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Rudy
Hiding?**

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**Merry
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Hannukah Latkes | Festive Fun Around Town | Parenting PSAs



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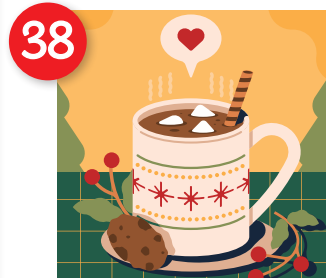


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HOLIDAY RECIPES



HUMOUR @ HOME



KCFM WINS!

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Vaun Thygerson
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

I love to sing along to anything and everything, especially Christmas Carols. Can I carry a tune? No. But what I lack in talent, I make up for in volume. My philosophy is that the louder I sing, the less likely people will notice if I'm completely off-key. Each year, KCFM publishes its own book of Christmas songs, which I use to my full advantage for neighborhood sing-alongs or caroling. Last year, a group of us went caroling around the halls of Kern Medical,

and it has to be one of my top five holiday memories. Not only did the hospital staff and patients feel the spirit of love, but we did as well. I plan on making this an annual tradition, complete with the KCFM songbook in hand.

If you ask me which holiday song is my favorite, I really don't have one that stands out, but if you ask me which singer I listen to the most during the holiday season, it will always be Elvis Presley. Once November hits, I keep my playlist on a tight rotation of Elvis' Christmas renditions in his rich, velvety tone.

Another one of my cold-weather favorites is a mug of hot chocolate topped with marshmallows. Julie Willis agrees, except hers is a vegan hot chocolate option that she orders through Amazon. In her Humor at Home article, **"Treats, Transitions & Total Guesswork,"** on page 38, she writes about how different types of splurges are suitable for various life stages – from coffees in college to ordering McDonald's fries from the drive-thru just for her.

Congratulations to the team here at KCFM for winning big at the national Parenting Media Association conference in Chicago. Our magazine took home five silver awards: two in design and three in editorial. Judged from submissions from parenting publications nationwide, these awards celebrate excellence, and we couldn't be prouder!

Special thanks to this year's Happy Mamas for supporting KCFM and making our community a better place. In the article, **"Parenting in a Nutshell: 2025 Parenting PSAs Roundup,"** Callie Collins reaches out to each of our moms featured monthly in her recurring column to provide a collective snapshot of parenting wisdom. To read all of their parenting nuggets, turn to page 30.

Among December's many celebrations, Pretend to Be a Time Traveler Day on the 8th stands out for sparking young readers' imagination. In Andrea Rose's article, **"Back to the Future... and Beyond!"** on page 29, she recommends fun, time-twisting stories like The Magic School Bus in the Time of Dinosaurs and The Timekeepers: First Flight.

This Holiday Season, as you're in the middle of all the hustle and bustle, don't forget to belt out, at the top of your lungs, any and all Christmas Carols. And remember my plan: the louder you sing, the less likely people will realize if you hit all of the wrong notes. As Buddy the Elf says, "The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear."

Happy Holidays!

Find **Rudy** Reindeer!



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East Side Aquatic Center PHOTO COURTESY KERN HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

Kern High School District's Grand Opening of East Side Aquatic Center

The Kern High School District recently announced the grand opening of its East Side Aquatic Center on the Highland High School campus. As the district's second aquatic center, this state-of-the-art facility includes a 50-meter pool designed to support local and regional competitive events for swimming, diving, and water polo programs.

In addition, the pool was designed to serve as an asset to the community by offering swim lessons and youth swimming through scheduled civic use, promoting a culture of community engagement, health, and fitness. This project has been made possible by the generosity of the 661 Foundation and Measure E, a general obligation bond approved by Kern County voters in 2022.

Kern Medical and WesternU Join Forces to Train More Local Doctors



PHOTO BY JEFF MALET, WESTERNU

Kern Medical has partnered with Western University of Health Sciences to expand physician training in Kern County. The collaboration creates a pathway for local students—from Bakersfield College and

CSU Bakersfield—to attend medical school at WesternU and complete clinical rotations at Kern Medical.

Plans are also underway for a new medical education and wellness center in Bakersfield, offering advanced training facilities and community health programs. This partnership supports Kern Medical's mission to grow a skilled, compassionate healthcare workforce for the region.

A vertical poster for the Winter Day Camp. The background is a light blue, icy texture with snowflakes and ice cubes. At the top is the Boys & Girls Clubs of Kern County logo, which consists of two interlocking red and white shapes. Below the logo, the text "BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS OF KERN COUNTY" is written in red. The main title "WINTER DAY CAMP" is in large, 3D, icy blue letters. To the right of the title is a small illustration of a snow-covered evergreen tree. Below the title, the dates "DECEMBER 22ND, 23RD, 26TH, 29TH, 30TH" and "AND JANUARY 2ND" are written in red. Below the dates, the text "OPEN 7AM TO 6PM" is written in red. Further down, the location "ARMSTRONG YOUTH CENTER 801 NILES STREET BAKERSFIELD, CA 93305 661-325-3730" is listed in blue. Below that, the location "STOCKDALE CLUB 5207 YOUNG STREET #200 BAKERSFIELD, CA 93311 661-663-8733" is listed in blue. At the bottom, the website "BGCKC.ORG/DAYCAMP" is written in red. There are several orange and yellow maple leaves scattered around the poster. A small illustration of a reindeer is in the bottom right corner.

Top Journalism School Mizzou says KCFM is Silver-Worthy — Five-X Over with Awards!

KERN COUNTY FAMILY RECEIVED FIVE SILVER AWARDS for editorial and design at the national Parenting Media Association conference and awards banquet in Chicago, which recognizes excellence among parenting publications from across the country. Submissions are judged by a panel from the University of Missouri School of Journalism, which looks for the best in local and regional parenting publications. KCFM editor and staff are honored to receive recognition in various categories.

Silver Awards



Design Category: Ancillary Cover: “2024 Holiday Fun & Games”; LJ Radon, Fran Sherman, James Jamot, and Roxanne Ricker

Judge’s Comments: “Cute and whimsical characters, including birds, a bear, a fox and even happy snow clouds sing a visual harmony that wonderfully complement the type and cover lines that are fearlessly creative and wildly appropriate. The style and quality of the wintery illustration is surreal, celebratory, exciting and fun. The cover is exciting, delightful and a noteworthy representation of holiday fun.”



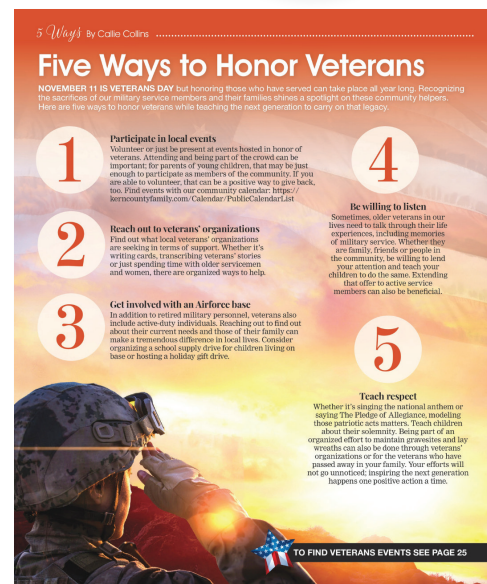
Design Category: Front Cover: Illustration: “December 2024 Holiday”; LJ Radon, Fran Sherman, James Jamot, and Roxanne Ricker

Judge’s Comments: “This cheerful cover takes readers on an illustrative journey through holiday themes. The hand-drawn style adds a whimsical, approachable charm that perfectly supports December’s content. Muted tones allow the masthead and teaser text to pop, with clean typography making it easy to navigate.”



Editorial Category: Recurring Column: “Hello, Happy Mama”; LJ Radon, Callie Collins, and Roxanne Ricker

Judge’s Comments: “This column smartly showcases mothers in the community who are making a difference. Their stories are touching and meaningful, and the content provides a window into their experiences with which readers can easily relate. The writing is clear and concise while still being conversational for the reader.”



Editorial Category: Non-Traditional Story Form: “Five Ways to Honor Veterans”; LJ Radon, Callie Collins, and Roxanne Ricker

Judge’s Comments: “This helpful article offers five nice ideas for teaching kids to honor veterans. The material is clearly organized and tightly written.”

Editorial Category: Briefs/Short Stuff: “Refrigerator Door”; LJ Radon, Roxanne Ricker, and Vaun Thygerson



Judge’s Comments: “This collection of short news items keeps parents up to date while also celebrating the successes of local organizations. Each mini-story contains lots of relevant details.”





Kern County Celebrates the Grand Opening of La Colonia Park



The County of Kern celebrates the grand opening of La Colonia Park, located at 30714 Martinez Street in Shafter, and its significant investment in neighborhood revitalization and community wellness. La Colonia is the County's second pocket park and was made possible with over \$1.1 million in funding from

the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).

What began as a vacant lot has been transformed into a welcoming gathering place for the entire community. Planning for the project began in 2020 and involved extensive community engagement, where residents helped shape the park's design and amenities based on what mattered most to local families.

Bakersfield Giving Machines



This Holiday Season, mark your calendars to visit the Bakersfield Giving Machines from December 13 through January 3 from 9 am to 9 pm in the Shops at Riverwalk. Sponsored by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you will spot these red vending machines near Crumble Cookie and DSW Shoes. Instead of offering candy or soda, these machines will provide opportunities to give to five local nonprofits and/

or two global charities. It's a creative way to give to those in need, making your own holiday even more meaningful.

CALM Zoo Lights Up the Holidays

HolidayLights at CALM Zoo, presented by Adventist Health, is back for its 23rd year, transforming the California Living Museum into a glowing winter wonderland. From November 29, 2025, to January 3, 2026, visitors can stroll through millions of lights, enjoy unlimited train rides, meet Santa, and get creative at The Pines Creation Station.



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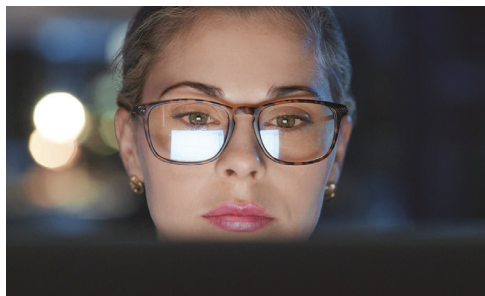
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John 14:6

[illegible]

Screen Time: Not Just a Kids' Issue



While screen time is often discussed in relation to children, adults are equally vulnerable to its negative effects. Many professionals spend long hours on computers, then unwind with streaming or social media—adding up to significant daily exposure. Yet, the threshold for harmful screen use in adults remains unclear. Some experts suggest limiting social media to 30 minutes a day can significantly boost well-being.

Depression: A 2017 Preventative Medicine Reports study linked TV and computer use to moderate or severe depression, with similar findings reported in adolescents.

Eye strain: Screen use can strain eyes. The American Academy of Ophthalmology

advises the 20-20-20 rule: every 20 minutes, look 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

Neck and back pain: Looking down at screens strains the neck, shoulders, and back—a condition known as “tech neck.” Reid Health warns prolonged posture can lead to serious musculoskeletal issues.

Cognitive changes: A 2020 Science Direct study linked smartphone addiction to impaired brain signaling and reduced cognition. Stanford Lifestyle Medicine adds that 5+ hours of daily TV raises risks for dementia, stroke, and Parkinson’s.

Reduced physical activity: Excessive screen time often reduces physical activity, contributing to obesity and related health risks.

Impact sleep: The JAMA Network reports that among 122,058 participants in the American Cancer Society Cancer Prevention Study-3, screen use was linked to shorter sleep and poorer sleep quality. Using screens before bed can disrupt circadian rhythms.

Eat Bright, Sleep Tight

A new study from Columbia University and the University of Chicago reveals that eating 5 cups of fruits and vegetables daily can improve sleep quality—starting the same night. Participants who hit the 5-cup mark experienced deeper sleep and fewer nighttime awakenings.

For families, this is a game-changer. Kids are especially sensitive to dietary shifts, and poor sleep can affect mood, learning, and behavior. Swapping processed snacks for produce—like berries at breakfast, carrots at lunch, and broccoli



at dinner—can help children fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer.

Why does it work? Fruits and veggies are packed with fiber, antioxidants, and complex carbs that stabilize blood sugar and support melatonin production, which regulates circadian rhythms.

The Cosmetic Tweak That Eases Dry Eye

Forgoing eyeliner could ease dry eye, Chinese findings suggest. In the study, women who used eyeliner at least three times per week over one year were less likely to suffer from dry eye (as measured by a scale called the Ocular Surface Disease Index) than women who went

without. And applying eyeliner to the inner rims of eyelids proved especially problematic. The researchers say eyeliner ingredients can worsen dry eye by irritating the meibomian glands, which produce an oily substance that keeps tears from evaporating too quickly.



Peel, Sniff, Smile

The scent of citrus—especially oranges—has been scientifically shown to reduce stress and boost mood. In fact, studies have found that just smelling orange essential oil can lower anxiety levels and promote calmness, making citrus not only good for your body but also your brain.

So, whether you’re peeling a mandarin or zesting a lemon, you’re giving your nervous system a little sunshine boost.

The Power of Hourly Movement

Experts recommend standing or moving for at least 5 minutes every hour. Here’s what that can do:

- **Boost circulation and prevent blood pooling in the legs**
- **Engage muscles in your legs, core, and back**
- **Improve posture and reduce spinal compression**
- **Enhance focus and energy, especially during long work sessions**

Even light activity—like stretching, walking to refill your water, or doing a few squats—can make a difference. A study published in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* and reviewed by Harvard Health Publishing found that short walking breaks every 30 minutes significantly lowered blood pressure and improved metabolic health. Dr. Howard LeWine of Harvard notes that “any movement is better than none”—especially when it comes to counteracting the effects of prolonged sitting.





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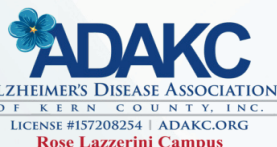
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Readers Respond | By Lisa Keosouphanh

Tune In to the Holidays: The Jingle That Says It's Time

NOTHING KICKS OFF the holiday spirit like the perfect song. We asked, **"What's the one Christmas or holiday tune that makes you think of the season?"** Here's what readers said—joyful, nostalgic, and full of festive cheer.



"All of them! For me it's Christmas Radio! When I hear our local 101.5 go to Christmas Songs, I know it's almost Christmas!"

Janet Maness

"It's Beginning to Look A Lot Like Christmas"

Bernice Garcia

"Feliz Navidad" by Jose Feliciano

Diana Montalvo

"Walking in a Winter Wonderland"

Anna Boss

"Away in a Manger"

Breanna Westenbroek

"Deck the Halls"

Dakota Plotner

"Jingle Bell Rock"

Jessica Payan-Medina

"All I Want for Christmas" by Mariah Carey

Rosa Gonzalez

"Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays" by NSYNC

Cari Cowling

"Little Drummer Boy"

Raquel Santiago

"Oh Holy Night"

Vicki Kramer

"Silent Night"

Andrea Sobrien

"Jingle Bells"

Emmanuel Mourtzanos

"Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer"

Corrine Gann

"Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree"

Karen Orellana

"Santa Claus is Coming to Town"

Lynda Flores

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Season's Greetings, Kern County!

By Andrea Rose



Ean you believe the holidays are here already?

It seems like just yesterday we were planning graduation parties for our kindergartners and seniors and now, here we are, making lists and checking them twice.

Oh, ho, ho, NO!

As you think about sending cards (or a simple e-mail or DM) and take inventory for what you might need to bake cookies or a holiday meal, we know how stressful the season can be.

In these times where costs are going up, we present FREE family fun with our annual holiday activity book.

You'll find puzzles and games—and even something to sing about!

Gather the kids and grandparents and take a moment to celebrate the season with simplicity.

We hope you find joy with family and friends, and we thank you for being loyal Kern County Family readers and advertisers.

Wishing you a very Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year from our Kern County family to yours!

kern county
Family
magazine

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Deck The Halls

It's hard to hear "Deck the Halls" and not immediately be overcome by the festive nature of the holiday season. The lyrics to "Deck the Halls" were written by the Scottish musician Thomas Oliphant in 1862. However, the Welsh melody that is part of the song can be traced to the 16th century and a song called "Nos Galan." That song is not about Christmas, but rather New Year's Eve.

Deck the halls with boughs of holly,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
'Tis the season to be jolly,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Fill the meadcup, drain the barrel,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Troul the ancient Christmas carol,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

See the flowing bowl before us,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Strike the harp and join the chorus,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Follow me in merry measure,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
While I sing of beauty's treasure,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

Fast away the old year passes,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Hail the new, ye lads and lasses!
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Laughing, quaffing all together,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.
Heedless of the wind and weather,
Fa la la la la, la la la la.



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Whimsical Trees for Santa's Biggest Fans

CHRISTMAS EVE feels extra magical when kids are buzzing with excitement over Santa's visit. Their joy brings the season to life—so why not make something just for them? These whimsical “Christmas Tree Cake Pops” are a sweet surprise for little ones (and maybe a few grown-up elves too).

Christmas Tree Cake Pops

Makes 24 cake pops

1 box of vanilla cake mix	1 teaspoon milk
¾ cup of canola oil	3 ½ cups of green candy melts
½ cup unsalted butter, softened	24 cake pop sticks
1 cup confectioner's sugar	Icing dots
1 teaspoon vanilla extract	Icing stars

Prepare cake according to package instructions, adding ¾ cup canola oil to the cake mix before baking.

Once cake is cool to the touch, transfer to a large mixing bowl and break up into crumbs. Allow to cool completely.

In a medium bowl, add the butter, sugar, vanilla, and milk. Use an electric mixer and beat on medium speed for about 4 minutes until light and fluffy.

Add ¾ of the frosting to the cake crumbs and mix until mixture can hold together well. Refrigerate for at least an hour.

Using your hands, shape the cake pop mixture into 24 conical shapes.

Melt the green candy melts. Dip one end of each of the cake pop sticks into the melted chocolate before inserting into the bottom of the cake pops. Dip each cake pop into the melted chocolate, making sure to cover completely, allowing excess to drip back into bowl.

Use a toothpick to create the textured look of the tree and decorate with the icing dots and stars before standing upright to dry completely.

Recipe courtesy Lines+Angles



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CHRISTMAS
and
HAPPY
NEW YEAR**



We're just peeking in to say,
Hope you have a great holiday.
May it be happy, healthy and bright,
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	4			7	8			
1				2	6		7	
			6	5				
8		5		4	2		3	
	6		8	9		2	1	
		3				6	4	8
	1	4	7				5	
	2	8						

Answers on next page

Crossword

1				2		3		4
5					6			
7				8				
9								

ACROSS

- Santa's helper
- Short for "dinosaur"
- Move through sky
- Passed down story
- Secret spot

DOWN

- Has a red nose
- Nobody
- Santa's other helper
- King or queen
- Tidy

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Joy To The World

Lyrics written in 1719 by Isaac Watts
Music "Antioch" by George Frideric Handel

Joy to the world, the Lord is come
Let Earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room

And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven and nature sing
And Heaven, and Heaven,
and nature sing

Joy to the Earth, the Savior reigns
Let all their songs employ
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and
plains

Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat the sounding joy
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy

He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness

And wonders of His love
And wonders of His love
And wonders, wonders, of His love
Joy to the world, the Lord is come
Let Earth receive her King
Let every heart prepare Him room

And Heaven and nature sing
(And Heaven and nature sing)
And Heaven and nature sing
(And Heaven and nature sing)
And Heaven, and Heaven, and
nature sing
And Heaven, and Heaven,
and nature sing

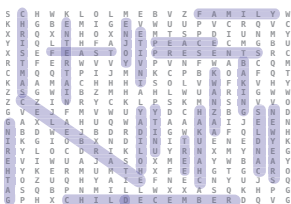
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Let Earth receive her King
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ACTIVITY ANSWERS

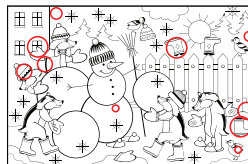
Word Search



Sudoku

7	6	1	4	9	8	3	2	5
2	5	3	6	7	8	4	1	9
8	4	9	1	5	2	7	6	3
5	1	2	8	3	6	7	9	4
9	3	7	2	4	1	5	6	8
6	8	5	7	4	2	3	1	9
3	4	6	2	9	7	8	5	1
1	5	9	3	1	4	6	8	7
4	7	8	2	9	3	1	5	6

10 Differences



Crossword

Across 1. Reindeer 3. Dino 6. Fly 7.
Legend 9. Hideaway Down 1. Rudolph
2. Noone 3. Elf 4. Royalty 8. Neat

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CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

\$120 New Patient

(Covers Exam, X-Rays, 1st adjustment, & ROF)
Must present coupon. Expires 1/15/2026



“Matthew 1:21 ; “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins.”



Bakersfield Swim Academy
www.bakersfieldswimacademy.com



Reindeer Treats: Tiny Antlers, Big Flavor

FOOD BRINGS people together and adorable cookies add to the festive feel, especially during the holiday season. These Peanut Butter Reindeer Cookies are both delicious and charming—perfect for adding warmth and whimsy to your celebrations.

Peanut Butter Reindeer Cookies

Makes 48 cookies

½ cup unsalted butter, softened	1½ cups of all-purpose flour
¾ cup peanut butter	1 teaspoon of baking soda
⅓ cup granulated sugar	½ teaspoon salt
⅓ cup (packed) light brown sugar	48 large red M&M candies
1 large egg	96 mini semisweet chocolate chips
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract	Pretzels, broken into 96 1-inch pieces

Preheat oven to 350 F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.

In a large bowl, beat together butter, peanut butter, sugar, and brown sugar on medium speed until light and fluffy, for about 2 minutes. Add egg and vanilla extract and mix until combined.

In a small bowl, whisk together flour, baking soda, and salt. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and stir until just combined. Roll the dough into 1-inch balls, and place at least 1 inch apart on cookie sheet. Bake only 10 to 12 cookies at a time. Refrigerate the bowl of dough in between batches. Bake for 7 to 9 minutes, until the cookies are just set.

Immediately place one M&M in the center of each cookie for a nose (press down a bit if your cookies aren't flat enough), 2 mini chocolate chips for the eyes, and 2 pretzel pieces at the top for antlers. Carefully transfer the cookies to a wire rack to cool completely.

Recipe courtesy Lines+Angles



Hanukkah's Golden Favorite: Potato Latkes

LATKES ARE A BELOVED staple of Hanukkah celebrations, with roots tracing back to Eastern European Jewish communities who adapted the humble potato into a festive favorite. This season, air frying offers a fresh twist.

Potato Latkes

Makes 4 servings

3 large russet potatoes, peeled	dusting
2 eggs	Cooking spray
1 teaspoon kosher salt	Sour cream, to serve
3 tablespoons matzo meal	1 tablespoon chives, snipped
1 tablespoon cornstarch or potato starch, plus extra for	Salt
	Freshly ground black pepper

Coarsely grate potatoes on a box grater; alternatively, use grater attachment on a food processor for uniform pieces.

Submerge potatoes in a bowl of cold water. Drain well and wring out in a clean dish towel to extract as much moisture as possible.

Beat eggs in a large mixing bowl with half the salt. Whisk in matzo meal and cornstarch or potato starch.

Add dried potato to egg mixture, stirring thoroughly to combine. Divide and shape into four large latkes, approximately 1/4-inch thick.

Dust with more cornstarch (or potato starch, whichever using), gently shaking or brushing off excess. Season with remaining salt.

Preheat air fryer to 380 F. Spritz basket with cooking spray before carefully arranging latkes in it.

Cook for 8 minutes. Turn and cook for a further 4 to 6 minutes until golden brown all over.

Remove from air fryer and cool briefly before serving with a garnish of sour cream and chives.

Recipe courtesy Lines+Angles

Badger Snow Fun: What's the Difference?

There are 10 differences in the pictures below.
Can you find them all?



Answers under Joy to the World Lyrics



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF KERN COUNTY

KERN COUNTY NEEDS CLUB KIDS.

KIDS NEED SAFE PLACES.

CLUB KIDS NEED YOU!

A gift to the Boys & Girls Clubs of Kern County this holiday season will help meet the real, everyday needs of kids in this community—so they can rise, lead and thrive.

Donate



bgckc.org/safeplaces



BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF KERN COUNTY

What colors do you see?

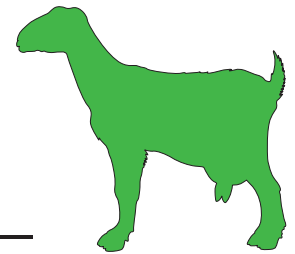


What color is the goat? _____

What color is the tortoise? _____



What color is the duck? _____



What color is the bobcat? _____

What color is the snake? _____

What color is the eagle? _____



Come visit your animal friends at
CALMZOO



PRESENTED BY AdventistHealth 

**HOLIDAY
LIGHTS**

Nov. 29, 2025–Jan. 3, 2026

5:30 to 9:00 pm

CLOSED CHRISTMAS.

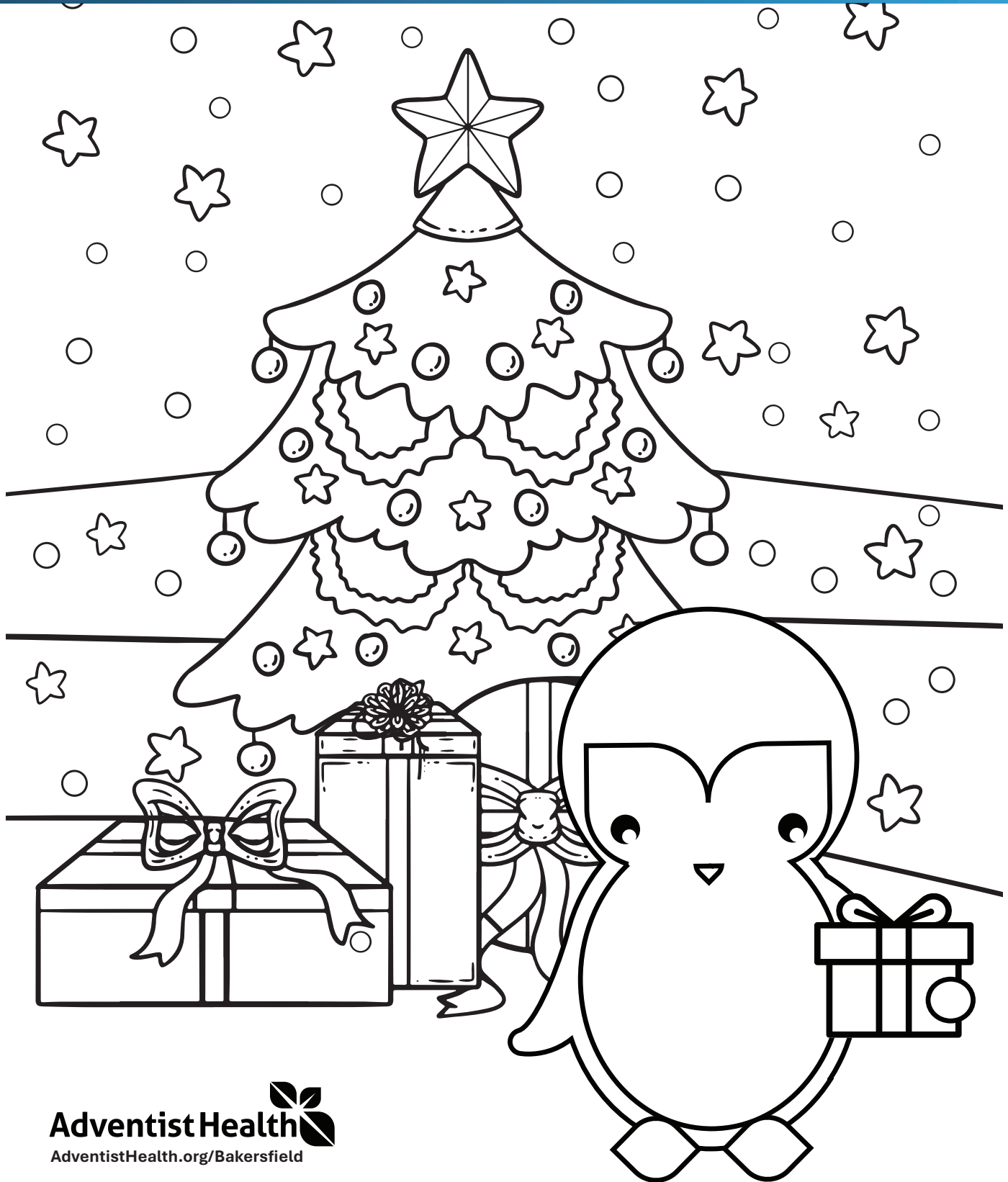
Tickets: calmholidaylights.org

CALMZOO

Happy Holidays from Adventist Health!

PIP and all our friends at Adventist Health wish you comfort, joy, and good health this holiday season!

Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!





Sensory-Friendly Holidays

A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

The holiday season brings joy, excitement—and for many children, a flood of sensory input that can quickly become overwhelming. From flashing lights and crowded rooms to unfamiliar foods and disrupted routines, the festive atmosphere can pose challenges for kids who thrive on predictability and calmness.

Experts in child development say that sensory overload isn't limited to children with diagnosed conditions. Any child can struggle with the intensity of holiday experiences, especially when routines shift and expectations rise.

To help kids feel more grounded during the holidays, specialists recommend a few simple strategies:

- **Maintain familiar routines.** Stick to regular meal times, bedtimes and daily rituals whenever possible.
 - **Prepare for new environments.** Talk through upcoming events, show photos of unfamiliar places, and explain who will be there and what to expect.
 - **Pack comfort items.** Bring along favorite snacks, foods, toys, blankets, headphones or sensory tools that help kids self-regulate.
 - **Plan for breaks.** Find a quiet space to regroup. A short walk or car break can reset the nervous system.
 - **Designate a quiet space.** Whether at home or visiting, create a calm area where children can retreat and recharge.
 - **Watch for sensory triggers.** Strong smells, loud music or scratchy fabrics can be distressing. Offer breaks and alternatives.
 - **Encourage hydration and rest.** Regular water and downtime can help balance stimulation.
 - **Dress for comfort.** Choose soft, breathable clothing and avoid tags or tight layers.
- While holiday traditions vary, the need for emotional and sensory safety is universal. With a little planning, families can create celebrations that feel joyful—not overwhelming—for everyone.



Holiday Time Word Search

S	C	H	W	K	L	O	L	M	E	B	V	Z	F	A	M	I	L	Y	W
K	H	G	B	E	M	I	G	E	V	W	U	U	P	V	C	R	Q	V	C
X	R	Q	X	N	H	O	X	N	E	M	T	S	P	D	I	U	N	M	Y
Y	I	Q	L	T	H	F	A	J	T	P	E	A	C	E	C	M	G	B	U
X	S	E	F	E	A	S	T	O	I	P	R	E	S	E	N	T	S	R	C
R	T	F	E	R	W	V	V	Y	V	P	V	N	F	W	A	B	C	Q	M
C	M	Q	Q	T	P	I	J	M	N	K	C	P	B	K	O	A	F	Q	T
K	A	A	M	A	C	H	H	H	I	S	O	L	V	W	F	K	V	H	Y
Z	S	G	W	I	B	Z	M	H	A	H	L	W	U	A	R	I	G	W	W
Z	C	Z	I	N	R	Y	C	K	L	P	S	K	M	N	S	N	V	V	O
G	V	E	J	F	M	V	W	U	Y	Y	D	C	H	Z	B	G	S	N	D
G	A	X	L	A	H	U	Q	W	A	T	A	A	A	A	I	J	E	E	N
N	B	D	W	E	J	B	D	R	D	I	G	W	K	A	F	Q	L	W	H
I	K	G	I	O	B	X	N	D	I	N	I	T	U	E	N	E	D	Y	K
R	Y	L	O	C	D	R	I	K	L	U	Y	R	N	X	M	Y	N	E	G
E	V	I	W	U	A	J	A	S	O	X	M	E	A	Y	W	B	A	A	Y
H	Y	K	E	R	M	U	M	T	H	X	F	E	H	G	T	G	C	R	O
T	O	Z	U	Q	H	Y	A	I	E	F	N	E	C	N	Y	U	J	S	Q
A	S	Q	B	P	N	M	I	L	L	W	X	X	A	S	Q	K	H	P	G
G	P	H	X	C	H	I	L	D	E	C	E	M	B	E	R	D	Q	V	G

Find the words hidden vertically, horizontally, diagonally, and backwards

BAKING
CANDLES
CELEBRATE
CHANUKAH

CHILD
CHRISTMAS
DECEMBER
ENJOY

ENTERTAIN
FAMILY
FEAST
GATHERING

HOLIDAY
INVITE
KWANZAA
NEW YEARS

PEACE
PRESENTS
TREE
UNITY



Merry

BYNUM INC

2025



Christmas

Back to the Future ... and Beyond!

DEC. 8 IS A DAY TO PONDER what it would be like to go back in time—or forward in time! Here are a few books that will take you on an adventure into a different time and place. Don't forget to come back!

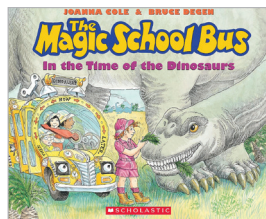


Back to the Future

By Arie Kaplan & Meg Dunn

\$5.57; Ages: 2-5
Publisher: Little Golden Books
Amazon.com
Who doesn't love the story of Marty

McFly and his journey back to 1955? This Little Golden Book uses Funko POP! Illustrations, which appeal to little ones and Funko POP! Collectors.



The Magic School Bus in the Time of Dinosaurs

By Joanna Cole & Bruce Degen
\$7.18; Ages: 3-7

Publisher: Scholastic Press
Amazon.com

Hop on the bus and let Ms. Frizzle take the kids to Dinosaur Land to learn all about the pre-historic beasts. It will be so much fun!



Ranger in Time: Rescue on the Oregon Trail

By Kate Messner and Kelley McMorris

\$5.99; Ages: 7-9
Publisher: Scholastic Press
Amazon.com

Ranger is a time-traveling golden retriever whose adventures help teach children history. In this first book of a 12-book series, Ranger visits the Oregon Trail in 1850. Kids who love adventure will love Ranger!



The Timekeepers: First Flight

By SJ King & Esther Hernando

\$6.50; Ages: 7-9
Publisher: DK flip
Amazon.com
This chapter book is one in a series that uses adventure and fun characters to

teach young readers about history. In this installment, the Timekeepers are visit 1903 Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, where Orville and Wilbur Wright are focused on being First in Flight.



The Secret Lake

By Karen Inglis

\$8.99; Ages: 8-12
Publisher: Well Said Press
Amazon.com

This adventure takes readers to London in the early 1900s where brother and sister travel back 100 years! The first of three

Secret Lake books.



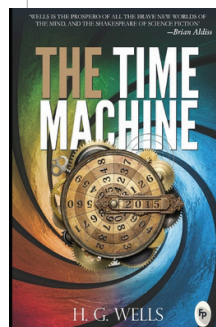
The Secret Library

By Kekla Magoon

\$8.19; Ages: 8-12
Publisher: Candlewick Press
Amazon.com

When a young girl searches for family secrets she discovers a library of secrets

where every book is a portal in time.

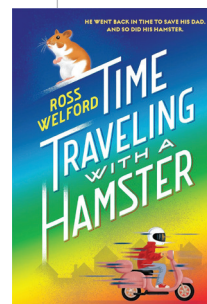


The Time Machine

By H.G. Wells

\$5.99; Ages: 10+
Publisher: Fingerprint! Publishing

This sci-fi classic speaks volumes when a time traveler discovers a future divided into two distinct societies and the threats that come with them.



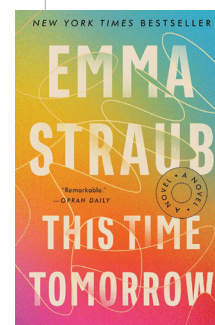
Time Traveling with a Hamster

By Ross Welford

\$9.99; Ages: 9-12
Publisher: Yearling
Amazon.com

A young boy discovers a letter from his deceased dad directing him to a time machine. He and his pet hamster

then travels to 1984 to prevent his father's go-kart crash.



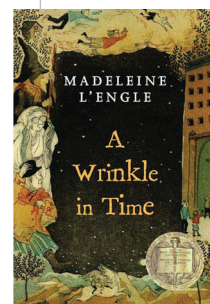
This Time Tomorrow

By Emma Straub

\$10.19; Ages: Adult
Publisher: Riverhead Books
Amazon.com

Alice is turning 40 and although she's comfortable in life, something's missing. One morning, she

wakes up to discover she is back in 1996 reliving her 16th birthday. and it feels to her as if something is missing. When she wakes up the next morning, she finds herself back in 1996, reliving her sixteenth birthday. What does it all mean?



A Wrinkle in Time

By Madeleine L'Engle

\$4.83; Ages: 9+
Publisher: Square Fish
Amazon.com

Book 1 in the Time Quintet Series tells the tale of Meg and Charles Murry who journey through space and time in an attempt

to rescue their father. First published in 1962, the book has sold more than 10 million copies, won a Newbury medal and inspired two films.



“Volunteer. If you can’t volunteer, sponsor. If you can’t sponsor, donate. If you can’t donate, educate.” **Timi Ann Mongold**



“You only have what you give away. Teach your children that everyone can help in some capacity.” **Callie Collins**

PARENTING IN A NUTSHELL

2025 PARENTING PSAS ROUNDUP

Each month in our Hello, Happy Mama column, Kern County Family features inspiring local parents—mostly moms, and occasionally dads for special observances. We always ask: “If you could share one message with Kern County parents, what would it be?” This year, our participants responded with heartfelt parenting PSAs—some short, some reflective, all meaningful. This month, we’re proud to showcase their best advice from 2025: a collective snapshot of parenting wisdom from our community.



“Be kind to yourself.” **Cherese Grell**



“Love your children unconditionally.” **Cindy Huge**



“A good night’s rest solves a lot of problems.” **Cory Corrales**



“It takes a village to raise a child.” **Doc Waller**



“Don’t ever assume you are above another parent. No one has it all figured out. Don’t say ‘My child would never.’ Instead, be present, be available and be a safe space when they fall because children are their own people. Never underestimate the power of a parent who keeps showing up.”

Nila Hogan



“When we, as parents, slow down and say ‘yes,’ we teach our children the world is full of possibility. If it is not dangerous or destructive, consider saying yes. More ‘yes’ to creativity, more ‘yes’ to curiosity, more ‘yes’ to connection. You will never regret the ‘yes’ that made them smile, but you might regret the ‘no’ that shut down their spark.”

Samantha Saldaña-Avedaño



“Just stop and have fun with your kids. They are only little once. I have never gone to bed and thought ‘We should have had so much fun today’ but I have gone to bed and thought ‘I shouldn’t have been so hard on them today; it wasn’t that big of a deal. Why couldn’t I just have fun with them?’ It’s better to enjoy the moment.”

Alex Lopez



“Be content but not complacent: Always strive for the best for you and your family but not at the expense of yourself and your family.”

Kim Price

Do you know a local parent who has a great story and parenting wisdom to share? Email lj@kerncountyfamily.com to nominate someone for a Hello, Happy Mama feature!

Find Rudy Reindeer!

CONTEST SPONSORED BY



Count the number of Rudy Reindeers you find in this issue, then submit your answer by midnight on

December 18th

For a chance to win a

Nespresso Vertuo Next Coffee & Espresso Maker!

Value: \$220

Scan Here to Enter!





CALM Holiday Lights. PHOTO Robert Meszaros KCSOS

DECEMBER 2

Giving Tuesday

Light Up A Life

Hoffmann Hospice marks the beginning of the holiday season with the annual Light Up A Life celebration. It is an opportunity to celebrate the memory of loved ones that have passed away and individuals that make life a little brighter. Get your loved one's name read by purchasing a light or an Ornament.

6:30 - 8:30 p.m.
hoffmannhospice.org

DECEMBER 4

WHF Christmas Cornhole Tournament

Cornhole tournament, ugly sweater contest, family games, cookie decorating, raffles, and more!

Time: TBA
<https://www.instagram.com/woundedheroesfund/>

DECEMBER 5 & 6

36th Annual Chez Noel Home Tour & Vendor Fair

Assistance League Bakerfield presents the Chez Noel Hol-

iday Home Tours, benefiting Operation School Bell. No children under 12. Get your tickets today!

10 a.m. - 3 p.m.
https://www.instagram.com/assistance_league_bakersfield/

DECEMBER 5 - 7

The Bakersfield Christmas Market

Celebrate the season with Christmas Story Bingo, tasty eats, local shopping, and festive fun for all ages. Snap a pic with the iconic FRA-GII-LEEE leg lamp, meet Santa and make merry memories with family and friends!

5:30 - 9 p.m.
<https://bakersfieldchristmasmarket.com/>

2025 HOT ROD Power Tour West

Thousands of cars and trucks of all years, makes, and models will be on display for tens of thousands of automotive enthusiasts. The tour will feature drag racing, autocross, and live entertainment.

11 a.m. - 5 p.m.
hotrodpowertourwest.us

DECEMBER 6

Santa Fly-In at Minter Air Field Museum

Santa Claus is flying in! Visit the museum for an open house and get some giveaway items provided by community partners, and of course, get your picture taken with Santa Claus!

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
<https://www.minterfieldairmuseum.com/event-details-registration/santa-fly-in>

Breakfast with Santa

Join the League of Dreams for a holly jolly morning at Breakfast with Santa! Enjoy a delicious pancake breakfast, and of course... a special visit with Santa himself! Tickets are limited, grab yours now!

8 - 10 a.m.
<https://ourleagueofdreams.com/>

Home Depot Kids Workshops: Holiday Cocoa Mug

FREE in-store kid workshop for kids. While Supplies Last. Register today!

9 a.m. - 12 p.m.
<https://www.homedepot.com/c/kids-workshop>

Little Bakersfield Flea Market

This event's theme is "A Very 50s Christmas (A Christmas Story)". Favorite outfits have a chance to earn a free blind box gifted to you at the market! Shop, celebrate, and enjoy

a community holiday event!

10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
<https://www.instagram.com/littlebakersfieldflea/>

Photos with Santa at Kid's Closet Bakersfield

Santa and Mrs. Claus will be visiting Kid's Closet! Bring your camera or phones to take a FREE picture!

10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
<https://www.instagram.com/kidsclosetbakersfield/>

Smiles with Santa

Bring your phone or camera and capture a festive photo with Santa!

1 - 3 p.m.
<https://tejonoutlets.com/events-promotions/>

Toys for Tots: Christmas on the Farm

A day of family fun, giving, and Christmas cheer. Bring unopened and unwrapped toys to give back and enjoy face painting, feed the animals, shop local vendors, food, drinks, reserve for a photo with Santa, and more!

10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
https://www.instagram.com/cherry_acres/

Holiday Lamp Light Tours

Enjoy hayrides, guided house tours, holiday music and carolers, sweet eats and treats for purchase, and photos with Santa.

5:30 - 9 p.m.
<https://kerncountymuseum.org/>

DECEMBER 7

5th Annual Jamison Children's Center "Wish List" Collection

Free community donation event helping support Kern's at-risk youth. Free tacos with a donation from the wish list, free Christmas trees while supplies last, free haircuts for kids, face painting, music, games, and so much more!

12 - 3 p.m.
https://www.instagram.com/ogz_carclub/

Christmas Book Market

To celebrate the Tehachapi Hometown Christmas, the Tehachapi Friends of the Library will be holding their Christmas Book Market and Craft Event. Peruse a wonderful selection of specialty gifts, books and other items saved especially for the season.

10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

<https://www.facebook.com/FOLTehachapi/>

CSUB's Holiday Concert

CSUB's Music Program presents their annual holiday performance. Holiday Concert features CSUB band and choral ensembles for a combined concert.

3 p.m.

<https://csub.edu/music/>

DECEMBER 11

Christmas with The Cranktones

An unforgettable night of music, community, and generosity benefiting the Kern County Cancer Foundation.

7 – 10 p.m.

<https://kerncountycancerfoundation.org/event/christmas-with-the-cranktones/>

DECEMBER 12-14

Civic Dance Center's "The Nutcracker"

Experience one of Bakersfield's favorite holiday traditions live on stage. Event features the enchanting Nutcracker Orchestra that brings this classic to life!

Friday: 7:30 p.m. Saturday: 1 & 7:30 p.m. Sunday: 1 p.m.

<https://www.civictancecenter.com/the-nutcracker/>

DECEMBER 12 & 13

Holiday Movie Magic

Two nights of festive fun this December! Grab some of our hot chocolate and popcorn and enjoy your favorite holi-



HOLIDAY PARADE HAPPENINGS

DECEMBER 4

Bakersfield's 43rd Annual Christmas Parade

This year's theme is "A Family Christmas." The beloved holiday tradition will light up the streets with festive floats, marching bands, classic cars, and cheerful performances from local youth groups.

6 – 8 p.m.

<https://www.bcp parade.com/>

Parade begins at 6:30 p.m. and pictures with Santa start at 7:30 p.m.

4:30 p.m.

<https://www.instagram.com/cityofshafter/>

DECEMBER 6

Mountain Communities Holiday Faire & Fantasy of Lights Parade

Visit with Santa, food & craft vendors, kid's workshops, raffles, Girl Scout tree lighting, parade at sundown!

12 – 6 p.m.

<https://www.mountainmemories.org/holiday-faire>

Tehachapi Hometown Christmas & Parade

Hometown Christmas returns, bringing festive fun with free kids' crafts, holiday vendors, and live entertainment. The family-friendly event wraps up in time for the Christmas Parade, followed by the tree lighting at the Tehachapi Depot Museum.

Hometown Christmas Begins: 11 a.m.

Parade Begins: 5:30 p.m.

<https://www.liveuptehachapi.com/563/Tehachapi-Hometown-Christmas>

Wasco's Christmas Festival & Parade

Wasco Rose Festival Foundation invites you to celebrate their Rustic Roots & Christmas Boots event at the Wasco Christmas Festival. Kid's corner, tree lighting after parade, vendors, and more!

Parade starts at 6 p.m. 3 – 9 p.m.

<https://www.wascorosefestival.com/>

DECEMBER 7

McFarland's Christmas Parade & Tree Lighting Ceremony

A magical holiday celebration for the whole family. Tree lighting will take place at City Hall. Parade route TBA.

5 p.m.

<https://www.instagram.com/cityofmcfarland/>

DECEMBER 8

Taft's 80th Annual Christmas Parade

This year's theme is Oil Town Christmas (Fueled by Holiday Cheer!) Experience the magic as Taft's streets come alive with dazzling floats, marching bands, cheerleaders, classic cars, festive animals, and more.

6 – 8 p.m.

<https://taftchamber.com/>

DECEMBER 13

NOR's 52nd Annual Christmas Parade

This year's theme is A Neighborhood Christmas! Join in the festive spirit with dazzling entries, music-filled streets, and a joyful atmosphere for the whole family.

10 a.m.

<https://www.norfun.org/christmas-parade>

day classics under the stars.
\$25 per car.

5 p.m.
Dec. 12: Home Alone at 6 p.m.
Dec. 13: National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation at 6 p.m.
https://www.instagram.com/cherry_acres/

DECEMBER 13

Golden Empire Gleaners Bi-Monthly Yard Sale

Great deals on NEW and slightly used items! New toys, mattresses, lawnmowers, pet food, cleaning supplies, and so much more.

6 – 8:30 a.m.
<https://www.goldenempiregleaners.com/programs>

Cinema with Santa & Friends

Enjoy a day filled with family fun, laughter, popcorn and snacks while watching Jim Carrey's The Grinch in a cozy themed tent! Movie begins at 11:30 AM.

10:30 a.m.
<https://tejonoutlets.com/events-promotions/>

DECEMBER 14 – 22



DECEMBER 14

Sensory Santa Visit

Kern Autism Network presents a sensory-friendly visit with Santa Claus and Rudolph with goodies, exclusively for children and young adults on the Autism Spectrum or with related disabilities. KAN will take photos and share them on social media for download. Closed to the public. Register today to secure your spot!

1:30 – 4 p.m.
<https://kernautism.org/>

ONGOING HAPPENINGS

THROUGH JANUARY 3

Holiday Lights at CALM

Step into a dazzling winter wonderland filled with unlimited train rides, photos with Santa, hands-on crafts at The Pines Creation Station, and festive fun for all ages. Closed on Christmas Day.

Sunday – Thursday: 5:30 – 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday: 5:30 – 10 p.m.
<https://calmholidaylights.org/>

THROUGH JANUARY 6

Bakersfield Christmas Town

The holiday traditions you love, all in one place. Enjoy lights, Santa, skating, sledding, photo ops, cocoa & more.

Sunday–Thursday: 5:30 – 9 p.m. Friday–Saturday: 5:30 – 10 p.m.
<https://christmastown.net/>

THROUGH JANUARY 11

Candy Cane Corner Ice Skating Rink

A winter wonderland of peppermint dreams at Candy Cane Corner! Closed on Christmas & New Years Day. Grab your tickets to-

day! Groups of 20+ require reservations.

Wednesday through Sunday: 2 – 8 p.m.
<https://www.instagram.com/delanopdhq/>

FIRST SATURDAYS

The Market at Tejon

A NEW, vibrant community gathering nestled in Tejon's scenic hills. The market invites families, friends, and food lovers to enjoy local flavor, fun, and connection.

4 – 8 p.m.
<https://tejonoutlets.com/events-promotions/>

SATURDAYS

F Street Farmers Market

Bakersfield's longest-running Farmers Market! Accepts cash, card & EBT Snap.

7:45a.m. – 12 p.m.
<https://fstfarmersmarket.com/>

RiverLakes Farmers Market

Farm to Table, fresh produce! Our certified farmers bring you the freshest fruits and vegetables.

9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
https://www.instagram.com/riverlakes_farmers_market/?hl=en

SUNDAYS

Haggin Oaks Farmers Market

Visit over 70 different vendors at the biggest Farmers Market in town.

9 a.m. – 2 p.m.
<https://www.instagram.com/hagginoaksfarmersmarket/?hl=en>

FIRST & THIRD SATURDAYS

Tractor Supply Farmers Market: Rosedale Artisan Fair

Explore seasonal produce, handmade goods, and family-friendly fun—all brought to you by neighbors and small businesses in your area.

9 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
<https://officialartisanfairs.com/>

SECOND & FOURTH SUNDAYS

Riverwalk Artisan Fair

Catch local vendors at this bi-weekly Sunday market. Discover unique goods, delicious snacks, and a bustling community. Each purchase supports a local business.

8 a.m. - 2 p.m.
<https://officialartisanfairs.com/>

DECEMBER 21

Delano Community Toy Drive & Giveaway 2025

Come donate unopened and unwrapped toys and be entered to win raffles and awards. Get pictures with Santa and give back this holiday season! Toy giveaway begins at 3:30 PM.

9 a.m.
<https://www.instagram.com/delanolife/>

DECEMBER 25

Merry Christmas

DECEMBER 26 – JANUARY 1

HAPPY KWANZAA

DECEMBER 31

Happy New Year

WORD SEARCH ANSWER

ACTIVITY CORNER: PAGE 39



WORD SEARCH SPONSORED BY:



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Worship Guide

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Emmanuel: God With Us – Still

“God with us”—Emmanuel—the heart of Christmas! It is the overwhelming truth that the Creator of the universe stepped into human history, and became one of us! In a humble manger, God revealed His love in the most personal way imaginable. Christmas reminds us that we are never alone; the God who once walked among shepherds and kings still walks with us today through His Spirit.

When we feel weary, uncertain, or broken, the message of Emmanuel brings comfort and hope. God did not remain distant or unreachable—He entered our world to share in our joys, our struggles, and our pain. The birth of Jesus bridges the gap between heaven and earth, proving that divine love is not abstract but deeply personal and present.

During the Christmas season, we celebrate more than a historical event; we celebrate a living promise. “God with us” means His presence is constant—in our homes, our hearts, and every moment of our lives. As we gather with loved ones and share in the joy of the season, remember that the greatest gift of Christmas is not found in what we receive, but in who came to be with us: Jesus Christ, Emmanuel.

— By Jon Engen



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To register, please contact our office for details.

Chess Club for Teens Sunday, December 7th from 11 am to noon.
To register visit our website www.kernautism.org

Parent Support Group Meeting: Wednesday, December 10th @ 6 pm.
To register, visit our website kernautism.org

Female Support Group Gathering Friday, December 12th @ 6 pm.
To register, please contact our office for details.

Sensory Santa Visit, Sunday, December 14th.
Register via Eventbrite at www.Kernautism.org

Father's Virtual Support Group Meeting: Cancelled for the holiday.

To read more about the organization, follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

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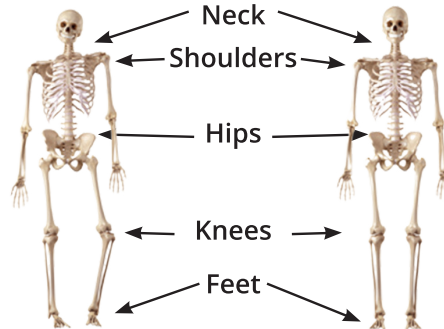
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This time of year, I have a second splurge. I love, love, love Castle Kitchen vegan hot chocolate, only available on amazon as far as I can tell. I drink a cup of that on the cold mornings (that aren't actually that cold if you think about it but which feel dreadfully dark and dreary compared to the majority of the year where the temps are in the 100s and you don't see a cloud for months on end).

So you can imagine my disappointment when I ordered a shipment of vegan hot chocolate, and right around the time I started wondering where it was (which is saying a lot because usually when the amazon boxes arrive, I'm like, "Huh, I wonder what I ordered." I'm not sure if I should be embarrassed by this first world problem or by the fact that my brain is so addled that I just don't know what I'm doing even when I'm spending money and waiting for fun things to arrive on my doorstep.) In any case, I was wondering where my vegan hot chocolate was, and I got a message from amazon saying it was "undeliverable," which I found (in a very first-world problem sort of way) rather disheartening. I was much more depressed by this unfortunate event than the event warranted.

I ordered again, this time from another seller (just in case—because, I mean, who wants to go through all THAT again?) The hot chocolate arrived in record time. It came so fast that I remembered what the package was when I found it on my mat. I told my family, "Oh, that's for me! That's my vegan hot chocolate." (And who even remembers how I even got started on vegan hot chocolate? Why vegan?) So I put the hot chocolate in the cabinet and promptly FORGOT it was there for three days. There was even a perfectly overcast day with low clouds and cool temps, and I was like, "Maybe I'll stop at Starbucks today" (I didn't), but not once did I say to myself, "Oh, I should make some vegan hot chocolate which I already have."

Which all goes to show that I really don't know what I am doing. I am just bumbling along and making everything up as I go.

I have arrived at that point in my life when a splurge looks like microwave lunches.

When I was in college, a splurge was a cup of coffee (nothing with espresso, just a \$1.06 drip coffee with some low fat milk, no sugar) and an apple scone from Slo Baked (which, sadly, is now out of business, but which got me through some Cal Poly moments).

When my kids were in the crying-in-the-rear-facing-car-seat stage, my splurge was to drive through McDonald's for fries, which I did not share.

When I was in the throes of homeschooling in those early elementary years, com-

plete with field trips and messy science experiments and All The Things, I loved to eat their leftover mac and for lunch.

And here we are. I'm now in the phase where I homeschool older kids who mainly teach themselves and don't come out of their rooms except to eat, which is always at an odd hour like 11pm. Or 10:32am. Or right after they didn't eat the lunch I made. Or the breakfast I made. Or the dinner my husband made. My biggest treat is to not have to make any food. Just open the freezer, take out some Amy's frozen enchiladas or cheesy mac and kale (which is actually called three cheese kale bake which sounds awful but isn't.)

DECEMBER ACTIVITY CORNER

PUZZLE
ANSWERS
PAGE 34

MERRY CHRISTMAS WORD SEARCH

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P	E	I	K	R	U	U	S	R	S	H	T	A	E	R	W	M	H	E	T
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By Lisa Keosouphanh

Sleigh-Worthy Surprises: Holiday Toy Picks That Wow

Looking for gifts that spark giggles, creativity, and nonstop play? This year's roundup features crowd-pleasers for every age.

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3. FurReal Maggie The Feed & Follow Cow \$45.99, www.amazon.com
4. CONNETIX Magnetic Tiles Light Star Pack \$59, www.target.com
5. woom GO 4 Bike + READY Helmet Bundle \$900, https://woom.com/en_US
6. Fisher-Price Laugh & Learn 4-In-1 Activity Table & Ease \$59.99, www.target.com
7. Imaginair Spidey Bumper Car with Inflatable Character \$128, www.walmart.com

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Celebrating Hanukkah

HANUKKAH (DECEMBER 14-22) is more than a festival of lights. It's a cherished Jewish tradition and celebration of resilience, joy, and togetherness. Whether you're honoring ancient miracles or creating new memories, these five traditions bring warmth and meaning to every night of Hanukkah.

Light the Menorah

Each evening, families gather to light the hanukkiah, adding one candle at a time to mark the eight nights of Hanukkah. The ninth candle, the shamash, helps light the others—symbolizing how one small flame can ignite hope. Try pairing your candle-lighting with a favorite song or a moment of gratitude.

1

Giving Gelt

Gelt—Yiddish for “money”—has evolved into shiny chocolate coins that delight kids and adults alike. Traditionally given to children or used in dreidel games, gelt also offers a chance to talk about generosity. Consider donating to a local cause or inviting kids to choose a charity to support.

4

Playing Dreidel

This four-sided top isn't just a game—it's a story in motion. The Hebrew letters Nun, Gimel, Hei, and Shin stand for “A great miracle happened there.” Grab some chocolate gelt or coins, gather the kids, and let the spinning begin. It's a playful way to connect with history and each other.

2

Gift with Heart

While Hanukkah isn't historically a gift-giving holiday, many families now exchange small presents to mark the nights. Think beyond the box: handmade crafts, shared experiences, or acts of kindness can be just as meaningful. One night could be “give a gift to someone else” night—spreading the light even further.

5

Feast on Fried Favorites

Hanukkah's culinary stars are golden and crispy—latkes (potato pancakes) and sufganiyot (jelly doughnuts) top the list. These fried treats honor the miracle of the oil and invite delicious experimentation. Try a latke bar with toppings from applesauce to smoked salmon or fill doughnuts with unexpected flavors like lemon curd or dulce de leche.

3

Bonus Spark: Create a “Hanukkah Memory Jar” where family members jot down favorite moments each night. By the eighth evening, you'll have a collection of joy to revisit year after year.



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