

WINNIPEG PARENT



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the publisher's Pen

There's Something About September that Makes Everything Feel a Little Bit New.

The backpacks come out, the calendars fill up, the alarm clocks get set a little earlier, and suddenly we're all back to figuring out who needs to be where—and when. Summer may be winding down, but I've always loved the feeling that comes with this time of year. It's a fresh start without actually having to start from scratch.

And I love the little things that come with fall. The first chilly morning. My favourite sweater. Leaves changing colour. The new daytimer and calendar. That first evening when everyone seems happy to be home and the house feels a little cozier.

Of course, getting back into a routine isn't always quite as charming!

Between school, sports, activities, homework, appointments and trying to squeeze in some actual family time, fall can quickly become one of the busiest seasons of the year. That's why this issue of Winnipeg Parent is all about finding that balance—getting organized, getting involved and, most importantly, enjoying the season along the way.

Inside this issue, we're looking at ways to make the transition back to school a little easier, keeping kids moving and active, exploring the benefits of creative activities, helping with lunch plans, and finding ways to make learning fun both in and out of the classroom.

We're also talking STEM, vision health, weekend adventures and plenty of ideas to remind us that family life shouldn't revolve entirely around the school calendar.

So, as we settle into another school year, I hope you'll give yourself permission to enjoy the organized chaos a little. The packed calendars won't last forever—and neither will these busy, wonderful years of raising kids.

Here's to crisp mornings, colourful trees, full calendars and making the most of all the little moments in between.

Happy Fall!

Dana



Photo: Dana Todd

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On the Cover: Family enjoys an outdoor autumn walk.

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The *Beauty* of Boredom

Carew Papritz
Award-winning Author

What seemed like yesterday and a million years ago, our family took an afternoon trip to the mountains. It was a beautiful spring day filled with blue-sky clouds and the anticipation of a lovely hike with our 8-year-old son.

Our son's backseat was strewn with books and magazines to occupy his time. Conversations were filled with the absurd and the enlightened, sometimes at the same time. I was fascinated with how the world was seen through the eyes of an 8-year-old.

Still, I remember that family day as if it were a minute ago. Our son staring out the window looking at the clouds. I figured he was bored, so I asked him "What'cha thinking?" His reply will stay with me until the end of my existence. "Papa, could you not interrupt me right now. I'm daydreaming."

That's when it dawned on me. He had failed at boredom. He didn't want to read. Or converse. He wanted to daydream. And that was the brilliance of his failure. He created something out of nothing. He had left boredom behind.

It was at that moment I understood the Beauty of Boredom. Because without it,

we can't move. We don't think. We can't create. It was the greatest gift that we as parents are taking away from our kids. And we don't even know it.

If our kids can't learn to be bored, then they can't fail at being bored. And how, pray tell, do you fail at boredom? You fail at boredom by doing, creating, or inventing something.

And guess what was discovered when two kids got bored at the same time. Yep—they discovered playing! (Also known as being "un-bored but that doesn't sound as fun as playing.")

When you play, you solve so many childhood problems at once. Kids learn how to converse with real words, face to face (not Facetime to Facetime). They learn how to socialize without parents helicoptering over their every interaction. They learn how to listen because that's what you do when you talk. They learn to move, which is exercising but really called playing. (Adults call exercising "working out" and it sure doesn't sound like playing.)

You can cheat at boredom. It's called a cell phone, also known as "mind driver." It's a brain-altering drug intended to keep you from being bored. I've watched over the years as the soul-sucking digital addiction started to take place in kids all around me, resulting in "un-kids,"

all gleefully drowning in tidal waves of dopamine (which is the drug inside your brain that makes you want to endlessly scroll till the end of time, "liking" everything imaginable, and simultaneously texting every person known and unknown to you).

Adults are equally to blame. I soon realized that cell phones are becoming the new parents as they woefully abdicated their usefulness to walk their parental talk. Heck, I was even accused of being a "bad parent" because my son didn't have a cell phone yet. (He didn't get one until high school, sort of like getting your driver's permit as part of the ritual of becoming an adult.)

You thought helicopter moms were a thing? How about drone moms? They know their kids everywhere and everything, 24/7. It's a form of kid suffocation in which kids have no say in anything about anything—except for posting on their social media sites which is the only true form of freedom they have anymore. So, we blindly push them into the digital world, cell phone glued to hand, because we won't allow them to do anything in the real world. Yeah. Talk about being mollycoddled to death.

Kids have lost the art of being kids.

You want to create the best human being in the world? Let's let our kids fail, play, fall, run, listen, create, jump, invent,

and learn as real adults-in-training without us always poking are noses into everything they do. Some things yes. But the real gift is learning when to butt out, and learning when to teach them again about the real Beauty of Boredom.



Carew Papritz is an award-winning author, literacy advocate, and educational speaker. He is the author of *The Legacy Letters*, a bestselling coming-of-age book that encourages young people to think deeply about character, purpose, relationships, and personal growth. His writing has appeared in Reader's Digest, Yahoo! News, Woman's World, and First Time Parent Magazine. Learn more at thelegacyletters.com

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Back to School, Back to the House Hunt

Lisa Derenchuk
RE/MAX Professionals

September has a funny way of making us look at our homes a little differently. After a summer of being home more, having kids underfoot, hosting friends, storing bikes and sports equipment, and trying to find somewhere—anywhere—to put all the stuff that seems to multiply over the summer, you might suddenly be noticing the things about your house that aren't working anymore.

Then school starts.

The backpacks come out. The morning rush begins. Homework happens at the kitchen table. Someone needs a quiet place to study, someone else needs a bedroom with a door that actually closes, and suddenly that “cozy” house you loved a few years ago feels...a little tight.

September can be a great time to start thinking about whether your home still fits your family.

Maybe you need another bedroom. Maybe the kids are getting older and you'd love a little more separation between bedrooms and living spaces. Maybe the basement that was once the perfect playroom could now be a homework zone, home gym or hangout space. Or perhaps you're simply dreaming about a bigger kitchen where everyone can gather without bumping elbows.

And sometimes it's not about needing more house. It's about wanting a different kind of home.

You might be thinking about moving closer to your kids' school, finding a neighbourhood with parks and walking paths, downsizing now that the kids are becoming more independent, or finally moving into the home you've been talking about for years.

The good news is that you don't necessarily have to make a decision right away.

September is a great month to start looking. Spend a weekend visiting open houses. Drive through neighbourhoods you've always liked. Get a feel for what homes are selling for and what your budget might realistically get you. Even if you're months away from making a move, doing a little homework now can make the process much less overwhelming when you're ready.

And if you're thinking about selling your current home, September can also be a good time to start that conversation. Sometimes simply walking through your house with a real estate professional can help you see what changes—or what timing—might make sense.

Back to school is all about fresh starts, new routines and looking ahead.

Maybe this year, that fresh start includes a new address.

And if nothing else, September is a pretty good time to finally figure out what you're going to do with all those backpacks.

Lisa Derenchuk is an experienced Realtor with more than 25 years of experience in the Winnipeg Real Estate Market and Mom to two great kids! Thinking of buying a new home, you can reach Lisa anytime: c. 204-952-7355 e. Lisaderenchuk@remax.net



Dana Todd
Editor, Winnipeg Parent

One of my favourite things to do as a kid was build with LEGO. Give me a big bucket of those little colourful bricks and I could happily sit for hours building houses, cars, towers and whatever else I could dream up. I loved turning those pieces into something completely my own.

Fast forward a few decades and LEGO is still a favourite in our house, even with a grown-up kid! Watching TV? Grab some LEGO and keep those hands—and brains—busy. Waiting for dinner? Build a house! I love that what feels like simple play is doing some pretty important work inside those brains.

With school starting up again, we often hear about getting kids back into a routine, back to reading and back into “school mode.” After a summer of a little less structure, it's not unusual for kids to need some time to get those learning muscles working again. A little summer brain drain is real!

That's where STEM activities can be so great. Science, technology, engineering and math encourage kids to think, experiment, problem-solve, ask questions and, perhaps most importantly, figure things out for themselves.

And it doesn't have to feel like more school.

LEGO is a perfect example.

When kids build a bridge, they're thinking about balance and strength. When their tower falls over, they figure out why and try again. When they create a vehicle, they're experimenting with movement, wheels and design. There's a whole lot of engineering and problem-solving happening without anyone handing them a worksheet.

There are also some fun LEGO sets that take STEM play a step further. The LEGO Creator 3-in-1 Space Exploration Telescope is designed for kids over 8 years old and lets them build a telescope complete with a solar system model, then rebuild it into an adjustable microscope or a UFO. It even includes a light brick and interchangeable lenses featuring a planet, star and moon, bringing a little more science and discovery into the fun.

And this is just one example. There are a multitude of great LEGO sets for all ages that can keep kids' brains busy without them even realizing they're learning!

But honestly, you don't need a special set—or even a plan.

Dump a pile of LEGO on the table and ask, “I wonder if you could build a tower tall enough to reach this shelf?” Or, “Could you build a car that actually rolls across the room?”

Then let them figure it out.

Because sometimes the best way to get kids' brains ready for school is to simply let them play, create, experiment—and build something amazing along the way.



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From Guide to Leader: *A Journey of Growth, Service, and Confidence*

Ellie Oneschuk
a current Guider and
former Youth Member

When I joined Girl Guides of Canada at eight years old, I had no way of knowing that it would become one of the most defining parts of my life. Tuesday evenings quickly became the highlight of my week. I loved earning badges and joining in the traditions that made each meeting feel meaningful. In my first year, I was so eager to participate that I earned every badge. I still remember singing the Banana Song, standing proudly with my group, and feeling a sense of belonging in a space created for girls to learn, grow, and be themselves. As I grew older, Guiding grew with me.

In Guides, I was introduced to camping, outdoor cooking, community service, teamwork, and leadership. Selling cookies door to door helped me build confidence, while earning badges and awards taught me perseverance and commitment. Becoming a Patrol Leader at eleven gave me my first meaningful opportunity to mentor younger girls and understand the responsibility that comes with leadership.

Later, in Pathfinders and Rangers, many of my favourite memories were formed around campfires, geocaching, late-night conversations, and adventures throughout my city with friends who made every experience more meaningful. Completing the program as a Ranger made me realize how deeply Guiding had shaped who I was becoming. What I appreciate most now is that Girl Guides was never simply an extracurricular activity. It challenged me to try new things, contribute to my community, and see myself as someone capable of leadership. I learned how to speak with confidence, collaborate with others, adapt when plans changed, and take initiative when something needed to be done.

"I am grateful to have grown up in a program that shaped who I am today..."

At 21, I can see how strongly those lessons have carried into every adventure I have pursued. I have graduated from university in Honours Biochemistry and Biomedical Sciences. Among 20 leadership roles across campus and my community, I gained experience as an emergency first responder and also led more than 100 volunteers in organizing an overnight event supporting the fight against cancer. Through each experience, I have continued to feel supported by the sisterhood, confidence, and purpose that Guiding gave me.

After advancing out of the program as a youth member, I joined a unit as soon as I could as an adult volunteer. For the past four years, I have been an Ember leader with the same unit where my Guiding journey began. I also serve as an Elected Member of my Provincial Council and as a Brand Ambassador, helping strengthen opportunities for youth and families to experience Guiding. This fall, I will help open a Guide unit alongside new volunteers, because I believe every girl deserves the opportunity to experience Girl Guides. I am grateful to have grown up in a program that shaped who I am today, and even more grateful to give back to the next generation beginning their Guiding journey.

Open the Door to Sport, and You Open the Door to Belonging



Dustin Ehr & Amber Marra
KidSport Manitoba

Sport has a powerful way of bringing people together. Whether on the world stage or in local communities, it creates moments of connection, pride, and belonging. But for some families, the cost of participating in sport can make those opportunities feel out of reach.

For Stella, a Winnipeg parent of three, enrolling her children in organized sport once felt out of reach.

"When you're focused on keeping a roof over their heads, food on the table, and proper clothes for every season, it simply isn't possible."

With support from KidSport Manitoba, which helps cover registration costs so kids can play, Stella's children were able to join soccer and gymnastics. Since then, she has seen a remarkable change in them.

For her daughters, gymnastics opened the door to their first extracurricular activity.

"In gymnastics, they have made new friends and built their own little community. They get so excited to come home and show us the stretches they've learned, proudly teaching us like little coaches."

The benefits reached the whole family.

"The kids have gained confidence, made new friends, stayed active, and had a lot of fun doing something they love. Since starting in the developmental soccer program, my son has truly come out of his shell. The friendships he's

formed with his teammates have been incredible to watch. They've built a bond that feels unbreakable."

Soccer has become a passion for Stella's son, bringing energy into their home.

"Game days are a huge deal in our house. He gets ready so early and counts down the minutes until he can see his teammates, warm up, and play together. After the game, we always talk about how well the team played and how proud we are of the effort and teamwork everyone put into it."

For Stella, the experience has shown how sport offers far more than physical activity.

"Sport brings people together from all different backgrounds and gives them a shared purpose and sense of belonging. Through sport, kids and families connect, friendships are formed, and support systems naturally grow. For children especially, sport teaches teamwork, respect, discipline, and perseverance. Those lessons don't stay on the field. They carry into school, friendships, and adulthood."

For Stella's family, the chance to play has brought confidence, connection, and a community they are proud to be part of.

Soccer and gymnastics were among the sports that received the most KidSport support, with the program funding 407 kids in soccer and 220 in gymnastics. Across all sports, KidSport helped 1,868 Manitoban children take part. That's hundreds of kids just like Stella's little ones who may not have had the opportunity to experience the joy of sport without KidSport's help.

Carbon Monoxide: Safety is the answer

Manitoba Hydro

With the season for heating your home just around the corner, it's important to start thinking about how you can protect your family from the dangers of carbon monoxide.

Carbon monoxide (CO) is often called the silent killer. It's an invisible, odourless and toxic gas that is produced when wood or fuels burn without proper ventilation.

To protect your family, install CO alarms on every level of your home, especially near bedrooms. They can be purchased at most big box stores for around \$40 to \$50. Take notes of expiry dates and test them regularly.

Common symptoms of CO poisoning include headaches, dizziness, nausea and vomiting and shortage of breath during moderate physical activity. If you are experiencing health problems from suspected CO poisoning, seek medical attention and let the physician know you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning.

Other warning signs of CO include stuffy or stale air, water condensation on windows, the smell of exhaust fumes, a back draft from the fireplace, or a pilot light that keeps going out.

If your alarm sounds or you suspect CO poisoning, leave the area immediately and call 911.

To prevent CO from forming; never use a barbecue, camp stove, fuel burning heater, generator, or any gas-powered engine inside your home, garage, or enclosed space. If a wood stove, fireplace or natural gas appliance is not properly ventilated, the fuel cannot get enough oxygen and will release CO.

Keep CO out of your home by having your heating system annually inspected and maintained by a licensed heating contractor. Ensure external vents are secure and free of snow, leaves and other debris. If you have a fireplace, make sure it has a fresh air intake duct.

Keep your family safe from carbon monoxide this fall and winter.

Hear your CO alarm?

Evacuate. Call 911.

Safety is the answer.



Manitoba Hydro
energy for life

Back in School:
Have Homework Battles Started?

Dr. Matthew Anderson
Anderson Vision

While many families start the new school year filled with hope that this year will be better than last year, some are disappointed when struggles with schoolwork and homework battles begin.

Parents will often share that the conflict feels less about the assignment and more about fatigue, resistance, frustration, and procrastination. Sometimes it can even seem as though their child suddenly forgets how to read, write, or do math.

Before assuming the problem is motivation or attitude, it's worth asking a different question: could there be a hidden but real problem interfering with your child's ability to do homework?

Did you know that inconsistent academic performance can sometimes be related to underlying eye coordination and eye movement disorders? Typically, these children can see the letters on the eye chart just fine, so parents inadvertently assume that vision has been ruled out.

Reading, writing, and copying from the board all require more visual skills

than being able to see the letters on an eye chart clearly ("20/20"). They require their eyes to work together correctly as they move across a line of text and shift quickly from board to paper. When these visual skills haven't developed properly it can take extra work just to read and even more work to understand what is being read. The result can be frustration because children don't know that what they are experiencing is different and assume everyone sees the same way they do.

When a child suddenly appears to struggle with reading, when he or she was able to read just fine a moment ago, it may be worth finding out whether something has changed with how the print looks. You may be able to gain some insight into what is happening if you ask your child at that point, "What do the words look like?" or "Do the words look like they are moving?"

The good news is that that a child's behaviour can provide clues that they are struggling visually. Rubbing their eyes, losing their place, skipping lines, avoiding reading, or melting down over an assignment that "should" be easy may all be signs worth paying attention to. Other signs parents may notice include:

- Headaches or eye strain after schoolwork
- Losing their place while reading, or using a finger to track
- Complaints that words "jump" or blur
- Avoiding homework, especially reading-heavy subjects
- Poor handwriting or trouble copying from the board
- Shorter attention span for near work compared to screens or sports

These signs don't automatically mean a child has a vision problem — fatigue, learning differences, and attention issues can look similar. But a Developmental Vision Evaluation by a Developmental Optometrist includes specialized testing of functional vision skills and can help determine if vision is playing a role in your child's struggles.

If homework battles are becoming a daily struggle, it may be time to take a closer look at how your child is actually seeing the page. You can visit our website, grandvisioninstitute.com, for more information as well as an in-depth symptom checklist; just scroll down on the home page so you can click on the "Visions Symptoms Survey."

Dr. Matthew Anderson, Developmental Optometrist, provides vision care for the entire family and also provides specialized services in the diagnosis and treatment of vision problems that interfere with reading and learning. Dr. Anderson is a popular speaker with parents and professional groups and may be reached at (204) 633-5566. For more information visit his website: www.grandvisioninstitute.com

Fall Back into Your Fitness
Routine with a City of
Winnipeg Recreation Pass

City of Winnipeg

As the leaves begin to change colour and kids return to school, fall is the perfect time to focus on you.

Between school drop-offs, homework, activities, and busy family schedules, it can be easy to put your own well-being last. This fall, make time for yourself and get back to your fitness goals with a City of Winnipeg recreation pass. Whether you want to return to a regular workout routine, try a new fitness class, or stay active with others, there's a pass to suit your needs.

The Facility Pass gives you unlimited admission to all City pools and fitness and leisure centres. With the freedom to visit different facilities, you can choose activities that fit your routine. Work out at a fitness centre or swim a few laps in the pool. The Facility Pass gives you many ways to stay active.

If you enjoy group fitness, try out the Active Living Pass. It includes all the benefits of a Facility Pass, plus drop-in fitness classes. Look for the starred classes in Fall 2026/Winter 2027 Leisure Guide to explore your drop-in fitness options. From Zumba and Aquafitness to Yoga and more, try something new and find a class that's right for you.

Staying motivated can be easier when you have friends by your side. The Fit Together Pass gives workplaces, teams, and community groups a chance to get fit together with reduced rates on Facility and Active Living Passes. This pass is available to corporate, not-for-profit, and community-based organizations with 10 or more people. It's a great way to build healthy habits, stay accountable, and connect with others in your community.

Getting started is easier than you might think. Six-month and one-year Facility and Active Living Pass memberships are available online at winnipeg.ca/leisureonline. Monthly payment plans are also available to help make membership more affordable.

Fall can be a busy season, but staying active can be a simple way to make time for yourself. Set aside time each week to move, relax, and recharge. Finding movement you enjoy can help you feel good and stay on track with your goals. Discover how a City recreation pass can help you stay active and feeling your best all season long.

For more information, visit winnipeg.ca/memberships.

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WINNIPEG PARENT

Move, Create, Grow: The Joy of Rhythmic Gymnastics

Sapphires Rhythmic Gymnastics

More Than Just Movement

In a time when many children spend more time sitting, using screens and moving between school, homework and other activities, finding opportunities for active play is more important than ever. Regular movement is not just about physical fitness—it plays an important role in building children's confidence, coordination, social development and overall wellbeing. One activity that brings many of these benefits together is rhythmic gymnastics!

Building Strong Foundations

With programs for children as young as 3 years old, Sapphires Rhythmic Gymnastics Club runs a variety of classes for children of all ages and abilities. Through these structured programs, children learn to move their bodies in different ways, developing both gross and fine motor skills. They learn to balance, jump, roll, stretch and move through space while developing strength, flexibility, coordination and body awareness. These skills provide a strong foundation for many other sports and activities as children grow.

"The benefits of rhythmic gymnastics extend far beyond physical skills."

Where Movement Meets Creativity

Rhythmic gymnastics adds a special dimension to movement and activity by combining physical skills with music, body expression and handheld apparatus. Music and choreography provide children with opportunities for creativity and self-expression. Gymnasts learn to interpret music through movement while developing advanced hand-eye coordination using apparatus such as ribbons, hoops, ropes, balls, clubs and scarves. For some children, the artistic and expressive element of rhythmic gymnastics is what makes the sport particularly engaging!

Confidence, One Skill at a Time

The benefits of rhythmic gymnastics extend far beyond physical skills. Physical activity and sport involvement help build confidence, perseverance and problem-solving skills. Working through the process of learning new

skills teaches children that progress does not always happen immediately. Coaches help gymnasts break down challenging skills into smaller, achievable steps, building strength and confidence over time.

Finding Your People—and Your Confidence

Safe, inclusive sport and physical activity environments are key to ensuring that children stay involved and stay active. Physical activity and sport should be enjoyable! Rhythmic gymnastics provides a social environment where children can build friendships, encourage teammates and learn how to work towards both individual and group goals.

Whether a child participates recreationally, competes at the highest levels, or simply discovers a new activity they love, the skills they develop along the way will stay with them long after they leave the gym. Children do not need to become elite athletes to benefit from movement. The goal is to help them develop a positive relationship with being active and moving their bodies—one where movement is something they look forward to rather than something they feel they need to do.



Photo: Sapphires Rhythmic Gymnastics

A Place to Move, Explore and Grow

At Sapphires Rhythmic Gymnastics, we believe every child deserves the opportunity to experience the joy of movement in an environment where they feel welcome and supported. Our leadership team works to create programs that are accessible, exciting and fun while teaching the fundamentals of rhythmic gymnastics.

At its heart, rhythmic gymnastics is about giving children a space to move, explore and grow. It's the joy and confidence of finally mastering a new skill, building friendships and sharing memories, and developing a love for movement.

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Let Kids Be Kids: The Case for More Outdoor Play

Darci Karaibrahimović

In a world filled with screens, schedules, and structured activities, something simple is becoming surprisingly rare: kids playing outside just for the fun of it.

Remember spending entire afternoons riding bikes, building forts, climbing trees, or making up games with the neighbourhood kids? There was no agenda, no organized lesson, and no one keeping score. It was just play. And it turns out that kind of free-range outdoor play is exactly what many children need more of today.

When kids are outside, something different happens. They move their bodies naturally, explore their surroundings, and learn through trial and error. Whether they're balancing on a fallen log, digging in the dirt, or inventing an obstacle course, they're developing confidence, problem-solving skills, and resilience without even realizing it.

Outdoor play also encourages creativity in a way that screens simply can't. A stick becomes a magic wand, a sword, or a fishing rod. A patch of grass transforms into a pirate ship or a secret hideout. With fewer rules and endless possibilities, children are free to use their imagination and create their own adventures.

There are important benefits for mental health, too. Time spent outdoors has been linked to reduced stress, improved mood, and better focus. Fresh air, sunshine, and physical activity can help children reset after a busy day at school and provide a welcome break from the constant stimulation of technology.

Perhaps most importantly, outdoor play gives children the opportunity to learn independence. When kids are allowed to explore, make decisions, and navigate small challenges on their own, they build confidence in their abilities. They learn how to negotiate with friends, assess risks, and bounce back when things don't go as planned.

That doesn't mean children need complete freedom without supervision. It simply means creating opportunities for unstructured play where adults step back and let kids take the lead.

As parents, it can be tempting to fill every hour with activities and keep children constantly entertained. But sometimes the best thing we can do is open the door and send them outside.

The forts may be crooked, the games may not make sense, and they'll probably come home dirty. But they'll also come home happier, more confident, and full of stories. And that's the magic of letting kids be kids.

Sometimes, Kids (and Adults too) Just Need a Quiet Place

Dr. Gwen Donohoe
Sagehill Stables

The fall is full of new beginnings, but that doesn't mean it's easy for everyone.

For kids, going back to school can bring a whole mix of emotions. There are new teachers to get used to, new classmates to meet and new routines to figure out. Some kids jump right in, while others need a little more time to find their footing. And once the school year gets rolling, there's homework, busy schedules, tests and exams waiting around the corner.

Sometimes kids just need a break from all of it.

There's something about being around animals—especially horses—that can make you slow down. Horses aren't concerned about whether you had a great day at school or whether you're worried about making friends. They don't need you to explain yourself. They simply respond to you in the moment.

That's the thinking behind a program called Healing Beyond Words at Sagehill Stables. The idea is pretty

simple: give kids (and adults, too) some time to step away from everything else and just spend time with a horse.

There's no riding involved. You can groom a horse, talk to them, hang out beside them or simply be quiet for a while. It's that simple and so perfect. A coach is there to help with safety and answer questions, but there's no pressure to "do" anything.

For a child who is feeling anxious about school, having a hard time finding their place, feeling lonely or simply carrying a lot on their shoulders, 30 minutes in a barn might be a welcome change of scenery. There's no homework to finish, no test to study for and no expectation to perform.

"There's no homework to finish, no test to study for and no expectation to perform."

Just a horse, a quiet space and a little time to breathe.

And maybe that's something we could all use a little more of as the school year gets underway.

Kids can come on their own or with a parent, guardian or one guest. The sessions take place indoors, although barns and arenas aren't heated to room temperature, so dressing for the weather is important. Closed-toed footwear is required.

It's also worth remembering that sometimes the things that help us reset don't have to be complicated. A walk outside. Time with a pet. A favourite book. Or, perhaps, a quiet afternoon spent grooming a horse and having someone—or something—that's willing to listen.

Sometimes kids don't need to talk it all out. Sometimes they just need somewhere quiet to breathe, connect and reset. And a horse might be the perfect listener.

Sagehill Stables is located at Miracle Ranch, Springfield Manitoba. They provide a safe and enjoyable environment for all horse enthusiasts and believe passionately that horses are for life!

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Beyond the Ballot: How School Trustees Shape French-Second-Language Learning

Leia Patterson
Network Coordinator, Branch Advocacy
and Public Policy, CPF Manitoba

Fall brings a fresh start for many families as students return to school and communities settle into new routines. This year, Manitobans will head to the polls to elect new mayors, councillors, and school trustees on October 28. These local leaders play an important role in shaping educational opportunities, making municipal elections especially important for those who care about the future of French-second-language (FSL) education.

“...taking time to learn about the candidates in your community can help you make an informed decision on October 28.”

Municipal governments oversee important programs and services that impact our day-to-day lives.

Public transit, snow removal, emergency services, garbage and recycling, and libraries are all services provided by the city. Whether it's when our garbage is picked up, access to

firefighters and paramedics, or how long our libraries stay open, these everyday services help shape our communities and quality of life and are influenced by decisions made by city council.

In municipal elections, there are three positions to vote for: the head of council, councillors, and school trustees. The head of council leads council meetings, represents the municipality at events, and makes decisions that impact the community. Councillors represent their individual wards as well as influence city-wide decision-making. This includes participating in and voting at Council meetings, developing policies, and ensuring the city runs smoothly.

Although education is overseen by the provincial government, local elections have a big impact on FSL. Municipal governments help shape how communities grow and where public infrastructure, including schools, is located. They also support community programs and services, such as recreation, arts, and libraries.

School trustees have the most direct influence on French-second-language education.

Despite their important role, trustee elections often receive less attention than races for mayor or council. As members of the school board, trustees

make decisions about opening and closing schools, approving the school board's budget, and which programs to offer. They help decide whether a new school includes a French Immersion program, advocate for the recruitment of French-speaking teachers and educational assistants, and listen and respond to community feedback.

As election day approaches, taking time to learn about the candidates in your community can help you make an informed choice on October 28. Consider asking candidates about their positions on French-second-language education and attending local forums or debates to learn more about their priorities. **Strong support from elected officials and school trustees can help ensure that FSL programs continue to grow and thrive in communities across Manitoba.**

For more information on how municipal elections in your area impact French-second-language education, reach out to **Canadian Parents for French!** Visit our website and follow us on social media for updates, resources, and support for the FSL students in your life. By voting on October 28, Manitobans can help ensure strong support for FSL education in their communities for years to come.

Heat Your Home Safely this Winter

Olivier La Roche
Manitoba Hydro

With the colder months fast approaching, many of our natural gas appliances will be working harder to keep us warm. It also means we need to think of safety.

Natural gas is an invisible, odourless and highly flammable gas. We add a chemical compound called mercaptan to give it a strong rotten egg smell, so it can be easily detected.

“Be sure to stay on the lookout for signs that your furnace isn't working properly.”

Appliances like furnaces may use natural gas to heat your home. It's important to have your natural gas furnace inspected annually by a licensed heating contractor to ensure it is working safely and efficiently.

Be sure to stay on the lookout for signs that your furnace isn't working properly. These include:

- A loud bang when your furnace turns on. If this happens, turn down your thermostat and call Manitoba Hydro.
- A pilot light continually goes out (on older model furnaces).
- A yellow or wavering flame (it should be blue).
- Excessive soot or corrosion on the appliance or vent.
- Signs that the flame has extended out of the furnace, like scorch marks by an opening.
- Too much or too little heat.

If you smell a strong scent of sulphur or rotten eggs, evacuate the home immediately. Ensure the door remains open when exiting. **Call 9-1-1 or Manitoba Hydro for an emergency inspection at 1-888-624-9376.**

**If you smell natural gas, act fast!
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For Newcomers to Manitoba: Water Safety Should Be Part of Settlement

Omar Martin Tejada Perez
Lifesaving Society Manitoba

When I arrived in Winnipeg as a newcomer, I expected to learn how to live with Manitoba winters, navigate a new city and adapt to Canadian society. I did not immediately think that understanding water would also be part of learning how to live safely in my new home.

Today, through my experience as a lifeguard, National Lifeguard Instructor and First Aid Instructor, my work teaching water safety in more than 20 Indigenous communities through Lifesaving Society Manitoba's Northern Water Smart Program, and my role as Safety Management Officer with Lifesaving Society Manitoba, I see the issue differently.

Water safety should be considered an essential newcomer settlement skill.

Manitoba is a province of lakes, rivers and beaches. For many newcomers, enjoying these environments becomes part of discovering Canada. But the aquatic environment may be very different from the one we knew before arriving here. Cold water, strong currents, sudden weather changes,

unfamiliar beaches, rivers and winter ice create risks that newcomers may not recognize.

The statistics should concern us. Lifesaving Society research found that half of newcomers describe themselves as non-swimmers or weak swimmers. Among international students, the figure approaches three in five. Yet four in five recent immigrants expect to spend time in, on or around water during summer. Newcomers are consequently identified as a population at disproportionately high risk of drowning.

The problem is not theoretical but real.

In July 2026, Manitoba RCMP reported two suspected drowning incidents in a single weekend: two boys, aged 10 and 13, disappeared after entering fast-moving water at Nutimik Lake, while an 18-year-old disappeared while swimming in a gravel pit. Such tragedies remind us how quickly recreational activities can become emergencies.

Manitoba averages approximately 22 fatal drownings every year, while Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service responds to roughly 150 water-rescue calls annually.



Photo: Lifesaving Society Manitoba

But drowning is preventable.

That is why I believe water safety education should become a more deliberate component of newcomer orientation and settlement services in Manitoba. Settlement organizations, schools, universities and community associations can become partners in drowning prevention.

Every newcomer family should learn some fundamental principles: know your swimming ability; never swim alone; keep children within arm's reach; wear a properly fitted lifejacket when boating; understand currents, cold water and ice; learn CPR and first aid; and, whenever possible, swim where lifeguards are present. For instance, something as innocent as an inflatable boat or a seemingly shallow water zone might turn out to be highly potential risks of drowning if preventable measures are not

implemented and minimum swimming survival skills are not developed.

The good news is that training and educational programs already exist. Lifesaving Society Manitoba's Water Smart Program for Newcomers provides culturally and linguistically accessible education about summer and winter water hazards. The City of Winnipeg also provides multilingual water-safety resources.

As someone who came to Canada and subsequently became part of Manitoba's lifesaving community, I have learned something important: settlement is not only about finding a home, employment or education. It is also about learning how to live safely in a new environment. It is also about taking care of each other.

When we welcome newcomers to Manitoba, water safety should be part of that welcome.

Because one lesson learned before entering the water may prevent a rescue—and may save a life.

We are supposed to enjoy Manitoba and its waters, but enjoying always comes together with education and responsibility. We all came to this amazing country to have a better life; water safety awareness is part of making that dream come true.

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Sleepless in School

Jay M. Greenfeld
PhD, C. Psych.

Getting Back Into a Routine

Adjusting to the new school routine after a lengthy summer break is hard on everyone. The challenges impact the teachers and parents right to the children, their siblings, and their friends. However, one of the most important steps a parent can take during those opening weeks of school is establishing proper sleep hygiene. Lack of proper sleep hygiene can have an adverse effect on mood, attention, concentration, emotional regulation, level of patience, and irritability. The impact is not solely on your children, as the same negative impact of lack of sleep can impair adult functioning as well.

“...the night version of themselves is not friends with the morning version.”

Talk About Why Sleep Matters

Therefore, as summer mentality slowly fades away into the crisp fall weeks, get ahead of the curve. Explain to your children why routine sleep is so

important. Outline all of the benefits of proper sleep and the consequences of lacking the necessary amount of sleep. Be very specific with your children and involve them in the process. Explore with them what the advantages and disadvantages are of going to bed at certain times, having a certain bedtime routine, and what role they can play in helping to make that happen.

Make Sleep a Team Effort

Your children need to know that the night version of themselves is not friends with the morning version. At night, they believe they can stay awake for hours or they may be fearful of going to sleep at times. Then when they wake up in the morning lacking sleep, they will be distracted, less motivated, more irritable, more anxious, more frustrated, and listening less.

Ensure your children are part of the process of establishing a specific bedtime and specific wake time. Make a scorecard with them so they can see how much better their days are when they get the right number of hours for them, as each child’s needs are different.

Set Some Tech Boundaries

As parents, it is your role to tell your children they cannot have their phones in their rooms. It is your role to set firm

boundaries when it comes to tech use after 9 p.m. It is not just the phone, but any screen that will stimulate their brain, needs to be removed from their room or turned off.

Reward your children for following through each day, but remember, you are the parent. Set the boundary for your children—and equally as important—for YOURSELVES. When it is time for bed, go to sleep. You are better off catching up on your sleep instead of your shows!

Recharge for the Day Ahead

Finally, by making these adjustments and establishing firm sleeping patterns from the beginning of the year, your children will have a greater opportunity to stay focused for longer periods of time and experience less worry and stress because they are refreshed, recharged, and ready.

If you are charging your phones at night to optimize the battery power the next day, do the same with your mind and body with good, consistent, habitual rest.



Support Services for Families

Health Links-Info Santé
204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257

Vaccine Information
www.manitobavaccine.ca

Klinic: clinic.mb.ca

Kids Help Phone
(national line available to Manitoba Youth) kidshelpphone.ca
1-800-668-6868

Crisis Lines

Winnipeg Police Service
(Child Exploitation Unit)
legacy.winnipeg.ca/police/protection/ice.stm | 204-986-6222

988: Suicide Crisis Helpline (24/7)
Call or text 988

Manitoba Suicide Prevention & Support Line (24/7)
Toll free: 1-877-435-7170
reasontolive.ca

Klinic Crisis Line (24/7)
Phone: (204) 786-8686
Toll free: 1-888-322-3019

The Link -Youth Mobile Crisis Team
204-949-4777 | thelinkmb.ca

Child and Family Services
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(204) 944-4200 | 1 (866) 345-9241

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Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline
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Manitoba Farm, Rural & Northern Support Services (24/7)
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Uyiosa Chukwuka
Health Educator, CancerCare Manitoba

As parents, we want our kids to stay healthy, now and in the future. One simple step in Grade 6 can help protect them from several types of cancer later in life.

In Manitoba, vaccines for HPV (Human Papillomavirus) and Hep B (Hepatitis B) are offered free by the Grade 6 school immunization program. The HPV vaccine can prevent cancer of the mouth, throat, cervix, vulva, vagina, penis, and anus. The Hep B vaccine can prevent liver cancer.

Vaccines are offered at school by trained public health professionals.

School clinics make it easy. No appointment to book, no extra trip for your busy family. This fall, watch for the Grade 6 vaccine

information package and consent form from the school. Taking a few minutes to review and return the signed form helps make sure your child gets these vaccines at school. It's a simple, convenient way to protect their health for years to come.

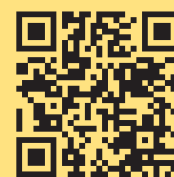
HPV and Hep B vaccines are an important part of long-lasting cancer protection.

Getting the vaccines in grade 6 helps your child build the best immune response and protects them before they are exposed to these viruses.

These vaccines have been safely used for many years. Like any vaccine, there can be mild side effects, such as a sore arm or feeling a little tired. These side effects usually go away quickly.

If your kid missed their vaccines in Grade 6, it's not too late. They can still receive the HPV and Hep B vaccines for free through a doctor or nurse.

Give your kids their best shot at a healthy future. Check 'YES' to the HPV and Hep B vaccines on the Grade 6 consent form to prevent cancer later in life.



To learn more, visit cancercare.mb.ca/vaccines or talk to a doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

Give your kids the best shot at a healthy future.

Grade 6 vaccines prevent cancer.



The Birthday Party Takeover

Because You Really Don't Need Another Thing to Plan

Lucy Reveco
L.A. Dance Academy

The new school year brings new calendars, new activities, new routines—and, inevitably, a whole new round of birthday parties.

Birthday parties are fun. Planning birthday parties? That's another story.

There's the guest list, invitations, food, decorations, activities, games, goodie bags and the inevitable question: What are we actually going to do with all these kids for two hours? Suddenly, a simple birthday celebration has turned into a full-blown event.

And while there's nothing wrong with hosting at home, sometimes the best birthday gift you can give yourself is not hosting at home.

Let Someone Else Do the Entertaining

One of the biggest perks of having a birthday party somewhere else is that you don't have to be the cruise director. You don't have to spend weeks coming up with activities or spend the party trying to keep everyone busy.

A good party venue comes with something kids actually want to do. They can dance, run, play, create, jump, or try something new—and you can step back and enjoy watching your child have fun with their friends.

It also takes away the clean-up. Which, let's be honest, deserves its own birthday cake.

Get Them Moving!

For younger kids especially, an active party can be a great way to celebrate. An hour of movement can go a long way when you have a room full of excited kids who have been waiting all week for cake and presents.

Dance parties, gymnastics, sports, skating and other activity-based parties give kids something to focus on while letting them burn off some of that birthday energy. And there's no expectation that everyone has to be amazing at it. Sometimes the funniest part is watching everyone try!

Make It Fun for You, Too

The best birthday parties are the ones where the birthday child feels special and everyone has a good time—including the adults.

"...sometimes the best birthday gift you can give to yourself is not hosting at home."

So as those birthday dates start filling up the calendar this year, consider handing over the planning, entertaining and cleaning to someone else. Places like L.A. Dance Academy, which offer birthday parties built around an hour of dance instruction and movement, are a fun option for kids who want to get up, get moving and work out the jellies with their friends.

Because sometimes the smartest party plan is simply: **show up, celebrate, and let someone else do the work.**

L.A. Dance Academy is where creativity, individuality and self-expression is encouraged and has a community of teachers, students and families who are passionate about performing arts. Their goal is to create a positive and happy experience for all and are passionate about teaching children not only about dance but also about life. Visit ladanceacademy.com for more information on fall and winter schedule and birthday parties!

We Double-Dog-Dare You!

5

Fun Challenges You Can Do with Your Friends!

Winnipeg Parent

1. Foodie Challenge!

Guess the pizza: You're all blindfolded, and all of you then take a bite of a slice of pizza and guess the pizza topping.

2. Silly Challenge!

Static Balloon: Blow up a balloon and then rub it on your head for at least 10 seconds. Now, see if you can stick the balloon on a wall. Your hair might get pretty wild as well!

3. Timed Challenge!

Alphabet Challenge: Sing the alphabet backwards within a minute.

4. Rainy Day Challenge!

Secret Code: Create a secret code by matching a number or symbol to each letter of the alphabet. Write out secret messages and see if your friends can crack the code!

5. Sporty Challenge!

Hop to it: Have a hopping race where you can only hop on one leg, and see who wins.

Credit: "Mindgames, Challenges: Over 100 Challenges to do with friends" by Lake Press



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DisneyOnIce.com

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To learn more, scan the QR code or visit winnipeg.ca/library.

Staff Picks for Young Readers

The weather is perfect for being outside and with back-to-school here, why not combine both the desire to be outdoors and the need to start learning again with *It's a Mitig!* by Bridget George. This charming rhyming board book has words in both English and Ojibwe,

introducing little ones to new words. The book takes you through an entire day, introducing you to all the animals around.

Slightly older kids will enjoy the picture book *Miss Leoparda* by Natalia Shaloshvili and illustrated by Lena Traer. This entertaining story tells the story of Miss Leoparda, a leopard bus driver. When bus riders move on to other ways of travel, Miss Leoparda reminds them that it's about more than getting from point A to point B, it's about being together and protecting nature.

Finally, by Canadian author Sarah Mensinga, *Kindred Dragons*, tells the story of an enthusiastic young girl obsessed with dragons. This juvenile graphic novel follows our protagonist as she learns more about dragons, her world, and herself while on a quest to save a reclusive dragon.

Find these books and other great titles at winnipeg.ca/library.

FALL FINDERS!

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Join other families for stories, songs, and rhymes for children 0-5 and their caregivers. Discover simple practices to nurture prereading skills at home.




For more information or to register for a program, scan the QR code or visit winnipeg.ca/library



ACCEPTING NEW CLIENTS for Assessments.

Assessing academics, ADHD, Neurodivergent children & adults.

**NEW: Onsite specialized tutoring
for Reading, Math, & Writing**

NEW GROUP Accelerate – Sport Performance Group

A group for athletes, parents, and coaches to help optimize peak performance through the integration of mental health building skills, stress management techniques to succeed in your sport and in life. **Starts Tuesday evenings in October (Ages 10-18)**



NEW GROUP Tweens, Teens, and Screens

A new group for parents, teens and, tweens to better understand healthy boundaries and limits with screen time use, internet safety, socializing online, and navigating healthy relationships with technology. **Starts Tuesdays in October (Ages 10-18)**



Reading Boot Camp

Starts Saturdays in October (Ages 7-14)

Anger Management

Starts Sundays in November (Ages 9-14)

Overcoming Anxiety

Starts Mondays in November (Ages 7-9)

Overcoming Negativity

Starts Thursdays in October (Ages 10-13)

Adapting to ADHD/Organizational Skills

Starts Wednesdays in November (Ages 8-12)

Friday Nights for Adults on the Spectrum

Starts Fridays in November (Ages 18-40)