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Jackson Area Collaborative Knowledge Source. This community resource guide is designed to improve the lives of children and strengthen families in the Jackson community by providing fun and useful information.

Learn more at
www.jacksfamilyguide.com

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How Well Do You Know Your Christmas Tree?

Contributed by
Imagine Planet

The leaves have fallen and it is time for the pine trees to shine. But are they really all pine trees? A better word to use is conifer, which are trees with cones. There are three types of conifer used as Christmas trees in Michigan, the fir (Abies), the spruce (Picea), and the pine (Pinus). They can also be found on nature walks or in landscaping.

How Can we Tell What we Have?

Scientists have come up with a way called a dichotomous key. A dichotomous key is a way of identifying things using yes or no questions. Such a key is like playing 20 questions or the *Guess Who* game, but with specific questions and answers in order. These keys are used frequently in nature study, and you can come to Imagine Planet to check some out!

Our Trees

Pine trees have needles that come in bunches of three to five, while spruce and fir trees have needles that attach directly to the branch. Spruce trees have individual needles that are stiff and pointy with sharp edges, and that can be easily rolled between your finger tips. Spruce needles are spiny and sharp (think SSS) and cones hang down from the branches.

Fir tree needles also grow

individually on the branch, but the needles are soft and flat and do not roll between your finger tips. Fir needles are flat and fat (think FFF), and fir cones stand on top of the branch.

Spruce needles are attached to small, stalk-like woody projections. When needles are shed, these projections remain. As a result,

pointed?

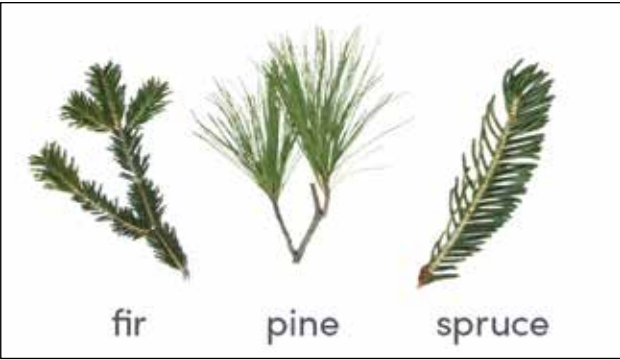
- Yes, Douglas fir
- No, other fir tree

Pinecone scales are woody in nature, with a rigid feel. In contrast, spruce cones have thinner scales than pinecones, which gives them a more flexible feel.

The following site links to an interactive dichotomous key from the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens with more detailed information and pictures: <https://www.bbg.org/gardening/article/holidaytree>.

Have a safe and happy holiday season! Imagine Planet will be open normal business hours between Christmas and New

Year's for winter break, 11 am to 6 pm. We will be closed December 24th and 25th and December 31st and January 1st.



the branches of spruce trees feel rough. Fir branches lack these projections, and thus have smooth bark. The color and length of needles are not reliable means of identification

Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga*) trees are not real firs and have pointed buds, spruce and real fir have round buds.

Simplified Dichotomous Key for Coniferous trees

Question 1: Do the needles come in bunches of 3 to 5?

- Yes, pine tree
- No, go to question 2.

Question 2: Can you roll the needles between your fingers?

- Yes, spruce tree
- No, go to question 3.

Question 3: Are the buds



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the YMCA



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Ages: 4-14 **Time:** 7:30 am-6 pm

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Register in person
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Learn to be a Tourist in Your Hometown

Local Gifts for that Hard to Buy For Person

By Val Herr



It's the holiday season, my favorite time of the year! I love the hustle and bustle, cookie day at my moms, having everyone home, and enjoying time off with loved ones. I will admit I also love the shopping. I fully understand, believe, and support that the holidays are not about gifts and no one needs an excess amount of gifts or to go into debt to try and meet some expectation. But, it is a time to give someone something they couldn't or wouldn't give to themselves. For some, it might be homemade treats or orna-

ments. For others, it might be a gas card or a much needed gift certificate for an oil change. I try and (no surprise here) focus on experiences. While a super soft blanket is always a win at my house, the gift of an experience can last a lifetime and doesn't have to break the bank.

Here are some ideas to consider giving to that hard to buy for person:

1. A gift certificate to a local art studio. Does mom talk about how much she liked painting in her youth or how she has always wanted to learn ceramics? This is the time to surprise her and fulfill a dream. Several local studios offer amazing programs such as Kate's Art School, Jackson School of the Arts, ART 634 and Essa Arts.

2. Is your dad or brother a big sports fan but doesn't need another jersey? What about taking them out bowling, or the new axe play or titled arcade bar? It would be a fun and unique experience they would remember all year long.

3. Oh those grandmas and grandpas. They never need anything and if they want something they usually go and buy it. So this year, what about a family trip to a local museum? Usually, what family wants most is dedicated time with us. Buy a family membership to Ella Sharp or Waterloo Farm or other local museum and dedicate specific events

the entire family will attend.

Don't get too caught up in the hustle and bustle of the holidays to take time to spend with family and friends doing some-

thing new and most importantly making lifelong memories.

As always break out of your routine and learn to be a tourist in your own hometown.



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It's a Great Day to be a Viking!

How to be Better Prepared for Successful Aging

Contributed by
Right at Home

Brush and floss your teeth. Save and invest your money wisely. Eat nutritiously. Stay active. Surround yourself with caring, positive people. The list goes on for sound advice on how to prepare for "successful aging," a term credited to John Wallis Rowe, M.D., and psychology and public health professor Robert L. Kahn, Ph.D.

In their "Successful Aging" book, Rowe and Kahn noted that flourishing as you age includes: (1) safeguarding your physical health and avoiding illness, disease and disability; (2) maintaining solid cognitive and physical abilities; and (3) staying actively engaged with life and relationships.

While everyone from gerontologists to financial planners to medical doctors and elder attorneys debate how to prepare for aging well, a Forbes "What Is Successful Aging?" article sums up the process. "Meaningful aging does not involve 'winners or losers' in terms of longevity and health," the article states, "but rather the need to focus on what is most meaningful to a person, especially in older age."¹

Many Americans Are Not Ready

For many seniors and those approaching their golden years, focusing on what is most meaningful means planning out preferences for future care needs, finances, legal arrangements and other personal choices, then communicating these decisions clearly to loved ones.

Yet, as AARP reports, many Americans are just not ready for this type of meaningful (or successful) aging. One national survey found that only 58% of baby boomers (ages 53-71) have estate-planning documents. The survey also noted that just over half of the 1,000 adult respondents have a power of attorney to help in case of serious health problems or mental or physical incapacity.²

It is not easy to bring up discussions about finances, ill health and eventual death. It may feel a bit awkward to talk through estate plans. But when the family gets together for the holiday season, it is an ideal time to address your potential healthcare needs or those of a senior loved one.

Casual holiday togetherness time is a natural segue to interacting with the family about current and future care needs.

Initiating planning-for-the-future conversations will help prevent loved ones from being caught off-guard when a health, financial or legal issue occurs. But how do you communicate your successful aging plans without family members dismissing you or taking charge, or someone feeling hurt or left out of the dialogue?

Simple Steps to Communicate Well

Fortunately, a team of home care professionals has already anticipated roadblocks and reservations about the conversation covering health, finance and legal needs of older relatives. The RightConversationsSM resource guide offers families tools and pointers for talking through a relative's options for their personal affairs and assistance to live safely at home. The solutions-driven guide developed by home care leader Right at Home helps resolve communication gaps and conflicts between seniors and their family caregivers as they talk about a care strategy for aging successfully.

"RightConversations is invaluable in helping families work through the dynamics of a loved one's care needs," said Elaine Gribble, Outreach Coordinator for Right at Home of South Central Michigan Jackson office. "My in-home care business continually draws tips from RightConversations to encourage effective communication between seniors and their loved ones. It is such a privilege to help bring everyone together to discuss what is best for elders."

Gribble outlines the following steps from the RightConversations materials, which are easy to understand and put into practice.

Step 1: Gather the important information.

The RightConversations Information Journal is a great jumping-off point to assist families in collecting the pertinent details about the loved one's health, doctors, family history, finances, insurance and other key personal facts. The Information Journal includes streamlined forms to keep all the relevant information in one place. For example, there is ample space to fill in the

names of life, health and auto insurance companies and policy numbers, and where to find the older adult's legal and financial paperwork.

Because the senior's health may waver, it is essential to learn specifics about the individual's current condition and medical care. The following suggestions for the information-gathering stage can help with wise choices moving forward:

- Make a note of what you see occurring. Do you notice your loved one can no longer perform specific tasks?

- Listen to your inner voice. That internal messenger could be telling you something is not quite right with your loved one or their condition is changing.

- Accompany your aging relative to doctor appointments so you hear information firsthand and can get a true picture of your loved one's condition.

- Ask about medications. You can obtain information about the loved one's medications and their adverse effects from a physician, pharmacy, or reliable source from the library or internet. Problems arise when medications expire, are taken at the wrong dose or interfere with a different medication.

Step 2: Organize tasks that need to be delegated to family members or service providers.

The RightConversations Family Action Planner documents the actions each family member will take to better support their loved one and includes an area for contact information of those who may assist in the care of the senior. Listing these to-dos in the Family Action Planner helps keep a record for all parties involved. Who will help with lawn work or financial management? Who will assist with meal preparation or cleaning? Who will be the person responsible for emergency care or a possible crisis related to caregiving?

Step 3: Plan in case an unexpected hospitalization happens.

A fall, the flu, a disease flare-up — any number of illnesses or medical crises can lead to a loved one being admitted to the hospital. Later, as the patient prepares to be discharged, a number of questions and concerns can arise about returning home. Do I

need any kind of care after my hospital stay? What medications should I take, and what medication schedule should I follow at home? What activities am I allowed to do and what activities should I avoid? What are my dietary restrictions and nutritional requirements?

As a pioneer in hospital-to-home care transitions for seniors, Right at Home launched RightTransitions® in 2010 as one of the first programs to provide care and support to patients during the transition from a hospital or other care facility back home. RightTransitions care services feature a full range of options from which to choose, such as personal care, health reminders, meal preparation, transportation to appointments and light housekeeping.

"When it comes to successful aging, open communication among loved ones is part of the best equation," Gribble explains. "Sometimes, it can be challenging for family members to have conversations with an aging relative who may fear losing their independence, but taking the initiative to talk with them honestly and compassionately can strengthen the relationship for the seasons ahead."

About Right at Home

Founded in 1995, Right at Home offers in-home companionship and personal care


and assistance to seniors and adults with disabilities who want to continue to live independently. Local Right at Home offices are independently owned and operated and directly employ and supervise all caregiving staff, each of whom is thoroughly screened, trained, and bonded/insured prior to entering a client's home. Right at Home's global office is based in Omaha, Nebraska, with franchise offices located in 47 states nationwide and throughout the world. For more information on Right at Home, visit About Right at Home at <http://www.rightathome.net/about-us> or read the Right at Home caregiving blog at <http://www.rightathome.net/blog>. To sign up for Right at Home's free adult caregiving e-newsletter, Caring Right at Home, visit <http://caringnews.com>.

About Right at Home of South Central Michigan

The Jackson office of Right at Home is a locally owned and operated franchise office of Right at Home, LLC, serving the communities of Albion, Adrian, Hillsdale, Hudson & Jackson. For more information, contact Right at Home of South Central Michigan at www.rightathome.net/south-central-michigan at 517-768-0900 or by email at outreach@rightathomescm.net

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Seasons Greetings from the Jackson School of the Arts

*By Amy Fracker,
Assistant Director,
Jackson School of the Arts*
Season's Greetings from



Jackson School of the Arts! It has been our pleasure to be part of the Jackson community for 18 years. As we move into 2020, we want to say THANK YOU to everyone who has helped us along the way. It's going to be a great year ahead and we are starting things out with two fun camps. I'm always looking for something to do after the novelty of new gifts for Christmas wears off. JSA has an exciting new offering and a perfect gift if you're still looking to fill a stocking or two.

Harry Potter Art & Dance Camp

Friday, January 3 from 9:30AM to 4:30PM \$48 In this full-day Art and Dance Camp we will explore the wonderful world of wizardry! This day is jam-packed with activity! Work on four magically different art-work projects, whirl yourself into some upbeat dances, play some Harry Potter-inspired games and enjoy some enchanting snacks throughout the day. This will be a great opportunity to escape to a magical world before the holiday break is done! Please bring a lunch for this all-day event, but we will provide two sets of snacks. For ages 5 to 12

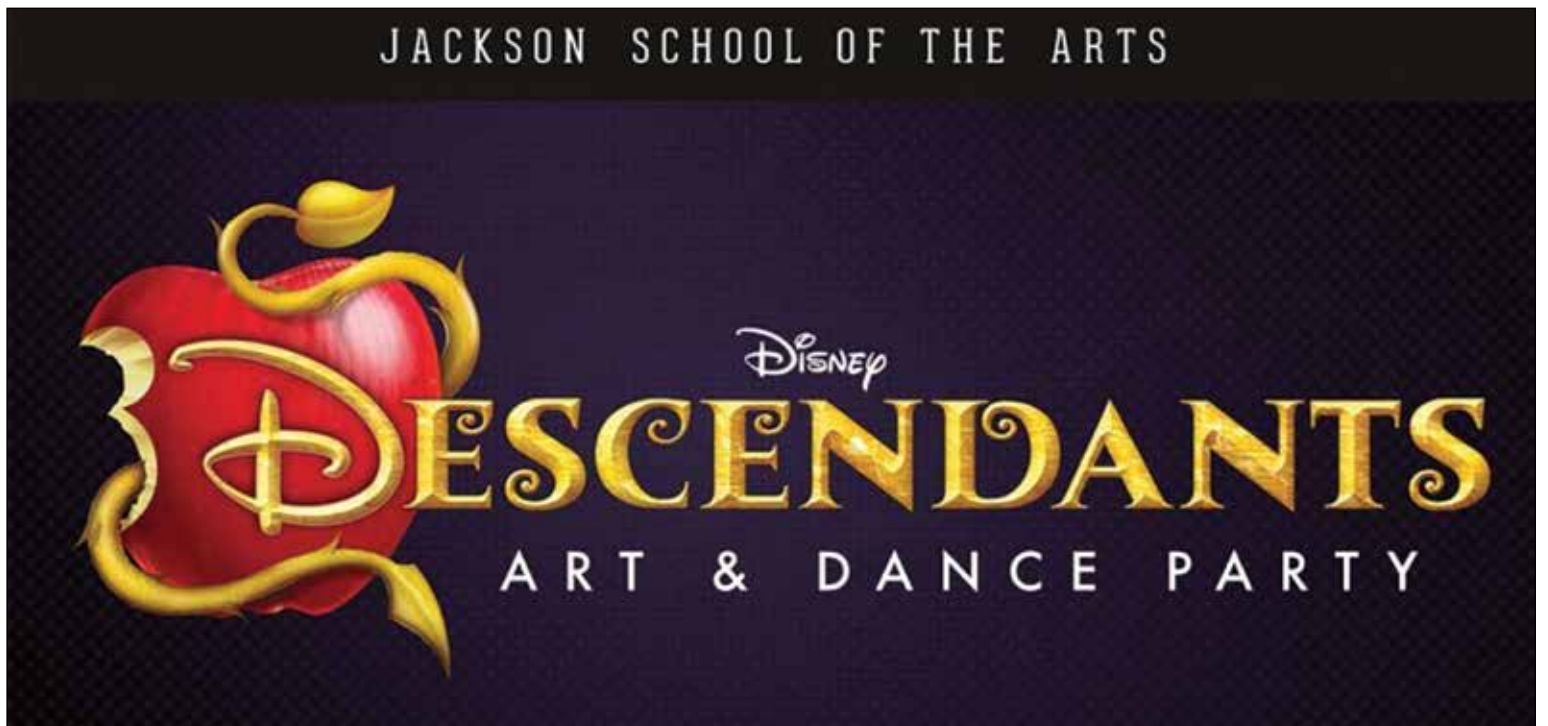
I'm really liking these camps. Anyone can sign up - you don't have to be a student here to take them. Also in January we will be offering another camp:

Descendants Art and Dance Camp

Friday, January 24 from 5:00 to 7:30PM \$25 for 2 1/2 hour party with dinner and supplies included! This kids night out is conveniently scheduled for a Friday night and lasts for 2 1/2 hours so parents can sneak off for a night on the town. Our magical Art & Dance Camp attendees will not only enjoy a fun dinner, but will dance along to your favorite Descendants songs, work on some art creations, and meet some new friends at our Descendants party.

This is a great chance to grab dinner at one of Jackson's great restaurants. Have you been downtown lately? There are some great places to go out to eat and shop. I love Date Night Downtown!

All of us at Jackson School of the Arts wish you the happiest of holidays and a wonderful New Year! See you in 2020 for more fun with JSA!



HEALTHY COMPETITION. HEALTHIER HEARTS.

Homer Schools Superintendent Scott Salow and Western School District Superintendent Mike Smajda are friendly rivals, especially when it comes to their school sports teams. Scott had open-heart surgery at Henry Ford Allegiance Health 10 years ago and was able to provide encouragement when Mike needed a double bypass last summer. Mike was determined to beat Scott's discharge time - three days post-surgery. They ended up in a tie, but the healthy competition continues as Scott challenges Mike to reach new fitness goals.

Read their stories at [HenryFord.com/HealthyHearts](https://www.henryford.com/HealthyHearts).



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JPS is Pleased to Announce the New Editions to their Exceptional Staff

**Contributed By
Jackson Public Schools**
Jackson Public Schools is pleased to announce that Todd Frey has been selected as the new Assistant Director of Operations
Frey grew up in Grass Lake, Michigan and has worked in Jackson County for most of his life. He has specialized in the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) industry for the past 19 years and studied at Washtenaw Community College in the early part of his career to learn more about this field.

While he was in college, he served as an assistant to the HVAC Department instructors and had the opportunity to design, engineer and install HVAC lab equipment in the facility; these opportunities helped him discover his passion for the industry.

Frey is also an entrepreneur; for the last 12 years, he has owned a local mechanical contractor business.

In the first five years of his career, he worked alongside a mechanical contractor hired by the school district. It was then that he noticed the positive impact Jackson Public Schools is making in the community. Frey is excited to take on his new role as assistant

director of operation.
“I am honored to have this opportunity to utilize my experience as a mechanical contractor in a capacity which allows me to lead change and provide guidance where I can within Jackson Public Schools,” Frey said. “I am excited to be a part of all the new changes Jackson Public Schools is doing in my community!”

Jackson Public School’s Director of Operations, Jeff Huey said, “Having worked with Todd previously as a contractor, it was his attention to detail and follow through that set him apart from other applicants. He will be an excellent addition to the JPS Operations Department.”

In addition to the hiring of Toddy Trey, Jackson Public Schools is excited to announce its new varsity women’s soccer coach is Travis Bake. Baker served as the JV women’s soccer coach from 2015-2017 and he is eager to be back with Jackson High School in a new role.

“The opportunity to once again work with the Jackson High School girls program is exciting to me after having previously worked in the program,” Baker said.

He is “looking forward to being able to bring some new

energy and ideas to the program. Thanks to Jack Fairly and staff for giving me this opportunity and can’t wait to get started with the girls this winter and build for the spring.”

“Jackson High is excited to have Coach Baker joining our staff this spring,” said Jack Fairly, Director of Athletics. “He brings a wealth of knowledge about the game and has



Todd Frey



Travis Baker

many years of experience to Coach Baker growing our coaching at the high school level. We are looking forward

Photos contributed by Jackson Public Schools

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FSP Reflects on the Gifts they Have Shared this Season

By Amy Fracker,
Assistant Director,
Jackson School of the Arts

As cooler temperatures, colored leaves and Thanksgiving meals fade away... snow, winter decorations, and "visions of sugarplums" slowly come into view. This time of year gives us an opportunity to take a minute to reflect on the many experiences and all of the gifts that we've shared. At Francis Street Primary School, we are so thankful for the many gifts that have come our way:

- All of our students who come to school every day to learn, share and shine.
- Our amazing staff who share their knowledge, experience, kindness and compassion.
- The opportunities of:
 - Sharing student progress at our Student/Parent/Teacher conferences
 - Having fun at our Halloween party
 - Completing NWEA and KRA testing to actively assess our students
 - Jackson Police Dept. sharing a lunchtime with us
 - Our "Start of School/Family Open House"
 - The Found Church and

Compassionate Ministries of Jackson County supplying all of our families with weekend food packs

- Our Schoolwide Pancake Breakfast
- Our volunteers, Ms. Michelle and Ms. Nancy, who come in 2x/week to help our 3rd graders work hard to become fluent readers.
- Our 2nd/3rd grade class Stone Soup activity in November
- The staff/employees at Cotton Correctional Facility adopting Francis Street Primary as their 'school of choice' to help over the holidays with food, clothing and gifts for our students and families.

Reflecting back, our parents/families have also shared their thoughts about our little school community. "I love the communication from the staff and the welcoming atmosphere." "My kids feel very welcome here!" "Staff goes above and beyond to accommodate all of the needs of the students and families." "Like the small classroom sizes." "I really like how my child is

improving." "I love having the smiling faces greet our children every day." "Staff are really nice and my child loves it as this school!"

In the coming weeks, the first half of our school year will come to a close. We look forward to the second half starting after our winter break. We are currently accepting enroll-

ments in our K, 1st, 2nd/3rd grade classrooms. Call us at 517-879-1380 or stop by the school at 1320 Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. for information and enrollment forms.

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Winter Fun at the Jackson YMCA

By Bonnie Gretzner
Jackson YMCA

Sign up for a day or two weeks of winter break camp Looking to keep your kids busy over winter break? Sign up for the Jackson YMCA Winter Break Camp. Kids ages 4-14 can come for one day or both weeks for fun activities indoors at the Y and outdoors.

Camp runs Dec. 23, Dec. 26-27 and then all week the next week, except for New Year's Day. While the schedule is still being finalized, activities include ice skating at Optimist Arena, a trip to the movie theater, winter-themed arts and crafts, swimming, and sledding at Cascades Park, weather permitting. Swimming is always a favorite activity and one that doesn't depend on the snow.

"Returning campers are always excited to come back and see their Y friends and fa-

vorite counselors," said Megan Hunt, the Jackson YMCA Youth Development Director. "And we love introducing first-time campers to new friends and all of the activities at the Y." Campers should bring a lunch, water bottle, swimsuit/towel and winter gear each day. Electronic devices should be left at home.



Online registration is now open, and families can sign up by the day; weekly rates are available for additional savings.

To register: Visit JacksonYMCA.org or call 517-782-0537.
Week 1: Dec 23, 26-27
Price: Members: \$75/week or \$30/day; Community: \$100/week or \$40/day,
Week 2: Dec. 30-31, Jan. 2-3, 2020
Price: Members: \$100/week or \$30/day; Community: \$125/week or \$40/day

SWIM WITH SANTA
COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS EVENT

SPLASH INTO THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT
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Take a picture with Santa in the pool and play holiday-themed water games including underwater Christmas tree decorating and candy cane dive.

Additional activities include Christmas Ornament craft, holiday movie, and hot chocolate and snacks.

Register NOW at JacksonYMCA.org or in person.

Please bring a swimsuit/towel if planning to swim. Santa will be in the pool area for photos for anyone who does not want to swim. Waivers are required for community members. Space is limited; pre-registration is required.

Contact Aquatics Director Alexa Markham for more information: alexa@jacksonymca.org

the Y FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT • FOR HEALTHY LIVING • FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Jackson YMCA
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Free for Members
\$5 Community
Per Child (No Charge for Adults or infants)
Fee includes all activities
*Children under 8 years old MUST be accompanied by a parent in the pool.

DATE:
Friday, December 13, 2019
TIME:
5:30-7:30 pm

Montessori Education

NSM: A Full Member of the American Montessori Society

By Barb Barnes
North Star Montessori Founder,
Director, and
Montessori Educator

Throughout my 17 years as Director of North Star Montessori, the most frequently asked questions I hear from parents are: What makes

a Montessori school different from a traditional school? What makes you unique? The answer is simple, we follow the child's development and meet their individual needs based on the Montessori method and philosophy. Traditional classrooms are teacher-centered. The same lesson is given to the class based on age, regardless of if the students are performing above or below grade level. North Star's curriculum is not solely based on the child's chronological age, but on the child's ability, specific needs, and interests.

How is North Star Montessori able to achieve high student outcomes when students' needs are so varied? Unlike traditional schools, our Montessori primary program is multi-aged and designed for a child to enter in at 3 years of age and continue over a three year period, through what would be the traditional "kindergarten" year. Ideally, each child will have a 1st, 2nd and 3rd year in their same classroom, with the same teacher and classmates. They are able to make choices selecting materials to use and engage in self-directed learning. The materials are on the shelves in sequential order from easiest to more complex and these lessons unfold in a natural progression at the child's pace. Children at North Star learn from each other and naturally work together. They are role models for each other and older students gain leadership skills as they teach younger students. Students benefit from experienced and credentialed Montessori educators who have observed, prepared, and guided them through three years of academic and life lessons to master concepts and skills. Our focus is on where the child is at academically, socially, and emotionally.

However, all Montessori schools are not created equal. The word Montessori is not trademarked, as it is a method of education that was developed by Maria Montessori over one hundred years ago. Parents may unknowingly select programs at public schools and preschools that use the Montessori name, but do not meet the basic fundamental components of Montessori education that make it successful. Schools labeled Montessori may have Montessori materials displayed on shelves, but do not have Montessori certified teachers in each classroom who know how and when to use them. Without proper guidance, children are overwhelmed with choices and cannot focus on lessons. This leaves them feeling stressed and frustrated, which ultimately impedes their learning.

In addition, schools often label themselves Montessori, but do not follow the correct multi-age classroom groupings. Instead, they separate students by grade, which robs the child of the continuity in their education that is found in an authentic Montessori program. This is because each lesson builds upon the next. True Montessori curriculum includes more advanced lessons with a broader scope than traditional grade level requirements. For example, in our primary classrooms

children in their 3rd or "kindergarten" year are already doing 4-digit addition using our hands-on golden bead materials. 4-digit addition is usually not introduced until 2nd grade in non-Montessori programs. North Star kids are excited and confident to take this next step in their learning because of all of their prior work they accomplished prepared them for this more complex lesson. This differs greatly from a child who has no prior experience using Montessori materials and has not developed the concentration, and self-discipline that it takes to work through more complicated lessons independently, yet is thrust into a "so-called Montessori" environment and expected to do well. By not following the fundamental tenets of Montessori education, students and teachers are set up to fail.

The American Montessori Society is an organization that promotes the highest standards of Montessori education and is an invaluable resource to parents who want to find an authentic Montessori program for their child to ensure the best outcomes for their educational success. When I founded North Star Montessori it was based on the belief that the Montessori method embodied all of the things that helped the whole child to reach their potential. I am just as passionate to-



day about Montessori education as I was when I started and I have had the privilege to be apart of and witness North Star Student's success. North Star Montessori is a full member of AMS and have achieved the high standards

of Montessori education like ensuring the multi-age three year cycle, the montessori certification of all teachers in a school, and a deep understanding and commitment to the Montessori method and philosophy.



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Accomplish Those New Year's Resolution

By Alex Cash,
Cocreative Life Coaching



People really like a clear beginning to make a fresh start. The start of a new year, a new week, or a new year are popular times to start something new in your life. Pretty soon the season of New Year's resolutions will be upon us. The third Monday in January can be known as Blue Monday, being one of the saddest days of the year.

It comes from the fact that most credit card bills come out, tallying all the money from our holiday spending spree. It is also three weeks from the start of the new year, a time when habits that haven't stuck are given up on.

This year instead of quitting on your goal three weeks in, let's learn some strategies for getting habits to stick for the long term. Goals are nothing without habits and a goal is just a series of habits put together, done regularly and continuously to achieve your best life.

1. Start tiny-According to behavioral scientist and au-

thor BJ Fogg, your new habit should take just 30 seconds or less, be something that requires minimal effort, and be something you will do daily. Use this formula to create your habit: After I ____, I will _____. Example: After I brush my teeth, I will floss one tooth. Notice that it attaches the new habit to something you already do, and it is something so easy so you are more likely to do it. In reality, once you floss one tooth, you'll likely just floss them all. The idea is to start small and build upon your habit over time.

2. Be specific- Keep your goals and habits very

specific. If you start with something like "I want to lose weight" it will be so large and overwhelming for you to handle. Even a more specific goal like "I will lose 10 pounds by March 31st" is too broad. Instead of thinking of it as losing weight, think of the small habits you will need to complete in order to attain a healthy weight. Think of the habits that are needed to shed pounds and get fit. Example: After I pour myself a cup of coffee, I will pack myself a healthy lunch.

3. Track it-In a notebook, a planner, or a habit tracking app, keep a tally of

your successes. That way you can look back and be satisfied with your progress of creating a new habit. Don't fret if you miss days here and there, nobody's perfect. Just do your best to do your new habits repetitively, then they will start to become second nature to you.

If you want to get a jump start on your New Year's habits get in touch with me, Alex, at Cocreative Life Coaching. I have more tips and tricks for you to build habits that achieve goals. Cocreativelife-coaching.com or check me out on Facebook Cocreative Life Coaching.

The Importance of Nutrition Begins with Infants and Toddlers

By Jessica Pingle, Ed.S.
Community Action Agency

Nutrition is important for all humans to live a healthy life, and it begins with infants and toddlers because a healthy diet impacts their brain development. The first three years of life are crucial for a child's physical growth and brain growth. A baby's brain is 80% of its adult size at age three!1

A mother's nutrition during pregnancy sets up a baby's brain up for success. What the mother eats and drinks, the baby does too! During pregnancy, the foundation of the child's brain is established and is strongly influenced by mom's nutrition. Eating healthy foods gives the baby a jump start on cognitive, motor and physical development. The baby's brain begins to form connections at an extremely rapid pace and nutritional deficiencies can lead to lifelong impacts in cognition and behavior.2 From about fifteen to twenty weeks in pregnancy, the baby's brain cells are increasing rapidly. Their brain is producing 250,000 nerve cells per minute. By about seven months of pregnancy, the baby's brain is producing it's own brain waves!3

Connections in an infant's brain begin before they are born and are influenced by interactions and experiences once they are out in the world. This includes playing, reading, quality care and interactions with caregivers. Nutrition plays a role in how the connections are formed. Myelination is a fancy word for the process of fat coating the connections in the brain and allowing the connections to move more quickly. This is why healthy fats are important for children, particularly

under age two. Infants typically receive good amounts of fat from breast milk or formula until about six months of age. Following six months, introducing healthy fats in baby foods will supplement their needs. After baby's first birthday, whole cow's milk can be a great source of fat and protein to continue creating strong connections in the brain.4

Another important nutrient for children is iron. Around six months of age, most infants need supplemental iron, aside from breast milk, even if the mother is not iron deficient. Many infant formulas and cereals are iron fortified. Iron is important because it helps balance oxygen carrying cells in the blood, and this is very important for the child's brain growth and development.4

If you think of a child's brain development like building a house, pregnancy is the time of collecting materials such as wood for the walls and floors. Proper nutrition ensures you're getting the best, longest lasting building materials. Following birth, experiences and interactions with caregivers and the world start building the house. Good nutrition creates a strong foundation and framework to support the house for many years to come!

Children are often picky eaters especially when getting used to solid foods. By introducing foods multiple times you are increasing your child's likelihood of eating and liking the food. When a child is older, it can be fun to involve them in shopping for, and cooking, meals. They will be more likely to try foods if they had a hand in helping pick out and cook the ingre-

dients. Giving simple tasks like washing the vegetables, getting the bowls and pans out, measuring and dumping ingredients and taste testing can get them excited for new foods. An added bonus is the quality time together and learning experience of doing this together! Sitting down for meals together and allowing your child to see you try new foods can influence their willingness to try as well.

If you have questions or concerns about your child's nutrition, please speak with your pediatrician.

1 <https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/early-childhood-matters/brain-development/>

2 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24684384>

3 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK234146>

4 <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1372-how-does-nutrition-affect-the-developing-brain>

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Redesigned Website & Resident Communication System

By Aaron Dimick,
City of Jackson Public
Information Officer



Improvements to the City’s communications are changing the ways residents contact and get information from their local government. The City of Jackson is unveiling its redesigned website and new resident communication system! The redesign brings a fresh and modern look to the City’s website, cityofjackson.org. The City, which hasn’t undergone a large scale website redesign in five years, benefited from a FREE redesign.

The biggest change residents will see is the home page layout. It has been completely redesigned for maximum efficiency. Improvements on the home page include drop down menus that are easier to navigate, connections to social media platforms, a search bar that functions like a web search engine, and quick link buttons that take residents to our most visited features. Also on the home page are more connections to the City, such as a bigger news section, improved City calendar, and easier access to the

Mayor and City Council profiles so residents can learn more about elected officials and how to contact them. The website is designed to be mobile friendly so residents can stay connected using mobile devices.

On the home page of the website and mobile site there’s a new way to report concerns to the City. The new Report a Concern feature allows residents to submit problems or questions directly to City staff using email, voicemails and text messages. Residents can

also include photos of the issue with messages so staff can better understand the problem. This will come in handy for reporting things like potholes or park maintenance. These messages are collected in an online system that allows City staff to correspond with residents and collaborate with other staff to resolve the issue. Residents can now call or text concerns to the new City of Jackson Resident Helpline at 517-529-2047.

Perhaps the best part of the website redesign is it was

all done for FREE by the City’s web vendor, CivicPlus. City staff looked through the contract with CivicPlus and noticed the City of Jackson was entitled to one free redesign. Redesign efforts started this past spring and were completed in November. The redesign process was initiated and facilitated by City Manager’s Office staff. City Manager Patrick Burtch says the redesign reinvigorates the City’s website. “I applaud the efforts of City staff for identifying this redesign and execut-

ing it at no additional cost to taxpayers. We are also looking forward to better serving our residents with the new Report a Concern feature, which will lead to greater efficiencies at City Hall and improve customer service for residents,” Burtch said.

Efforts are ongoing to edit interior web pages and update information so residents have the best City resources available to them whenever the need it.



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