



Early Intervention Child & Family Connections #15 December 2021 Family Newsletter

Will/Grundy/Kankakee/LaSalle Counties

Happy Holidays!



With the holidays and colder weather, often comes more time spent indoors. So, we have included links to fun Holiday crafts and activities to do with toddlers this holiday season.

-[Magic Foaming Snowman](#) from [funathomewithkids.com](#)

-[Christmas crafts, science experiments, ornaments, and messy play activities](#) from Fun-a-day.com

-[Easy Toddler Christmas Activities](#) from BusyToddler.com

-[18 Hanukkah Crafts for kids](#) from [thesprucecrafts.com](#)

-[30+ of the Best Kwanza Crafts and Activities for Kids](#)

and [50 Fun and Easy Elf on the Shelf Ideas](#) from [Happytoddlerplaytime.com](#)

45 Fun things to do with kids over the Holidays!

1. Spend a day making holiday cookies & try out [new recipes](#).
2. Have a [holiday movie](#) marathon
3. Pose for a holiday card photo — then do a silly one just for your family, maybe inspired by [Awkward Family Photos](#).
4. Assemble holiday cards — even little kids can put on stamps.
5. Find the North Pole on a map and talk about what Santa's workshop may look like.
6. Choose a [holiday craft](#) to make together.
7. [String popcorn](#) for edible decorations.
8. Go on a nature walk and talk about how things change during the winter.
9. Test out different [recipes for hot chocolate](#) and pick your favorite.
10. Share your favorite holiday memories from when you were a child.
11. Make a [gingerbread house](#) out of graham crackers.
12. Create [paper snowflakes](#).
13. Make [homemade candy canes](#).
14. Write and drop off holiday cards at a local nursing home.
15. Create [luminaries](#) and set them up along your driveway.
16. Have hot cocoa or a picnic under the Christmas tree.
17. Reuse holiday cards — cut out images to make one big holiday card collage or repurpose them as gift tags.
18. Make your own [nativity scene out of paper](#).
19. Head to a local holiday light show or walk around your neighborhood to look at decorations.
20. Make your own [Christmas village](#) out of paper houses and crafting supplies.
21. Visit a local museum that has a holiday exhibit.
22. Plan a special Christmas morning breakfast that everyone can help make.
23. Dip pretzels in chocolate and red and green sprinkles.
24. Read about the history of [Hanukkah](#).
25. Play a game of dreidel.
26. Make a menorah with flames out of construction paper.
27. Bake [Star of David cookies](#).



WE ARE
all like a
Snowflake
DIFFERENT
IN OUR OWN
BEAUTIFUL
WAY

28. Make a healthier version of a [coconut macaroon](#).
29. Create a wreath out of Stars of David.
30. Learn [how to roast chestnuts](#).
31. Make homemade wrapping paper using stamps, stickers and markers.
32. Play a game of pin the candle on the menorah.
33. [Make your own gelt](#) to celebrate the holiday.
34. Make cheese coins, rather than chocolate ones, by using a cookie cutter on bread and topping it with melted cheese.
35. Light a kinara for [Kwanzaa](#) and teach kids about the holiday.
36. Blindfold your kids and play the [African game of Mbube](#).
37. Roll dried corncobs in paint (red, black and green are Kwanzaa colors) and make a painting.
38. Make a [kinara candleholder](#).
39. Make an African drum using an empty coffee container.
40. Decorate [Kwanzaa paper dolls](#).
41. Cut out hand shapes from construction paper hands and create a wreath.
42. Make a [Resolution Tree](#) by writing down resolutions and tying them to the Christmas tree — try to guess which one belongs to each person.
43. Make noisemakers out of empty water bottles.
44. Blow up balloons and decorate a room for New Year's.
45. Jump on bubble wrap to ring in the New Year.

Please enjoy the information on **fun activities** and **support resources** for all families in this newsletter. This month we have included information on **some December awareness days** (this is not a list of all Awareness days for this month).

December is...

- [National Safe Toys and gifts month](#)
- December 1st is [Rosa Parks Day](#)
- December 6th-12 is [National Influenza vaccination week](#)
- December 7th is [National Illinois Day](#)
- December 12th is [Worldwide Candle Lighting Day](#)- a global candle lighting ceremony symbolizing support for families grieving the loss of a child. [Compassionatefriends.org](#)
- December 15th is [National Chocolate Covered Anything Day](#)
- December 18th is [Bake Cookies Day](#) - Try a new Christmas cookie recipe from [100 best Christmas Cookies from Food Network](#) or my personal favorite [Saltine Toffee Cookies](#)
- December 24th is [National Egg Nog Day](#) and Christmas Eve
- Christmas is December 25th
- [Kwanza](#) beings December 26th - January 1st - Check out the [Best Kwanza Events for Kids](#) from Chicago Parent
- December 31st is New Years Eve - Check out the [Best Kid Friendly New Years Events](#) from Chicago Parent.



If you know someone who is concerned about their child's development please refer them to our office or share this resource on [making a referral to Early Intervention](#).

Fun Family Activities | December 2021

See below for some fun family events in your area!

Visit with Santa:

- Enter your zip code at WhereisSanta.com to find a Santa photo experience near you!
- [Santa visits at Louis Joliet Mall](#) Nov 18th-Dec 24th. Click the link to reserve your visit with Santa.
- [Visit with Santa at Bass Pro Shops](#) Beginning November 6th. Reservations Required
- [Santa's workshop at Galowich YMCA](#) on December 17th 4-8pm. Register online



Free Holiday FUN:

- [Holiday FUN at Morris YMCA](#) - Free and open to all families December 16th 5-7pm
- [Holiday FUN at C.W. Avery YMCA](#) in Joliet on December 17th
- [Snow Ball at Bolingbrook Community Center](#), December 17th 6-9pm

Ongoing Holiday events:

- [Best Christmas light shows in the Chicago Suburbs](#) from mykidlist.com
- [Rialto Square Theatre Home for the Holidays](#) Nov 20th- Dec 22nd, Entertainment for the whole family.
- [Holly Jolly Days at Naper Settlement](#) Dec 17, 20, 21, 22, & 23 · 1-7PM
- [Festival of Lights at the Promenade](#) in Bolingbrook Nov 6-Dec 31
- [Holiday Lights Festival & visits with Santa](#) at Romeoville's Village Hall Dec 3rd, 4th, 10th & 11th.
- [The Holiday Express](#) at Blackberry Farm in Aurora. Every Thurs, Friday, Sat & Sunday until Dec 19th.
- [Chicago Botanic Garden Lightscape](#) an after dark illuminated trail, Nov 12-January 2nd. Tickets required
- [Morton Arboretum Illumination: Tree lights](#) Nov 20- Jan 2nd. Advance purchase recommended
- [Lincoln Park Zoolights](#) Nov 19-Jan 2nd. Tickets cost \$5. Free nights on Mondays & Tuesdays. Sensory Friendly nights on November 30th & December 15th
- [Brookfield Zoo Holiday Magic](#) Nov 26-Dec 31. Tickets must be reserved in advance.
- [Six Flags Holiday in the Park Lights](#) Nov 26- Dec 30.
- [Museum of Science & Industry Christmas Around the World](#) Nov 17- January 3rd. Tickets required.
- [Chicago's Christkindlmarket](#)
- [Goodman Theatre presents "A Christmas Carol"](#) Nov 20-Dec 31st.

New Years Events:

- [New Years Eve Family Party at Haunted Trails](#) Joliet, Dec 31st 6-10pm
- [Bubble Bash New Year's Eve](#) Dec. 31 at DuPage Children's Museum in Naperville

[Dupage Children's Museum](#) is open & pre-registration is required. See the website for details.

[Kidsworld Children's Museum](#) in Frankfort is open for in person play.

[Discovery Center Museum](#) in Rockford is open and reservations are required.

[The Shedd Aquarium](#) is open and tickets must be reserved in advanced.

[Field Museum](#) is open with advanced ticket purchase

[The Museum of Science and Industry](#) is open with advanced ticket purchase. [Click here](#) to see their FREE days for Illinois residents!

[The Art Institute](#) is open with advanced ticket purchase

[Lincoln Park](#) and [Brookfield Zoo](#) are open! Face coverings are required in all buildings.

[Cosley Zoo in Wheaton](#) is open with advanced registration.

[Sky Zone in Joliet](#) is open and has a Little Leapers program for kids age 7 and under on Saturdays from 10-11am. See their [calendar](#) for details.

[Starved Rock State Park](#) and [Matthiessen State Park](#) both located in LaSalle County are great places to get outside and enjoy nature!

Virtual Events

- **Michaels Crafts** stores are hosting free online events for children and adults. Check out their [Free Kids club zoom events for Mini Makers age 3 and up](#)
- **Barnes and Noble** has a [you tube channel](#) with virtual kids story times and many adult book club virtual events as well.

Will County Forest Preserve District has an [events calendar](#) with virtual & in-person events for children and families. Don't miss the...

- [Family Friendly Ugly Sweater Campfire](#) on December 11th at Messenger Woods Nature Preserve
- [Let it Snow zoom webinar](#) on December 15th to learn about all things snow!

For more information on fun family events in the **Chicagoland** area go to [Chicago Parent.com](#) and [Family Time Magazine](#). Check out the [November/December 2021 Issue of Chicago Parent](#) online.

For fun events and parenting tips in **LaSalle County** go to the [Illinois Valley Area Parent References](#) Facebook page. Also check out the [LaSalle County Calendar of Events](#).

For fun events in **Kankakee County** visit the [Kankakee County Calendar of Events page](#).

Many **libraries** and **park districts** are hosting in-person events for children and families. Please check out your local library and park district website for details.

Here a list of websites for several of the park districts in our area:

- [Joliet Park District](#)
- [Bolingbrook Park District](#)
- [Romeoville Park District](#)
- [Lemont Park District](#)
- [Mokena Park District](#)
- [Frankfort Park District](#)
- [New Lenox Park District](#)
- [Plainfield Park District](#)
- [Naperville Park District](#)
- [Channahon Park District](#)
- [Crete Park District](#)
- [Braidwood Park District](#)
- [Wilmington Island Park District](#)
- [Godley Park District](#) has up to date info on events and programs on their [facebook page](#)
- [Bourbonnais Township Park District](#) The [Exploration station](#) is open with online registration!
- [Momence Park District](#)

Local **Special Recreation Associations** are continuing to host virtual events and in-person events. See below for websites of some area Special Recreation Associations:

- [River Valley Special Rec Association](#) in Bradley
- [Lincolnway Special Rec Association](#) in New Lenox - Check out their [Winter Program Guide](#)
- [Northern Will County Special Rec Association](#) (NWCSRA) in Romeoville. Check out their [Winter/Spring 2022 brochure](#). They have a sensory room that is available to reserve for individual use located at 10 Montrose in Romeoville. Check out this great resource! Email [Gina Petkus](#) for info.
- [SRJC](#) - Special Recreation of Joliet and Channahon
- [The NorthWest Special Recreation Association in Rolling Meadows](#) hosts online [sibshops](#) for siblings, who are ages 8-12 year old, of children with disabilities to meet other siblings for peer support and fun! Contact [ljevaney@nwsra.org](mailto:ljevane@nwsra.org) for more information.

**Important Information on Early Intervention
In-Person Visits and Live Video Visits**



Please review the [In-person checklists for Early Intervention providers and for families](#) to help determine if it is safe to have in-person visits. If you or a member of your family is sick with any of the symptoms on the checklist please contact your Early Intervention providers and cancel any upcoming in-person visits.

It is very important that all families are aware of and agree to the recommended safety protocols from IDHS for In Person visits to occur:

- To the maximum extent possible individuals providing in-person support be vaccinated.
- Masks are to be worn when meeting indoors.
- Teams consider conducting in-person visits outdoors or in well-ventilated areas.
- Team members continue to utilize good handwashing practices and sanitize items that are used across homes before each use.
- Nothing unnecessary should be brought into a home/child care such as toy bags or other personal items.
- Maintain physical distance during indoor EI visits to the degree possible.
- In-person services should not occur if any individual participating has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days or if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.
- If individuals who are not fully vaccinated have been exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 14 days, in-person services should not occur.

If you do have to cancel your In-person



Live Video Visits continue to be a great opportunity for parents to learn from their EI providers how to help their child learn and grow! If your child is waiting for In-Person EI services consider trying Live Video Visits!

There are programs available for families to help provide technology devices and internet access for Video Visits.

[The Emergency Broadband Benefit Program](#) is a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) program that provides a temporary discount on monthly broadband bills for qualifying low-income households. Go to: www.getemergencybroadband.org or www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit to check if you qualify & apply online. You may also sign up through a participating broadband provider or by calling (833) 511-0311 between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. any day of the week to request a mail-in application and more information about the program.

The [Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse](#) continues to offer a [device loan program for all families in Early Intervention](#). They currently have over 100 available devices and no waitlist! Available technology includes: Ipads, hotspots, & Ipad stands. To apply to receive a device from the EI Clearinghouse, please complete the [Device Loan Request Form](#).

[The Arc of IL has an Assistive Technology Consumer Stipend Program](#) which provides funds to to pay for the assistive technology (Ipads, tablets, laptops etc) needed to attend virtual events and meetings for people with developmental disabilities and their

visit, consider trying a Live Video Visit so that you are still able to work with your Early Intervention Provider(s) to support your child. Please reach out to your service coordinator with any questions.

family members.

- Click to [download the application](#).
- Any questions? Call 815.464.1832 ext 1010.

The ETCA (Early Childhood Technical Assistance) Center has videos of real families talking about their experiences with Live Video Visits. Click here to be taken to [ETCA Center youtube videos](#).

Do you know someone who needs help with groceries?



[My Pantry Express](#) is an online food pantry that gives those in need of food assistance the opportunity to shop once a week for a variety of free grocery items. Items can be picked up from 3 locations in Will County. Please click the link for details.

No income or residency restrictions apply.



The Northern Illinois Food Bank has a list online of [upcoming Mobil Food Pantries and Pop up Markets listed monthly by county](#). Both types of distributions are currently using a drive-thru model. **Everyone is welcome – no ID or referral is needed.**



Will County has created [Food Access Maps](#) where you can locate food pantries, micro pantries, mobile food pantries, and community gardens in Will and some of the surrounding counties.

[Find Food IL Community Food map](#) allows you to search by zip code for food pantries, School meal sites, grocery stores, and SNAP & WIC offices.

To get information or help with your [SNAP \(supplemental nutrition assistance program\) application](#) click the link or call 844-600-SNAP.

Will-Grundy Counties



Family Support Resources For All Areas

Parent/Family Support Programs:

[TPS Ministry](#) an organization that supports foster children and foster families is hosting a holiday event and giveaway for foster families on December 17th from 6-8:30 at the Joliet Hope Center. Registration is required. [Click here to register](#)

[The Special Fathers Network](#) is a Dad to Dad mentoring program for fathers raising children with special needs. They host zoom calls on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month for Dads to connect. [Click here to view the list of previous and](#)

Whatever is beautiful,
Whatever is meaningful,
Whatever brings you
happiness. May it be
yours this holiday season
and throughout the
coming year.



[upcoming zoom calls.](#)

[ACES 5 week FREE parenting program](#) is a parent education program that provides parents with information on trauma, toxic stress, brain science, and how adverse experiences may be impacting your child. The classes are held at We Care of Grundy County. Free childcare and meals are provided. Please call 815-942-6389 for more info.

[The Jump Start homevisiting Parental Training Program](#) is a parenting enrichment program offered in Will, Grundy & Kankakee counties. It is a free program that offers parent education and family support services throughout pregnancy until their child is 3 years old. **In Will and Grundy Counties contact Alyssa at 309-370-9998 or in Kankakee County call Tyler at 815-600-9744 or [enroll online](#).** For more information on this great program check out their [facebook page](#).

Easter Seals has a [Parent's Raising Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders Support Group or other Social Interaction/Communication Disorder](#) that meets the first Friday of each month 11am-12 pm via Zoom. Email Alicia ahann@joliet.easterseals.com for the zoom link to join the group. They also offer [a Spanish Speaking group that meets weekly on Fridays at 3pm](#).

[Easter Seals is offering Free walk in mental health screenings for children](#) age 1-17 years old. Following the screening, families will be provided with information, resources, & tools if needed. Screenings are held the 2nd Friday of every month from 9am-11am, or to schedule a virtual appointment call 815-927-5466. [Screenings are also offered in Spanish.](#)

[Erikson Center for Children and families](#) is offering **in-person and virtual mental health services** to parents, caregivers, and children focusing on prenatal to 5 years old. Services available in English and Spanish. For more information contact their intake line at 312-709-0508 for English and 312-934-6446 for Spanish.

Educational & Informative webinars for parents & caregivers:

[Chicago Parent Magazine is hosting ParentEd Talks](#) which is a FREE virtual speaker series featuring some of the nation's top parenting experts! Virtual events are now through June 2022. Click the link for more information and to register.

[Illinois School for the Visually Impaired has a listing of recorded zoom webinars.](#) These webinars are free for families and professionals who are interested in learning more about children's eye conditions. Also check out their [facebook page](#) for info.

[Be Strong Families has a webinar series](#) for parents to help them stay strong and positive for themselves and their children. Past webinars are also available to view. Click the link for more information or to register. Registration information is in English and Spanish.

Informational Online Resources:

[Interacting with Autism](#) is an online informational video based resource on understanding, treating, and living with autism.

[SPARK](#) - Simons Foundation Powering Autism Research - has [information and webinars for parents](#) of children on the Autism Spectrum.

The Child Mind Institute has created a short [video series on helping young children manage anxiety](#). Kids can go on a Journey with Nixie and Nimbo to see how thoughts and actions affect how we feel. The [Child Mind Institute](#) is an online resource for children's mental health information.

[The Northwestern Infant and Child Development Center](#) is inviting parents and children from newborn to age 6 to participate in a research study on how babies learn so much so fast! Click [here to sign up](#) to participate in the study.

Northwestern University researchers are studying parent satisfaction with therapeutic services for children with disabilities during the coronavirus. To access the survey for this study go to <https://is.gd/parentingduringcovid> for questions on this survey please contact ashleymurphy2020@u.northwestern.edu

[The Early Intervention Research Group \(EIRG\)](#) offers many research studies for young children. Click here to [view all of their current research studies](#).

[Illinois Hands and Voices](#), supports families with children who have a hearing loss. Check out their website to receive updates and new blog posts.

[The Will County AOK \(All Our Kids\) Network](#) hosts monthly meetings for professionals working with children & families, community members, and parents. They have a [resource guide](#) with information on many local resources for families.

Developmental/Educational Online Resources:

[The Early Intervention Clearinghouse](#) has information to support all children and families in EI. They also have a [facebook page](#), a [newsletter for families](#), and a [blog](#) with resources & information on the EI system.

[The Division of Specialized Care for Children](#) (DSCC) has several resources related to education and childcare for children with healthcare needs or disabilities.

[First Words Project](#) is an online resource for parents with downloadable resources, videos, & information to support their child's development from birth-24 months.

[Family Matters Parent Training & Information Center](#) has many resources related to education, support, and advocacy for parents of a child with a disability.

[Zero to three](#) has a [Baby Steps newsletter](#) for parents and caregivers that delivers interesting articles and resources to your inbox. Also check out the [Zero to Three facebook page](#).

[The Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development](#) has information on resources for families with young children such as accessing childcare services.

[Harvard Center on the Developing Child](#) is an informational resource for families with young children. They cover topics such as Early Childhood Development, Brain Development, Self Regulation, and Stress.

[Sesame Street in Communities website](#) (Produced by Sesame Workshop) is a customizable resource for parents/caregivers to provide learning opportunities and help support children through challenges such as community violence, & traumatic experiences.

[Big Heart World](#) helps families to learn about social emotional learning. They share content each month, which will empower you to teach your children about themselves, others & relationships.

COVID-19 Information



All Illinois residents age 5 and over are eligible for the Covid vaccines. For those interested in learning more about the COVID-19 vaccine and its availability in your area, go to <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov>

The CDC has information on [Key Things to Know about Covid-19 Vaccines](#)

The [Illinois Department of Public Health website](#) is a resource for information on the current regional COVID 19 conditions and the activities permitted within each region.

You may also access information on the vaccine from your local Health Department.

- [Will County Health Department](#)
- [Grundy County Health Department](#)
- [Kankakee County Health Department](#)
- [LaSalle County Health Department](#)

Information to support families:

- [Call 4 Calm](#) - text TALK to 552020 for English or HABLAR for Spanish if you or a loved one are struggling with stress related to the pandemic. This is free and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA), the Office of Head Start (OHS), has created [a list of resources to support children with disabilities and their families](#) during the COVID pandemic.
- Parenting for Lifelong health has created [COVID-19: 24/7 Parenting](#) with information and online resources for parents.



About Us:

Visit our
website

[Child and Family Connections #15](#) is the regional office serving as the point of entry for children and families into the Illinois Early Intervention Program. CFC #15 serves children age 0-3 year and their families in Will, Grundy, Kankakee, and LaSalle Counties.

*For more information about the Illinois Early Intervention Program, please visit:
[Illinois Department of Human Services](#) or [The Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse](#)*

The events and information contained in this newsletter are not sponsored by Child and Family Connections #15. This newsletter contains information from many different agencies and organizations and is provided to families as a resource.