable, battery-operated breast pumps are your best friend here. If you have a wearable pump, that's even better! Pack a cooler bag with ice packs to store your liquid gold.

Airports increasingly offer lactation rooms but don't hesitate to use a family restroom in a pinch. And remember, it's okay to ask for a private space at hotels or restaurants. If you need to pump while physically on an airplane, ask the flight attendant if they have a private area you could use. If not, using a nursing cover or shawl and planning ahead with nursing and pumping-friendly clothing will usually make it possible to pump discretely in your seat.

The TSA Milk Rules: Yes, You Can Bring It

A quick note on airport security: breast milk is exempt from the usual liquid restrictions. Inform the TSA agents that you're carrying breast milk. They might test the containers, but if they tell you it needs to be dumped, you should ask to speak to a supervisor to work it out because this is not legally required.

Embrace the Experience

In conclusion, as a physician and advocate for breastfeeding, I encourage you to approach travel with your little one with confidence and a dash of humor. You've got this! Happy travels and happy feeding!

Dr. Rubin is a general pediatrician and board-certified breastfeeding medicine specialist practicing in the Western Suburbs of Chicago. She worked as an outpatient general pediatrician at a large academic center for 13 years before opening her Direct Care practice, In Touch Pediatrics and Lactation. Her personal journeys with postpartum and breastfeeding led her to focus on improving care in this field for everyone! She offers physician-level lactation consults and in-home postpartum newborn and mom support packages (pediatric and lactation) in the Chicagoland area.

ASK AN EXPERT

Fueling Healthy Adventures: Nurturing Picky Eaters on the Go

By Livia Ly, MS, RD, LDN



Photo courtesy Livia Ly

Juggling picky eating during family travels requires creativity, preparation, and a dash of flexibility.

Embarking on family adventures, such as road trips, airport travels, or exploring foreign lands, often poses the challenge of picky eating. A change in routine, exposure to new environments, and the availability of unfamiliar cuisines can all contribute to a child's resistance to trying new foods. As a registered dietitian, I emphasize the importance of healthy eating, consistent meal frequency, adequate protein and energy intake, and hydration while minimizing highly processed foods. In this article, we'll explore the reasons behind children's picky eating during travel and offer practical tips to ensure proper nutrition whether on a road trip, at the airport, or overseas.

Tips to Improve Eating Habits and Promote Nutrition on the Road, at the Airport, and Overseas

Create a Portable Pantry for Road Trips

I advocate for planning by packing a cooler with ice packs and a variety of healthy snacks. Options like cut-up/whole fruits or vegetable sticks paired with a healthy dip like dark chocolate/regular hummus, plain Greek yogurt, or nut butter packs, along with single-serving packet choices such as yogurt-covered/plain raisins, applesauce, low sodium jerky, seaweed snacks, popcorn, dried mango, dates, mini energy bars, cheese sticks/balls, drinkable kefir, cheese/nut crackers, plain/dark chocolate pretzels, pistachios or dark chocolate almonds, and sunflower seeds can provide essential nutrients during long drives. As a dietitian, I recommend avoiding excessive reliance on sugary treats, which can lead to energy spikes followed by crashes.

Airport Adventures

Navigating airport dining can be challenging, but with thoughtful planning, it becomes manageable. Carry a mix of healthy snacks such as the ones mentioned above. Look for airport restaurants offering balanced options like salads, wraps, or grilled chicken. Whether you're on a road trip, at the airport, or overseas, having a stash of familiar, healthy snacks can be a game-changer.

Hydration is Key

I stress the importance of staying hydrated during travel. Carry reusable water bottles and encourage regular sips. Limit sugary drinks and opt for water or diluted 100% fruit juices. Coconut water is also a great choice! Proper hydration is crucial for maintaining energy levels and overall well-being.

Balanced Fast Food Choices

While on the road, fast food may be the most convenient option. However, as a dietitian, I recommend making mindful choices by selecting items with a balance of protein, fiber, and vitamins and minerals. Many fast-food establishments now offer healthier alternatives, such as grilled chicken options or salads.

Opt for Buffets or Family-Style Dining

Choose restaurants that offer buffet or family-style dining options. This allows children to explore various dishes in smaller portions without feeling overwhelmed. It also gives them a sense of control over their meal choices.

Embrace International Flavors

Traveling abroad provides a unique opportunity to expose your child to diverse cuisines. Encourage kids to try small portions of local dishes. For food safety, focus on foods that are cooked thoroughly and filtered bottled water. Engaging in the cultural aspect of food can make the experience more enjoyable.

Explore Local Markets

While overseas, immerse your family in the local food culture by exploring markets. Allow your child to pick out fresh fruits, vegetables, or local snacks. This not only promotes healthy eating but also provides an exciting cultural experience.

Maintain Routine with Time Zone Changes

If traveling across time zones, try to maintain a consistent mealtime routine as much as possible. This helps regulate your child's hunger and ensures they receive the nutrients their growing bodies need.

Set a Healthy Example

Children often model their behavior after their parents. Demonstrate the importance of nutrition by making mindful food choices yourself. If they see you enjoying a variety of nutritious foods, they may be more inclined to do the same.

Juggling picky eating during family travels requires creativity, preparation, and a dash of flexibility. By understanding the reasons behind picky eating while on the road, at the airport, or overseas, and implementing practical tips, you can transform mealtime into an opportunity for nutritional exploration. As a dietitian, my emphasis is on creating lasting memories of nourishing adventures for your child, ensuring they receive the nutrients their growing bodies need.

Livia Ly is a cross-trained dietitian and founder of Nutrily, focusing on holistic nutrition for families. Promoting the six pillars of holistic health, Livia empowers clients to achieve health goals for a better life. She lives in Lincoln Park with her husband Kenny, son Lincoln (6), and daughter Liz (3).



NEIGHBORHOOD
Parents Network

Neighborhood Parents Network of Chicago
3320 W. Foster Ave. Ste. 138
Chicago, IL 60625-4813
312.476.9351
info@nnpnparents.org
nnpnparents.org

Non Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Chicago, IL
Permit No. 2536

NEIGHBORHOOD
Parents Network

Summer Camp Guide 2024

Find the best
summer camp
options around
the city and
across the
midwest!

SCAN NOW

Bubbles Academy MOMS NEIGHBORHOOD Parents Network OLIVE YOU nonny

Chicago's Ultimate Baby Shower!

**You're invited to CHICAGO'S
ULTIMATE BABY SHOWER
Sunday, April 14th 2024**

Join us for an afternoon packed
with education, pampering,
connection, and the best products
for new parents and parents-to-be.

REGISTER NOW