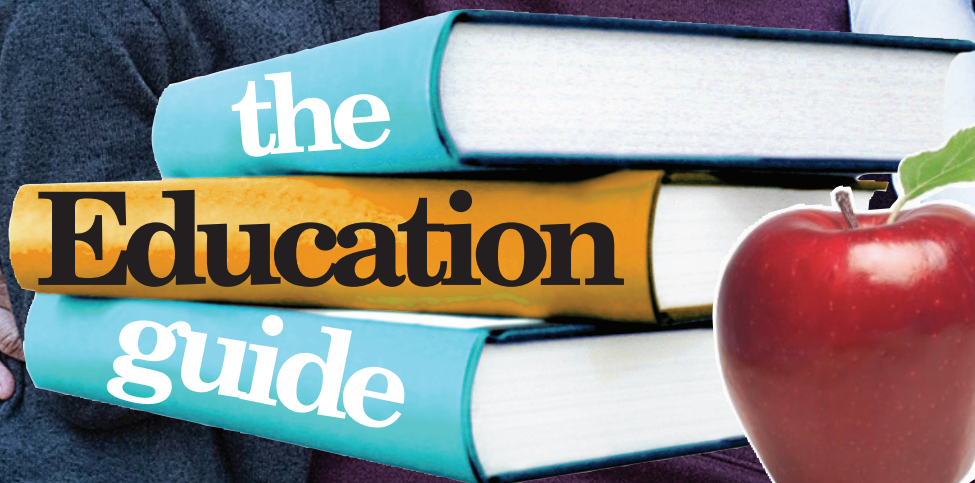


# Ann Arbor **FAMILY**

FREE  
FEBRUARY 2017

Press™

Learn the ABCs of  
these starter schools **p10**



100  
REASONS  
TO LOVE  
FEBRUARY  
INSIDE

**International Neighbors**

Welcoming women of  
all nations to Ann Arbor

**p14**

**Dip Into Romance**

How to host a fondue party

**p15**

# 'Tween Art and Heaven The Riverside Arts Center

By Louis Meldman

## Riverside Arts Center

Ann Arbor has nothing over scintillating Ypsilanti when it comes to art opportunities for tweens. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the Riverside Arts Center (RAC), an ongoing local labor of love, run entirely by volunteers until Director Will Hathaway assumed his post two years ago. Hathaway is something of a genius at maximizing the good of any organization. Before coming on board at RAC he served as director of human resource development at Eastern Michigan University, manager of the office of student conflict resolution at the University of Michigan, and executive director of the League of Women Voters of Michigan, where he obtained massive and well-deserved grants for that august institution.

## Nice neighborhood

The Riverside Arts Center stands on the edge of the amiable Huron River in a stately edifice erected in 1909 as the local Masonic Temple. Next door is the formidable former Detroit Edison Building, built in 1915, now the "Off Center"

RAC facility. Connecting the two is a sleek modern elevator column, connecting the magnificent, timeless architecture. But, it is what goes on inside that counts. Classes and exhibitions are for all ages, toddler to adult, so that tweens can find their level of comfort and ability and just jump in. There is every art imaginable, but my favorites are the fine arts, dance and theater programs.

The RAC is home to the Academy of Classical Russian Ballet, the only school in the greater Ann Arbor area with professional Russian ballet instructors. There is a one-time registration fee and an additional fee for semester or drop-in classes. Here's something cool: boys get a 50 percent discount. Will Hathaway said that's because for recitals there are never enough boys. Attention tween boys! Attention tween boys! Trust me, there's no better way to make friends and work on your strength, coordination and balance.

In addition to ballet, the RAC offers instruction in "Unveiled Dance," a.k.a. belly

PHOTO CREDIT: EMU BRIGHT FUTURES



Fun for All Ages at the RAC

dancing! Don't laugh. Classes are open to all ages with two levels of ability, and you can master the basics in just a few classes. This is fun and good exercise for tweens and at least as much fun for parents or the whole family. Parents, don't tell your tweens I said this, just get some friends together and go for a basic class! You won't be able to wipe the smiles off your faces for hours.

## Line!

Perhaps the most ambitious RAC program is the Ypsilanti Youth Theater, which takes all ages and makes sure that anyone who wants to perform will get on stage. Tweens are always needed. These are real plays with at least one Shakespeare production each year. Director Hathaway

pointed out to me that he salvaged the box office from the University of Michigan's Hill Auditorium, 115 seats and risers from the Trueblood Theatre in the old Frieze Building, and curtains from the Lydia Mendelssohn Theater.

"We are the repository of the best of the spirit of UM theatre," Hathaway noted. And well he might. That's part of his genius. And don't miss this month's fourth annual special exhibition of art by black artists in honor of Black History Month. See you there, and keep an eye on this space for more tween updates. Tween word of the day: Scintillating—meaning sparkling, shining and excitingly clever!

Riverside Arts Center, 76 N. Huron St., Ypsilanti.  
734-480-2787. [riversidearts.org](http://riversidearts.org)



## healthy kids

# Timely Parenting Research

The low-down on diet, toys, and stay-at-home parents

by Lisa A. Beach

What does the latest research say about the diet of U.S. children or the best toys for kids' development? And what do adults really think about working versus staying at home to raise a family? Take a look:

## Diet

In a study recently published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, researchers from Brown University found a marked improvement in the diet of U.S. children between 1999 and 2012. However, their overall diet still remains poor, the scientists noted.

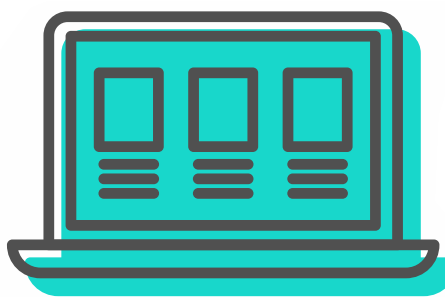
The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) examined the diet quality of more than 38,000 kids aged 2 to 18 and found that, in general, their nutrition is steadily improving. However, what they eat is still far from ideal, and disparities persist by income, race and receipt of government food assistance.

In fact, many of the components measured in the study's Healthy Eating Index improved significantly, such as children eating more healthy foods (like whole fruit) and decreasing their consumption of "empty calories" (like sugary drinks). Sodium consumption, however, worsened.

"I am encouraged by the gains," said study lead author Xiao Gu, a master's student in epidemiology in the Brown University School of Public Health. "Although we showed several components still need to be improved ... our paper provides evidence that we are on the correct track."

## Toys

Trendy electronic gadgets pull kids in and dazzle them like a magician, but according to the latest toy research, back-to-basics toys are better. In an online article recently published by The National Asso-



ciation for the Education of Young Children, researcher Jeffrey Trawick-Smith points out that simple, open-ended toys provide a variety of opportunities for flexible, imaginative play. Trawick-Smith, professor of early childhood education at the Center for Early Childhood Education at Eastern Connecticut State University in Willimantic, offers a few best-bets for kids: hardwood blocks, a set of wooden vehicles and road signs, and classic wooden construction toys.

"The most important finding emerging from our studies is that different toys impact children's behavior in different ways," says Trawick-Smith. "Some toys

have a powerful influence on children's thinking, interaction with peers, and creative expression. Other toys do not. Some of the toys that look most interesting to adults are not particularly effective in promoting development."

## Stay-at-home parents

Even though women have been flooding into the workforce for decades, a recent survey from the Pew Research Center notes that most Americans think children with two parents fare better when one of them (not necessarily mom) stays home to take care of the family. In 46 percent of two-parent households in the U.S. today, both parents work full-time, compared to just 31 percent employed full-time among two-parent households in 1970.

Among the 59 percent of U.S. adults who think children are better off with a stay-at-home parent, about half say it doesn't matter whether mom or dad forgoes a career to raise a family. Who is more likely to think one parent should stay at home? Men, older Americans, Hispanics, and adults with a high school education or less.