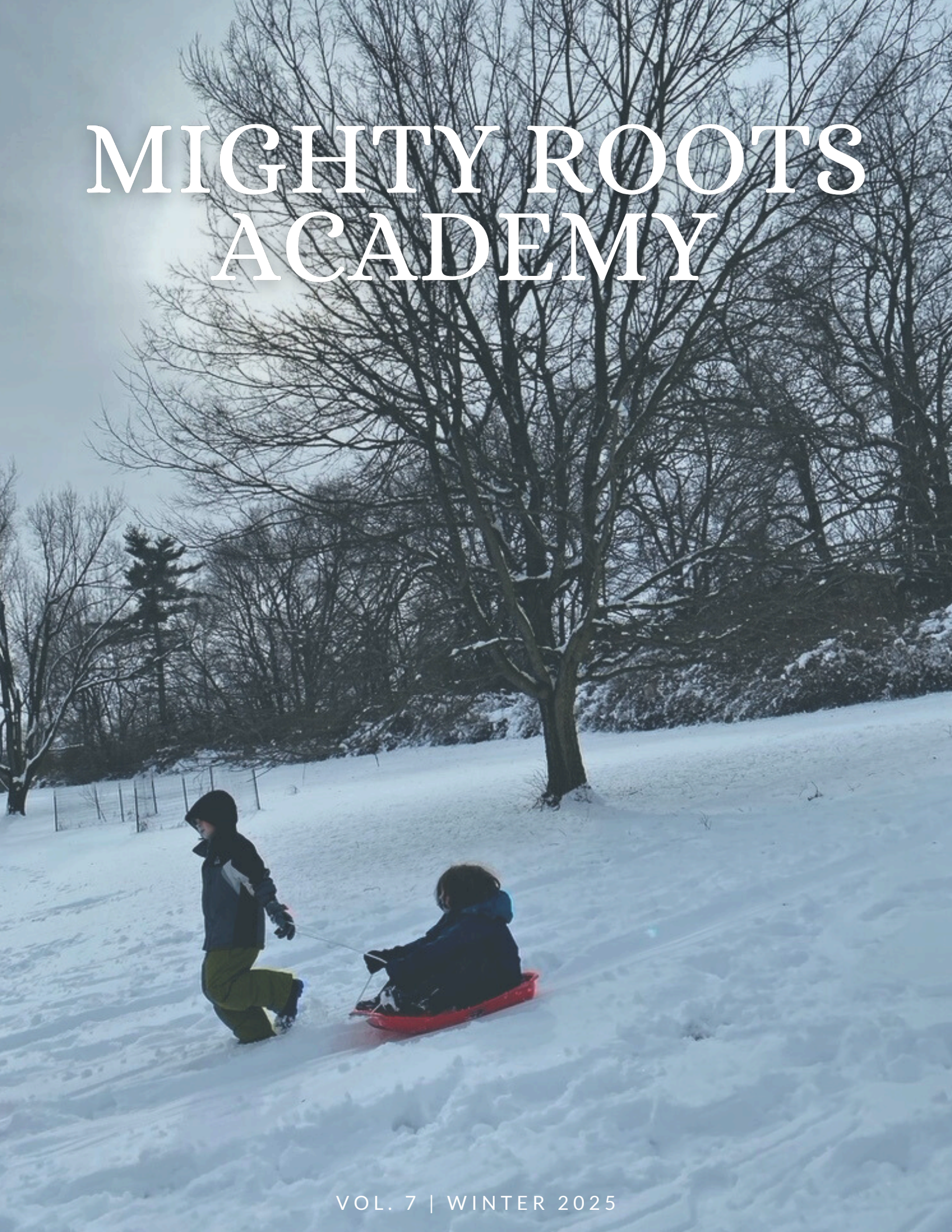


MIGHTY ROOTS ACADEMY



VOL. 7 | WINTER 2025

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Welcome!

This time of year invites us to slow down, reflect, and find beauty in the quiet moments that nature offers.

In this issue, we're embracing the season of cozy learning and chilly adventures with articles designed to spark creativity and encourage exploration—even in these colder months. Winter may bring shorter days, but it offers endless opportunities for curiosity and connection.

We encourage our families to bundle up and step outside, savoring the magic of winter while finding new ways to bring the season into their learning spaces. Whether it's through winter-themed crafts, science experiments inspired by the chilly weather, or simply enjoying the stillness of a snow-covered landscape, this is a time to celebrate the wonder of nature and the warmth of togetherness.

Let this season inspire you to explore, create, and cherish every moment. Here's to a winter filled with discovery, joy, and the enduring magic of learning!

A Message from our Director

Welcome to our Winter 2025 Mighty Roots Magazine. Grab a cup of your favorite hot beverage, a fuzzy blanket, and cozy up with us as we dive into the season. As the glimmer of the holiday season fades, the decorations are packed away, and we settle into the winter weather, we hope the articles you find here will spark your family's wonder of the season as we partner together to kick off 2025. Join us as we explore ways for your family to connect to each other, learn together, be creative and explore.

May you find joy, connection, fun and support as we persevere on our families educational journeys together.



~ Tracy Schroeder



The Quiet of Winter

Winter is a time when the world softens into a hushed calm. As snow blankets the ground and the air turns crisp, the noise of our busy lives seems to pause, inviting us to listen. The gentle stillness of winter is a reminder that growth happens not only in bursts of activity but also in moments of quiet reflection.

For homeschool families, winter offers a unique opportunity to align with this seasonal rhythm. It's a chance to slow down, savor simple joys, and cultivate a deeper connection to learning and to one another. Whether it's a walk through a snow-dusted forest, the soft crackle of a fire during a read-aloud, or the quiet focus of hands-on projects indoors, winter encourages us to be present in the moment.

From embracing seasonal rhythms to discovering new ways to learn and grow together, let's celebrate this season of rest and renewal. Together, we can uncover the peace and purpose that winter holds for us all.

Homeschooling with the Seasons

words and photos
by tracy schroeder

Continuing to Build Lasting
Connections with Nature
Through Each Season

In our Fall Magazine we shared the seasonal rhythm of visiting the same nature spot at least once each season for the entire school year. This is a fun way to see how the same location changes with the season. It provides opportunities to compare and contrast, look for changes and see what stays the same.

I personally enjoy reviewing my journal entry from the previous seasons before heading out. It refreshes my memory of what I enjoyed about the location during the other seasons. Then I can be intentional to look at those same points of interest to see how they have changed with the new season. I also like to see what new things capture my interest with the new season and make notes about them to be able to review before heading out again.

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One of my favorite things to do is visit my location in different weather conditions. I am fascinated by fungus, so getting out to a trail after it has rained or when we have had a stretch of damp weather is extra exciting for me. Every season provides a whole new array of fun fungus to find. If fungus isn't exciting to you, as you explore your nature spot over the seasons, pay attention to what keeps drawing your attention: insects, flowers, birds, leaves, trees, rocks, roots, or clouds.

Jack-O-Lantern Mushrooms: Poisonous but very fascinating. Make sure you wash your hands after touching mushrooms unless you are sure they aren't poisonous. Also, it helps to know your poisonous plants. See the poison ivy in the picture?

Morel Mushrooms: A spring edible that goes great with eggs for breakfast. Just make sure to know its similar poisonous counterpart, the Red Morel.

Giant Puffball: When young, true puffballs are edible if they have a solid white interior and no gills, spines, or pores. If the flesh is yellowish, greenish, or brown it's no longer edible and could cause digestive issues. Puffballs come in many sizes.

If this past fall you picked a location for a seasonal sit spot or walking observation, I encourage you to get back out to your location soon. If you didn't, the New Year is a great time to start.

Happy trails!



UNLOCKING POTENTIAL

Tips to Help Your Neurodivergent Student

words by renee bichel

Writer Steve Silberman said, “The most interesting people you’ll find are ones that don’t fit into your average cardboard box. They’ll make what they need. They’ll make their own boxes.” I think this is a great way to explain the neurodivergent mind. Just like we have a diversity of hair colors, body shapes, and natural talents, we also have brain diversity. About 1 in every 6 students are what we call “neurodivergent”. This just means the brain and nervous system works a little bit (sometimes a lot of bit) differently than what we call “typical”. This umbrella term covers ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and many others.

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“NEURODIVERSITY MAY BE EVERY BIT AS CRUCIAL FOR THE HUMAN RACE AS BIODIVERSITY IS FOR LIFE IN GENERAL”

-Steve Silberman.

Neurodivergent students can have some extra struggles during academic tasks. These are the kids that the typical one-size-fits-all academic approaches just do not work for. And for good reason! We do not all learn the same way. Each student has their own set of strengths and weaknesses. Throw some neurodiversity in there, and it can become overwhelmingly hard to cope - for both student and teacher.

This was one of the most compelling reasons we started Mighty Roots. My kids needed a safe space to be their neurodivergent selves without ridicule. But even more important, I needed the help a community brings when homeschooling. We wanted a community and classes where neurodivergent students can thrive!

Here are some tips we use daily in the classroom (and I use at home) to help all types of learners:

Learn about neurodivergence.

There is so much to learn about your specific student, and so many resources at our fingertips. Even a Google search of specific symptoms or issues can bring up a wealth of information (just always check your sources!). Ask a friend with a neurodivergent child - they will be a wealth of information, too. It's wonderful to connect with people that have already gone through what you are now encountering. I found consulting with a doctor to be a great peace of mind to confirm I am on the right track. Official diagnoses are not always desired, but I am learning that the medical community has come a

(continued)

long way in the past 20 years. Pharmaceutical drugs are not considered the first response anymore. There are a lot of practical strategies that can be life-changing for your student - with no meds at all. Most of all, information is power.

Assume the best. Focus on their strengths. Brené Brown says, “All I know is that my life is better when I assume that people are doing their best. It keeps me out of judgment and lets me focus on what is, and not what should or could be”. This is a wonderful reminder that even if it ends up being a case of them not trying their best, it does no good to assume it. I have also come to realize that any student that is not engaged to do their best, usually has more than one reason that they are not currently motivated. It is not always personal against the schoolwork. It is much more likely that there are many factors contributing: perhaps they didn’t sleep well, had a frustrating time with a sibling, is dehydrated, thinks their sweater is scratchy, or all of the above! It can be helpful to focus on the student’s strengths, especially when they feel overwhelmed by their struggles. Cling to the big perspective of your student as the whole human being they are with their own amazing, unique gifts.

Be patient. Keep yourself regulated.

I can’t just write “Be patient” without the keeping-yourself-regulated part. It is just out of our reach to be a patient teacher if we aren’t emotionally regulated ourselves. This is one of those concepts that is simple and true, but can be very difficult to implement. Have grace for yourself when you fail, because we all have our bad moments. I’m telling you, though, it is so much easier to be patient and keep our own cool head when our nervous system is not over capacity. This is where you have to learn about yourself and what your needs are.

For some homeschool parents, this may just mean a nice hot bath every night to unwind and relax. For others, it means some drastic lifestyle changes so you aren’t perpetually exhausted. I personally have had to say no to things that will eat up my peace, stamina, or time so that I have what I need so I can be the best version of myself for my homeschooling and parenting.

There are some amazing resources out there for taking care of your own nervous system. Look up the vagus nerve and its role in the way our nervous system functions.

(continued)

Provide structure with a clear routine. Although every student has their own sets of needs, it is well known that most neurodivergent students thrive in a structured environment. This is not the same as an inflexible routine! There will be times where flexibility is key, especially when the plan is not going well. However, keeping a structured learning environment where most things are consistent can really help the student's mind be at ease and set them up for success. Prepare your student for the day's tasks. Answer questions about the day beforehand, so the student has the smallest amount possible of unknowns or sudden changes.

Create sensory-friendly spaces. This does not apply to all neurodivergent students, but it is too important for me to skip mentioning. Many students are easily distracted by ambient noises, sudden changes in their environment, and any other things going on that could distract them. It can be near impossible for them to be successful at their academic task if they are constantly having to refocus their mind. This can frustrate some students past their breaking point. I've found that some unpleasant behaviors that I assumed were rebellious by nature, were actually just a child's response to being pushed past their nervous system's ability to process and regulate. This is where accommodations can be really amazing. Sometimes one thing, like noise cancelling headphones or weighted vests, can be a game changer. Be willing to try different things to help your specific student be successful. And celebrate their wins! Positive reinforcement has proven to be the best way to encourage growth.

Neurodiversity is not a curse. Many of humanity's best and brightest geniuses are/were neurodiverse. Bill Gates was told he was "incapable of learning" when he was a child. So was Thomas Edison, whose teacher called him "addlebrained". Albert Einstein was dyslexic, and it is very likely that Nikolai Tesla was autistic. Steve Silberman, who I quoted at the beginning of the article, also said: "Neurodiversity may be every bit as crucial for the human race as biodiversity is for life in general." The middle of the school year can be the hardest point of the year for some students. Remember that the struggles of this year may not be the same intensity a few weeks or months from now. That is an encouraging thought!

Renee lives in Peculiar, MO with her husband, 3 children, and a gaggle of animals.
She is a homeschool alumni and has homeschooled her children for over 10 years.
She is surrounded by neurodivergent humans that she adores, including her
husband, children, and some of the amazing students at Mighty Roots Academy.

Winter teaches
us patience, as
the world
slows down
and waits for
new life to
emerge.



SENSES IN THE SEASONS: WINTER

words by
krystle willmore

Now that you've practiced Nature Therapy this past Autumn, it's time to bring that into wintertime. This can be a hard time of year for people to spend time with nature, but it is possible! Ideally you'll still want to get outside, but there is a lot you can do inside as well.

Nature is one of our best sources of negative ions. Our bodies are overloaded with positive ions. We accumulate positive ions from things like cell phones, microwaves, pollution, strong winds, TVs, wifi, thunderstorms, and more. Looking around your home now, how many sources can you identify that are giving off positive ions? Don't worry, you can counteract this!

If you allow yourself to be exposed to negative ions, it will balance out in your body and be harmonious. Sources of negative ions are running water (yes showering counts) like waterfalls, salt lamps, burning beeswax candles, oceans, after thunderstorms, living plants, and more. Looking around your home, if you don't have enough items to produce negative ions, this may be the perfect winter activity for you! When your home is in balance of positive/negative ions, then your body has an easier time regulating.

Winter is a season of renewal, to allow flow and space. It is a time of rest, reflection, restoration, storage, and being cozy. Our ability to work and to rest is balanced by our innermost organs. Through depletion be it mentally, physically, or emotionally, we can eat into the body's storehouse and exhaust our vital life essence. As the days are darker and shorter, nature calls us to turn within.

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This may be a time of coziness and slowing down, but keeping our senses in check will allow us to better enjoy this season of rest to prepare for spring. Here are some sensory suggestions to try this Winter season:

Sight: open your curtains or blinds everyday, look for sunlight, watch the birds, notice a sunset through the leafless trees.

Hear: after snowfall notice the absence of sound, listen for bird calls, light a fire and listen to the crackling sound.

Taste: try baking bread and eating it fresh while it is still warm, drink hot chocolate, catch a snowflake on your tongue.

Smell: notice the smells of food you are cooking, take a deep breath on colder days, try essential oils.

Touch: bake cookies and notice the feeling of dough on your hands, go barefoot in the snow for a few seconds, collect nature items to bring inside and explore with your sense of touch. As you balance the ions in your home and body, connect with your senses through nature therapy, and slow down to rest, this winter season may become a favorite for you. Remember that nature is our example and it is important to follow the lead by slowing down. This can be hard for a lot of people, but as you try, you may see that in the next season you'll have even more motivation and energy to do all you set out to do!

May you have sunshine over your head and earth beneath your feet, always.



Embracing the Cold

When Winter
Isn't Your Season

words by renee bichel
photos by josh bichel

Disney's Queen Elsa finishes her masterpiece ballad, "Let it Go" with these immortal words: "Let the storm rage on! The cold never bothered me anyway!"

We aren't all Queen Elsa. We don't have frozen ice powers. (I would settle for the icy white blue gown. Alas, it is not to be.) The cold HAS bothered me. I'm just a midwestern Kansas City girl that loves nature, but naturally HATES the cold. I remember being 6 years old and putting my swimming suit on in January, dancing around my house. I told my grandma that I was pretending it was summer to trick my brain into thinking I was warm. I was sick of being so cold. (I was on to something, even though taking layers off was probably counter productive.)

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I may not have the power to change the temperature outside, but 6 year me did have the power to change my own thinking. Maybe I still have that power! Now I use different words to express it; but I've realized I am still "tricking my brain". I have learned some ways to take the edge off of my hatred of cold weather. Here they are. I hope they help you find some silver linings in the usual cold, barren landscape of winter.

Change your expectations. In my opinion, this sentence is the key to happiness in life. Maybe that is a tad dramatic, but it's hard to be disappointed if you take away the expectation. Small problem: humans are not great at this. We tend to cling to our expectations, getting angry when they aren't met to our standard. When it comes to winter, or really any season of life I find myself in that I would not choose for myself, I've found that changing what I expect to happen ends up changing everything for me. I find myself joyful over small things. I find myself grateful for any good that comes way. I have to take a moment for the idealists out there - I was born one, so I know what you are thinking. "So just expect the worst? What a sad way to live!" This is not what I am saying; in fact, it's just the opposite.

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I desire positive things to happen overall. However, I try to not feel entitled to the good things of life. When I wake up to the 14th day in a row of cloudy skies and 10 degree weather, knowing it is January and prepared for the dead of winter to be cold, I can shiver and move on with the day. When I wake up to the 14th day in a row of cloudy skies and 10 degree weather, angry that the sun has hidden so long, focusing on all the lost time and being stir crazy, I get stuck in that grumbling and often stay grumpy all day. Winter will be wintering, no matter how we handle it. Coming to expect the ice storms and the snow mud melt can take the edge off of the frustration and keep us in a place of realistic expectations.

Take the rest that the shorter days and slower pace are offering you. I read an amazing book recently titled “You are A Tree” (Joy Marie Clarkson). This isn’t a quote from the book, but she wrote it on X (Twitter) and it perfectly captures the concept of embracing rest. She says, “You are not a machine. You are more like a garden. You need different things on different days. A little sun today, a little less water tomorrow. You have fallow and fruitful seasons. It is not a design flaw. It is wiser than perpetual sameness.” That word, fallow, means rest. A winter season could absolutely be described that way. It is nature’s time to hibernate. Many plants and animals go dormant for a time. Animals move slower, spend more time in their burrows, and often eat off of their winter stash they’ve prepared. This can also be true for humans. We need the shorter daylight days, more rest times, more time indoors to cozy up. For some of us, it’s more time with our family. I get as stir crazy as the next guy trapped inside for too many days, but I also see the value of doing nothing. It’s not lost time, even though it can feel that way. Our bodies and minds and souls need rest to replenish, recover, and ultimately to have energy to keep growing! Winter months are just not the time to power through work. It’s naturally a more introspective time of year.

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Find winter hobbies. I know, I know. I just said rest. Well, life is all about balance! Resting our bodies doesn't always mean we aren't industrious in other ways. Winter offers unique opportunities to cultivate hobbies. Try something new that can be done indoors. Some gravitate toward crafty hobbies, some enjoy reading a new book series, and others plan their vacations or set goals for the next year. Find something that fills your cup. Something that sustains you through the weeks of bitter cold. Some real life examples from my own life: paint pouring in my garage, hosting a winter book club with friends, taking up a new form of

exercise classes (Zumba, yoga, Pilates, martial arts, etc.). Real life examples from friends: enrolling in an online class, writing a novel or in a diary, candle making, and water color painting.

Create winter traditions. When we think of traditions, we often think of big productions like Christmas dinners or expensive outings. When I say create your own winter traditions, I mean small things that bring joy to your day. Making a room tidy and inviting can help lower stress. Turning down main lights and turning on flameless candles (or real ones) can also induce calm. Winter baking can bring a nice aroma to the whole house. I like to devote time each evening to reading - to me, this is a huge stress reliever. In the summer, we often are out later in the evening and I notice I read a lot less. Winter is great time to create traditions with your family that may last generations.

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Maybe a winter soup recipe (my specialty is chili, which my family eats once a week November through March), or the sourdough pizza recipe that Krystle writes about in her article (I've had it - it is the best!). My family extends our Christmas season to through New Year's Day, so we enjoy our Christmas trees (yes, we have multiple) and decorations. G.K. Chesterton said, "The best way to shorten winter is to prolong Christmas." Your traditions may be completely opposite from mine, and that's good! Create traditions that are specific to your family's wants, interests, and needs. Traditions don't have to be inflexible, either. They can change forms as much as you decide, especially as kids grow older.

Find your gratitude. Changing your expectations only goes so far: it is like the gateway drug to gratitude, but doesn't guarantee it. Finding your gratitude takes real work. It means looking at your life and realizing the blessings you have right now. It's tempting to focus on the things we want instead of the things we already have. I love this concept: Someone somewhere is more content than you are with less than you have right now. This isn't meant to encourage comparison; it is meant to inspire us to look at all that we have right in front of us each day. Several books have been written on the art of being thankful and how transformative it is - just a quick online search brings up dozens! Many books will outline practical ways to cultivate gratitude in your life. The simplest is to make a list of a few things you are grateful for every day. I've also done a gratitude jar where you write one thing each day that you are grateful for, and on New Year's Eve read them all. Or once a week, have each family member say something they are grateful for during family dinner. I'll leave you with the author A.A. Milne, who wrote: *"Piglet noticed that even though he had a very small heart, it could hold a rather large amount of gratitude."*

From Starter to Slice

Sourdough
Pizza
Made
Simple

words by krystle willmore
photos by carolyn willmore



Sourdough can be overwhelming, but most recipes are pretty simple. The majority of the time sourdough starter is just another ingredient to be added and maybe there is some fermentation time. It's the bread making that is the most complicated, so let's focus on an easy and delicious recipe you can make today without any experience!

In 2019 I had decided that I wanted to start making sourdough and tried making my own starter. For an entire year I kept at it, but could never get one started correctly. Every recipe I made with my starter did not turn out. I gave up until a friend of mine shared her starter with me. She had gotten it from the woman who started it 50 years prior! My starter, which I named Sally (she is living after all) is now 55 years old!

One of the things I learned is that the older your starter is, the stronger it is. Now all of my recipes still turn out, even when I majorly mess them up! Sally has survived 5 years with me and is still going strong. I am always happy to share some with anyone, so if you drop off a jar at Mighty Roots, I can give you some starter. I am also happy to show anyone the ropes of maintaining their sourdough starter, but there are also tons of videos on youtube as well.

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Sourdough Pizza



This recipe is super easy to try with your active starter. I like to make it in bulk and freeze the dough to save for another time.

One day I'll build myself a brick oven outside to up my pizza game, but until then I'll enjoy this easy made dough baked right in my oven.

ACTIVE STARTER

PIZZA DOUGH

Ingredients

113 grams starter
600 grams flour
334 grams water
26 grams olive oil
2 tsp salt

Directions

- 1 8 hours before dough is needed, add ingredients to a stand mixer bowl.
- 2 With a dough hook, mix the dough until it passes the windowpane test. This may take up to 10 minutes.
- 3 Place in bowl and cover at room temperature for 8 hours.
- 4 Preheat oven to 475°
- 5 Divide into sections, 8 for individual pizzas, 2 for family size. (can freeze or refrigerate at this point)
- 6 Roll out dough on a lightly floured surface and add desired toppings.
- 7 Bake for 10-15 minutes (Times vary depending on size).

NOTE Can refrigerate up to one week, frozen can last for 2-3 months.

Green Meadows



Krystle is the Musical Theater Director and a Learning Guide at Mighty Roots Academy. You can follow her @onthegreenmeadows

FAMILY GAME NIGHT!

Creative ways to make family game nights unforgettable.

words by tracy schroeder
photos by isaac schroeder



photo by isaiah schroeder

In the Winter months as it gets dark early in the evening, families often spend most of their time indoors. Instead of turning on the TV, try grabbing a game for FAMILY GAME NIGHT!

Here are some of our family's tips for a great game night.

Grab a snack: This could be something special that your family doesn't usually have around the house or as simple as a bowl of popcorn.

Take turns: Each game night let a different family member pick the game your family plays.

Mix it up: Try a variety of styles of games: party games, cooperative games, strategy games, dice games, card games, and the list goes on.

(continued)

Team up: As a family of 5 and having a wide age span, sometimes two people will play as a team. This allows us to play 4 player games and help younger players play games that are intended for older players.

Minutes or Hours: You don't have to dedicate a whole night. Grab a short game and play for 15-20 minutes or make a night of it by grabbing a much longer strategy game that takes hours to play.

Trade with a friend: Don't have very many games or want to try a new one, swap with a friend. This is a great way to add variety without it costing you anything. This can be a great way to try out a new style of game as well.

Break the rules: We have a lot of games where we make up our own rules or change rules to better suit our family. This can make it so your family can play games intended for older kids or teens when you have a large age span. It can help shorten the game if you don't have hours to play or just adds a fun twist.

Looking for ideas, here are some of our family picks:

Tracy: Azul

Justin: King of Tokyo

Isaiah: Cash Flow and Seven Wonders

Isaac: Root & Hues and Cues

Lydia: That's Not A Hat and Pictures



Tracy is the Director and founding member of Mighty Roots. She lives in Grandview with her husband and three children.



words by
tracy shroeder

BEATING THE CHILL

Does your family every get a little stir crazy when there is a stretch of cold blustery days? Check out these fun family excursions that let you get out of the house while staying in. Bonus, they won't break the bank either.

Find the nature center closest to your house or visit a new one you haven't been to before. These are all free and provide a connection to nature indoors.

Lakeside Nature Center: 4701 E Gregory Blvd, Kansas City, MO 64132

Prairie Oak Nature Center: 3640 Ironwoods Ct, Leawood, KS 66224

James A. Reed Memorial Wildlife Area: 12405 SE Ranson Rd, Lee's Summit, MO 64082

Ernie Miller Park and Nature Center: 909 North, KS-7, Olathe, KS 66061

Bur Oak Woods Nature Center: 1401 NW Park Road, Blue Springs, MO 64015

George Owens Nature Park: 1601 Speck Rd, Independence, MO 64057

Anita B. Gorman: 4750 Troost Ave, Kansas City, MO 64110

Or just put "Nature Center near me" into your phone.

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Get out while staying in. These free centers provide opportunities to learn more about history, art, and our Kansas City heritage. Go as a family or meet up with friends.

Bruce R Wakins Culture Heritage

Center: 3700 Blue Pkwy., Kansas City, MO 64130

The Center is named in honor of Bruce R. Watkins, a political and social activist. Watkins was fueled by the need to recognize and preserve the varied contributions African-Americans made to the development of Kansas City. The facility is located

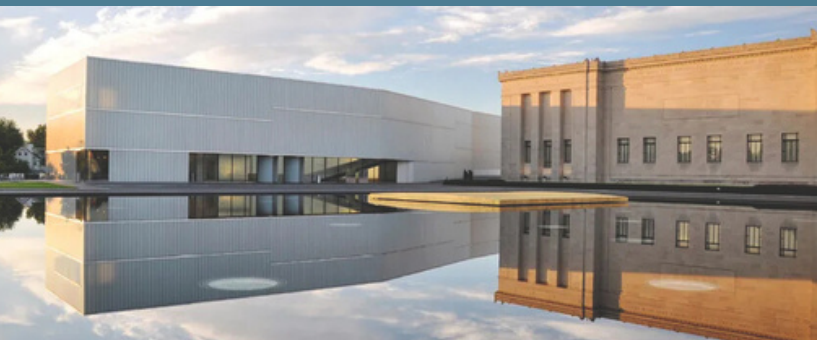
on one of Kansas City's major thoroughfares. It is part of the Cultural Mall complex, which includes the Spirit of Freedom Foundation, the Satchel Paige Stadium, an amphitheater and a hillside garden, which greets visitors with thousands of multi-colored irises.

The center provides visitors with culturally rich entertainment and educational experiences in the form of exhibits and displays, films, classes and workshops, stage performances and special ceremonies. The center is open to visitors of all ages. It includes permanent exhibit space, children's workspace, resource library, auditorium, small gallery and glassed encased exhibit area for small pieces and artifacts.

Admission is free, although there may be a small fee for some events and classes. (from: visitKC.com)



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The Nelson-Atkins Museum of

Art: 4525 Oak St., Kansas City,
MO 64111

You are invited to discover
some of the 34,500 pieces in

the collection of The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. From ceramic objects found in ancient Chinese tombs to whimsical sculptures of badminton birdies, the Nelson-Atkins collection spans over 5,000 years of humanity. (from: visitKC.com)

**Nerman Museum of
Contemporary Art:**

Johnson County Community
College campus, Overland Park,
KS

The Nerman Museum of
Contemporary Art (NMOCA)
has one of the top

internationally acclaimed collections of emerging and established artists today. Public Art Review magazine named JCCC as one of the top 10 university/college campuses for public art in America, citing the sculptures, paintings, ceramics, photography and works on paper installed throughout the campus. The museum presents many of the region's most important exhibitions of leading-edge contemporary art, as well as dynamic and diverse educational programming. (from: nermanmuseum.org)



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Sometimes the simplest things can be the best.

Schedule a play date: Invite your kid's friends over or their entire family for some time to play and connect.

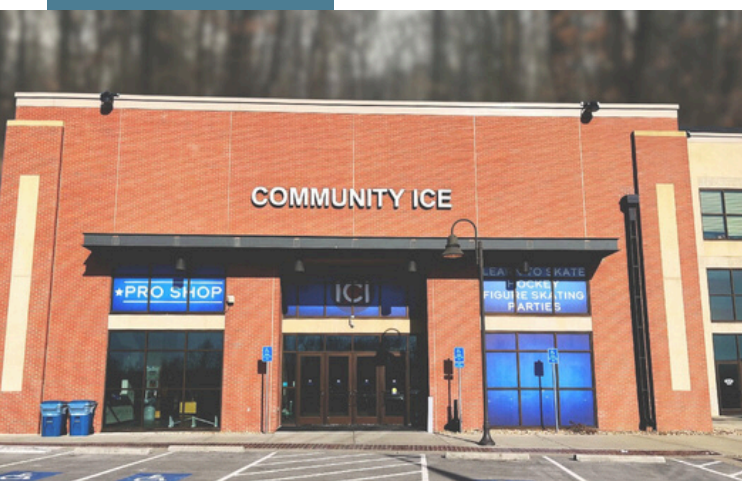
Meet up with friends at a fun place to hang out: Here are some of our local favorites. Check each location for pricing, but all provide a great atmosphere to connect and have fun.



MY Play Café



Cardboard Corner Café



Independence Community Ice



Winter is the
time for
quiet, for
a world
wrapped in
white and
possibilities
of the
future.



MEET OUR LEARNING GUIDE

ANGELA SCHILLING



At Mighty Roots Academy, every Learning Guide brings their unique story, skills, and passions to our nature-rich homeschool community. This winter, we're thrilled to introduce Angela Schilling. Her journey to homeschooling, fueled by a desire to stay present in her children's learning experiences, led her to Mighty Roots. Her dedication to gardening, love of teaching, and expertise in personal finance have made a lasting impact on our students. From her adventurous spirit—exploring hobbies like rock climbing—to her thoughtful approach to homeschooling her two children, she embodies the balance of learning, growth, and connection. Dive into this interview to learn more about her journey and the joy she finds in guiding young minds.

Tell us a little about yourself

Some weeks I wear many hats. I am a wife, a mom, a professional accountant, non-profit volunteer, a friend, a gardener, and a new chicken owner. I enjoy being at home with my family and animals but also enjoy going out and connecting with friends. I have been gardening consistently... maybe sorta obsessively for 3 years. There are so many rewards, lessons and quiet moments in gardening. My newest hobby is rock climbing. I have yet to take that hobby outdoors but have plans to do so Spring of 2025. Rock climbing has been a thrilling way to challenge myself, mentally and physically.

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How did you find out about Mighty Roots?

After having my son (now age 7) and watching him grow, learn and develop I knew I didn't want to send him away for hours each day to public school. But, at the time, I worked full-time so I was unsure how homeschooling would fit into our lives. In 2020 I had my daughter and a year later made a career change that allowed me to work remotely part-time. This change made way for homeschooling to be possible but I still would need support. I searched local homeschool programs and co-ops in the KC area and fell in love with Mighty Roots Academy's mission and nature-based learning.

What inspired/encouraged you to be a Learning Guide?

Tracy approached me about teaching gardening two program years ago. I love everything about gardening. It has been a very fun and rewarding experience, to learn and teach alongside the students.

What do you love most about teaching at Mighty Roots?

The students! They are so eager to learn and ask questions. They are very fun and inquisitive.

Which subjects or activities are you most passionate about teaching?

This year I am teaching gardening and personal finance. They have both been very fun courses to teach. To be 100% honest though, my nerdy side loves the personal finance class. The students are active, eager to learn and I think we all laugh quite a bit in that class.

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**“CHOOSE TO LOVE WITH
JOY AND GRACE”**



What drew you or got you into homeschooling?

My son, I loved watching him grow and develop. I didn't want to miss out on that by sending him to public school.

What are some challenges you find with homeschooling?

Being a working mom, even if part-time, has been something to juggle while also scheduling homeschool hours.

Is there advice you would give to a family just starting out on their own homeschool journey?

Don't over think it. There are so many resources online and programs available in our community. And, if you try it out and realize it just isn't working for your family then there is no shame in transferring to public schools.

Is there a particular quote or mantra that guides you in life?

Something I read and has been a guide-post in my life and relationships since is this Lacey Sturm quote:

*"Because I will die, I must be willing to live.
To do what I can while I'm still breathing and
to always choose to love with joy and grace".*



THE HEALING POWER OF ROSEMARY

words by krystle willmore
photos by carolyn willmore



A NATURAL REMEDY FOR HAIR AND HEALTH

Rosemary is a common cooking herb and can be found in grocery stores. It is also easily grown in our area and winterizes really well. Even though most people associate this herb with the kitchen, it has medicinal purposes as well! Rosemary is great for stimulating the circulatory system and the nervous system.



Rosemary has also been useful in cases of epilepsy and vertigo and can help to raise low blood pressure. It is valuable for fainting or spells of weakness associated with deficient circulation.



Externally, it is used to ease painful sciatica pain, muscular pain, and neuralgia. Apply Rosemary oil on the affected area. Rosemary stimulates blood flow and should not be used by women with heavy menstrual flow.



Rosemary is stimulating to the hair follicles and scalp circulation, making it very likely to be helpful for premature baldness. To benefit from this aspect, a nice infused oil should be applied and massaged into the scalp daily.

Ingredients:

- Several sprigs of fresh rosemary
- Olive Oil

Tools:

- Mini crockpot (these can be found at a lot of thrift stores)

- Chop the Rosemary up. Place the Rosemary in the mini crockpot. Pour enough oil to completely cover the Rosemary, stirring to combine it. Turn the crockpot on warm and heat for 8 hours. If your mini crockpot seems to heat too hot, unplug it once an hour and let it cool before plugging it back in. Strain off the oil through the strainer and cheesecloth.
- Discard the spent plant material and pour your oil into a widemouthed jar.
- Label and store in the fridge for best results.

Rosemary oil can be used in cooking or can be used to massage on the scalp to stimulate the hair follicles and relieve dandruff. To use, rub on the scalp for 30 minutes before washing.

FROM PATCH TO PAPER

Spreading the Gift of
Gardening, One Card at a Time

words and photos by
tracy schroeder



Winter can be a rough time for garden lovers or those that browse the seed catalogs dreaming about being a garden lover. Here is a winter gardening project my daughter and I enjoyed over winter break that kept us warm and cozy as we shared our love of gardening with our friends and family.

We wanted to share some of the wildflower seeds we had collected this fall from our small wildflower patch in our front yard with some of our extended family but also wanted to do it in a unique way. So, we got busy crafting seed cards and paper.

What are seed paper and cards? Simply put, they are cards and paper made with seeds incorporated into them. The recipient then plants the paper and watches it grow! Our first idea was to make handmade Christmas cards and add seeds to decorate them. This could also work great for birthday cards, valentines, thank you notes, or just a fun way to share your seeds with a friend.

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Seed Cards:

Cut the Card

Using thick paper, cut the paper to the size and shape of the card you desire. Using a thick craft or art paper helps your cards hold their shape when the glue is added.

Decorate the Card

Decorate your card using your preferred method keeping in mind how you can incorporate seeds into the design. We just made simple winter designs on ours using markers.

Add Seeds

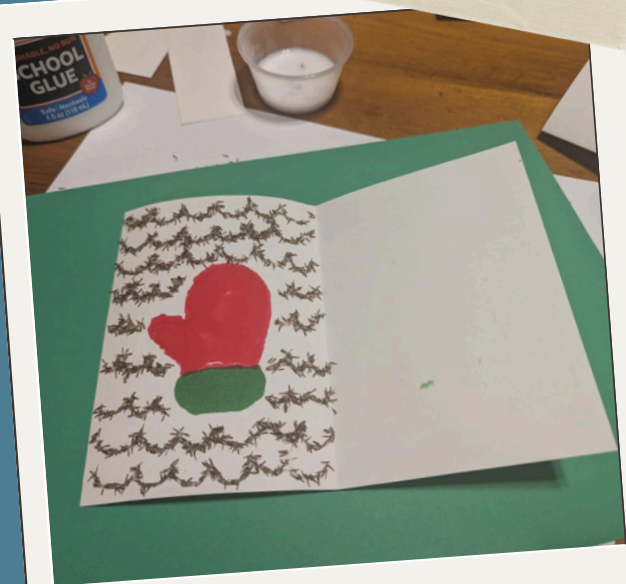
Add your seeds using washable school glue. Using the tip of the glue bottle or a paintbrush add glue to the areas you want to attach your seeds. We used smaller seeds to help them attach easier. You can add just a few or go wild and make the entire background seeds. The washable glue will dissolve with water and rain, allowing the seeds to grow once the paper is planted.

Include Seed Instructions

We added a small note inside our card that had the type of seed and planting instructions as well as a picture of the wildflower.

This was super easy and didn't take much time. We were able to make just a few cards at a time and come back to the project multiple times.

(continued)



Seed Paper:

To make seed paper, you can follow these steps:

Prepare the paper

Tear or shred your paper into small pieces, and soak it in water overnight. You can use a variety of paper, including scrap paper, newspaper, or construction paper.

Make the pulp

Blend the paper and water until it reaches a thick, smooth paste. Add more water as needed.

Add seeds

Stir seeds into the pulp until they are visible. We did this a very small amount at a time so that we could make different types of seed paper. We even made a few early spring vegetable papers like lettuce, carrots, and radishes. You can also add dried petals for decoration. Small seeds stayed incorporated best.

Shape the paper

Spread the pulp into a thin, even layer on a surface lined with a towel or paper towels. You can use a framed screen to create an even layer. We used cookie cutters to make fun shapes by adding a small handful of pulp inside each cutter and pressing it towards the edges with our fingers.

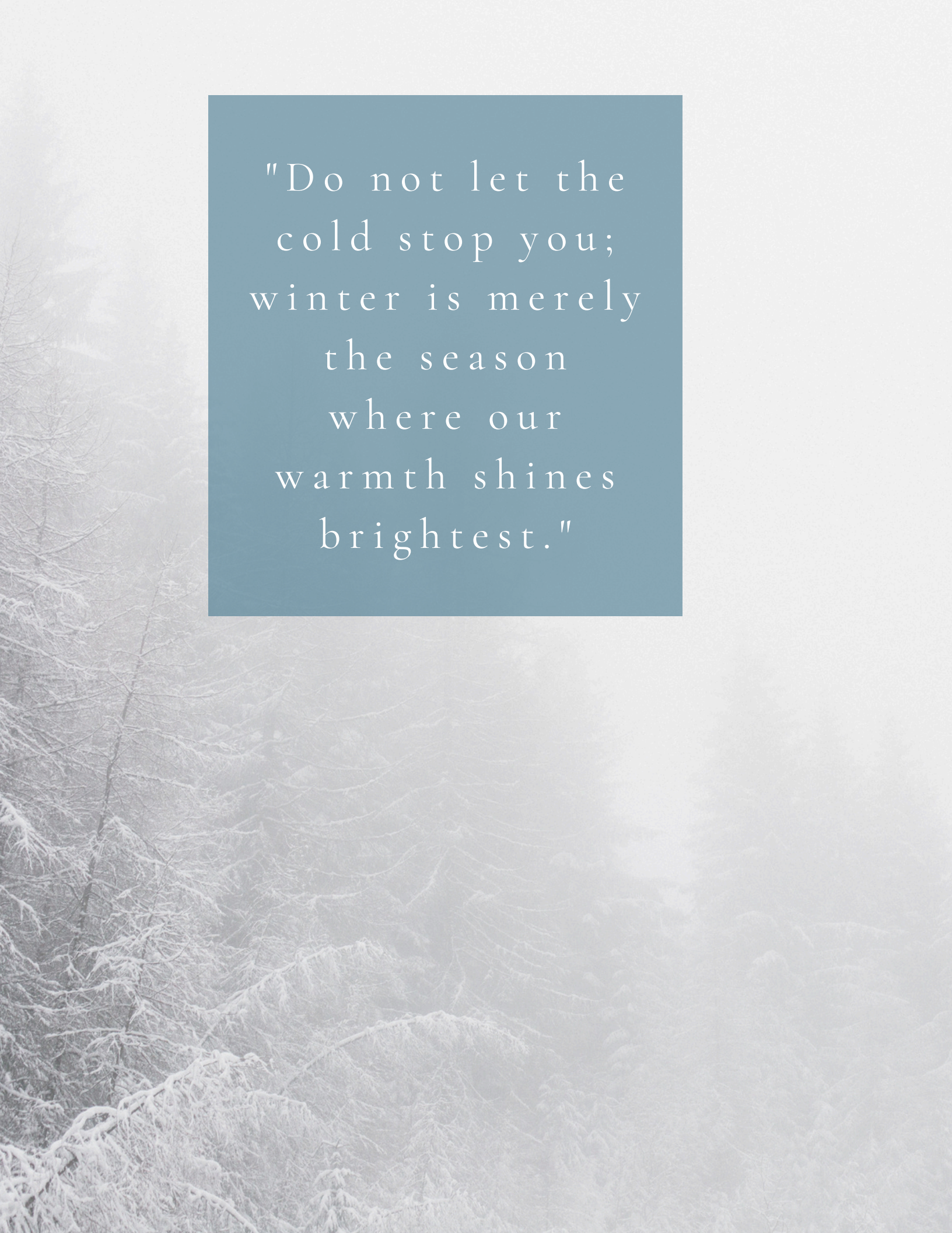
Press the Paper

Using a second towel, press down on the shaped paper to absorb extra water and to compress the paper to help it hold its shape.

Dry the paper

Let the paper dry for at least 24 hours. If needed, brush with a light layer of glue to help seeds stay attached to the paper. We used multiple baking sheets to store our paper on to dry so that we could move it around as needed while drying.





"Do not let the
cold stop you;
winter is merely
the season
where our
warmth shines
brightest."

BE THE ROOTS OF SOMETHING **MIGHTY!**



At Mighty Roots Academy, we believe that education is about more than just textbooks and tests—it's about planting seeds of curiosity, nurturing growth, and watching children flourish into lifelong learners. Our nature-rich, hands-on approach creates a learning environment where every student can grow strong, creative, and capable.

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit, Mighty Roots relies on the generosity of our community to sustain and expand the opportunities we provide. Your support helps us offer unique classes, maintain our outdoor spaces, and equip our students with the tools they need to explore, create, and thrive.

There are many ways to get involved and help our academy continue to grow:

- **Make a Donation:** Every contribution, no matter the size, directly impacts our students and teachers.
- **Sponsor a Program:** Help fund specific classes or activities that align with your interests or passions.
- **Volunteer Your Time:** Whether it's helping with projects, sharing a skill, or simply lending a hand, your time is invaluable.
- **Spread the Word:** Share our mission with friends, family, and your community to help us reach more families.

When you support Mighty Roots, you become part of a community dedicated to inspiring the next generation. Together, we can ensure that every student has the chance to learn, grow, and achieve their dreams.

Join us in being the roots of something mighty!

Final Thoughts



As winter settles in, it brings with it a season of quiet reflection and cozy connection. The shorter days and cooler air invite us to pause and appreciate the warmth of learning together, whether it's through shared stories, hands-on projects, or moments of wonder sparked by nature's winter beauty.

At Mighty Roots Academy, we've seen how this season encourages resilience and creativity. Just as nature rests and prepares for spring, this is our time to rest, reflect, and nurture the seeds of growth planted during the fall.

Let us cherish these moments of togetherness and continue to inspire one another. Thank you for being part of our community. Here's to a season filled with warmth, discovery, and the promise of new beginnings.

Our Mission

The mission of Mighty Roots Academy is to provide active, multiage learning in a nature-rich environment.

Our Philosophy

At Mighty Roots Academy, we believe it is most important to develop the skills of independent learning that equip students for a lifetime of inquiry and growth. A true education builds the skills needed for becoming a lifelong learner. We believe that students benefit most when skill-building is the focus, no matter the subject.



Mighty Roots Academy

mightyrootsacademy.com