

# due west



## **WINTER FUN** with your kids

### **What's on:**

A winter calendar  
jam-packed with events

### **Taking care of business:**

Company success stories

**The west's best**  
rural driving tours

### **Where to eat**

Expanded restaurant listings



## Just because summer's over doesn't mean the fun has to come to an end

An activity planner to keep kids busy over those long winter months

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDREA TOMKINS ([www.quietfish.com/blink/index.html](http://www.quietfish.com/blink/index.html))

Taking care of the wee ones during the summer is easy. Slap on some sunscreen, a hat, and some sandals, and voila, you're ready for anything. The unfortunate reality is that summertime in Ottawa is pretty short. Comparatively speaking, parenting during the colder months can be a challenge. The absence of heat means kids require more layers—coat, hat, mitts, where's your scarf? Sometimes it's an effort just to get out the door. And what is there to do? The wading pool is closed, and the sandbox is buried under a tarp. If you need to get out of the house and can deal with the layers, here is a bunch of ideas for things to do now that the days are cooler. And who knows—you might establish some new family traditions too.

### Get wet

After hearing many positive reviews about the Kanata Leisure Centre & Wave Pool, I decided it was time to test the waters. But I was hesitant. My children (aged three and five) are not great swimmers. In fact, I would categorize them as non-swimmers, as they rely entirely on their parents or other flotation devices for support. I was worried the waves would crash over their heads and fill their little nostrils and that our adventure would end in tears—theirs, mine, possibly both.

The pool is large, and most of it is fairly shallow. A buzzer signals the start of the waves. No tsunami here. The waves are just big enough to make it fun. If your kids

aren't confident in the water, toss 'em on a raftlike mat and keep them at arm's length while you tread water. Fortunately, it's just when you think your legs are about to give out that the waves die down and it's back to regular wave-free swim time.

A twisty tube waterslide is popular for all ages. Oddly enough, they don't allow parents to go down with the children, even the little ones. My three-year-old had to go it alone. Later, while her big sister revisited the slide (for the third time), we hung out in the kiddie pool, where the water is a few degrees warmer than the big pool and there is a plentiful supply of watering cans and rubber ducks.



A FULL HOUSE AT A "FAMOUS BABIES" MATINEE MOVIE. SEE PAGE 14.

PHOTOGRAPH BY COLIN ROWE

Take a lock so that you can stash your stuff, and don't forget your flip-flops. Wave swims are daily. Adults \$6.70, seniors \$5.70, children aged three to seventeen \$4.65, children under three free.

#### **Kanata Leisure Centre & Wave Pool**

70 Aird Pl. 591-9283

[www.city.ottawa.on.ca/city\\_services/recreation/swimming/west/kanata\\_en.shtml](http://www.city.ottawa.on.ca/city_services/recreation/swimming/west/kanata_en.shtml)

## Pining for a tree

While Saunders Farm is most famous for its October haunting season, the fun doesn't stop just because Halloween is over. Christmas arrives at the farm on December 4, and until the nineteenth you can meet Santa, cut your own Christmas tree, and enjoy some hot chocolate in this pretty winter setting. Trees start at \$30 and there are over 2,000 pine and spruce to choose from. Kids will also love the hay-wagon ride and the fact that Saunders' massive Discovery Barn has been transformed into a winter fantasyland. If the weather's not too icy, there are outdoor tree forts, slides, and play structures to explore. Admission is \$5 per person.

### Saunders Farm

7893 Bleeks Rd., Munster 838-5440  
www.saundersfarm.com

## Don't stay home when the snow flies

I have a couple of theories about winter weather: 1) That which does not kill us makes us stronger; 2) Unless you get out of the house and participate in winter, you'll go crazy.

Ottawa's pride and joy is the Rideau Canal, but you can also try out one of many local outdoor rinks. The City of Ottawa maintains a list of rinks on its web site ([www.city.ottawa.on.ca/city\\_services/recreation/seasonal/outdoor\\_rinks/info\\_en.shtml](http://www.city.ottawa.on.ca/city_services/recreation/seasonal/outdoor_rinks/info_en.shtml)), which includes essential information about each location: Is there a washroom? Is it supervised? Is there a trailer? Is it an oval, a rink with a puddle, or a double surface?

## Become one with the snow

I still have the Krazy Karpet from my youth: an unadorned sheet of flexible plastic with two holes cut out at the top. No padding, no brakes, nada. Just the "driver," holding on for dear life. You, too, can relive your childhood and take your kids tobogganing. Nothing beats the feeling of the wind in your face as you rush down a hill, anticipating a big wipeout at the bottom. I have long since given up the Krazy Karpet, but we still love to hit the slopes—albeit a little more softly—on an inflatable sled.

Bruce Pit on Cedarview Road is a great place to get a faceful of snow, but make sure it's not yellow. The area is also a major dog-walking park, although, technically, dogs aren't allowed on the toboggan hill. The hill at Carlington Snowpark (941 Clyde Ave. near Woodward) it is a massive hill, and is lit at night. It's a long climb, but the descent is worth it. It is also popular with snowboarders.

## Develop the art of silence, patience, and fine-motor skills a.k.a birdwatching

Every fall and winter we make the pilgrimage to Stony Swamp in Bells



can't tell a black-capped chickadee from a white-breasted nuthatch, you may want to plan ahead and check out some books from the library as a point of reference. Check the Ottawa Public Library's on-line catalogue at [www.library-](http://www.library-ottawa.on.ca)

ottawa.on.ca for birdwatching guides that are specific to this region. Corners. Jack Pine Trail is our favourite. The scenery is tranquil, and the wildlife is of the small and harmless variety. We like everything about it, but it's the merry little chickadees that keep drawing us back.

Imagine a tiny bird landing on your hand, its body almost weightless yet warm, its tiny feet brushing your palm like the bristles of a hairbrush. It alights, collects its due, and disappears almost as quickly as it arrived. It's a magical experience for everyone.

You don't want to arrive empty-handed, so be sure to take some black sunflower seeds—their favourite snack. The chickadees will take seeds from your hand or even from the top of your hat if you're willing. It took our youngest daughter a couple of seasons before she was able to hold her hand steady enough for the birds to land. But the payoff is huge.

Binoculars are a bonus if you have them, but they aren't necessary. If you

ottawa.on.ca for birdwatching guides that are specific to this region.

While you're in the area, drop by the Wild Bird Care Centre (73 Majestic Dr.) right next to the Stony Swamp Conservation Trail parking lot. The good folks at the centre treat and rehabilitate sick, injured, and orphaned wild birds before releasing them back to the wild. Open to the public from noon to three p.m. For more information, check out their web site at [www.wildbirdcarecentre.org](http://www.wildbirdcarecentre.org) or call 828-2849.

## But if it gets really cold, you might want to stay indoors

Why not take in a movie? Ottawa Family Cinema is the greatest little cinematic secret in Ottawa. Finally, a place for exhausted parents to see a film with their excitable children! The theatre itself is



CHOOSE A TREE, THEN VISIT WITH SANTA AT SAUNDERS FARM

(710 Broadview Ave., just north of Carling Ave.). Movie selections are family-friendly. Family membership is \$25 a year. If you buy tickets in advance, member rates are only \$4 for adults, \$3 for children age twelve and under. (Prices rise by \$1 the day of the show.) Check the web site for show times: [www.familycinema.org](http://www.familycinema.org).

Two Famous Players locations offer afternoon Famous Babies screenings, ideal for parents who are keen to see a new release on the big screen but are leery of irritating others with their gurgling/burping/temperamental infants. The cinemas offer a new film every week and sweeten the pot by lowering the movie volume (in the hope that babies will sleep through the show) and providing valet stroller parking and diaper change facilities. Famous Babies shows are offered at the Coliseum (3090 Carling Ave., 596-1812) on Thursdays at one p.m. Check out the Famous Players web site ([www.famousplayers.com](http://www.famousplayers.com)) to see what's playing or to buy your tickets on-line.

## Visit your local library

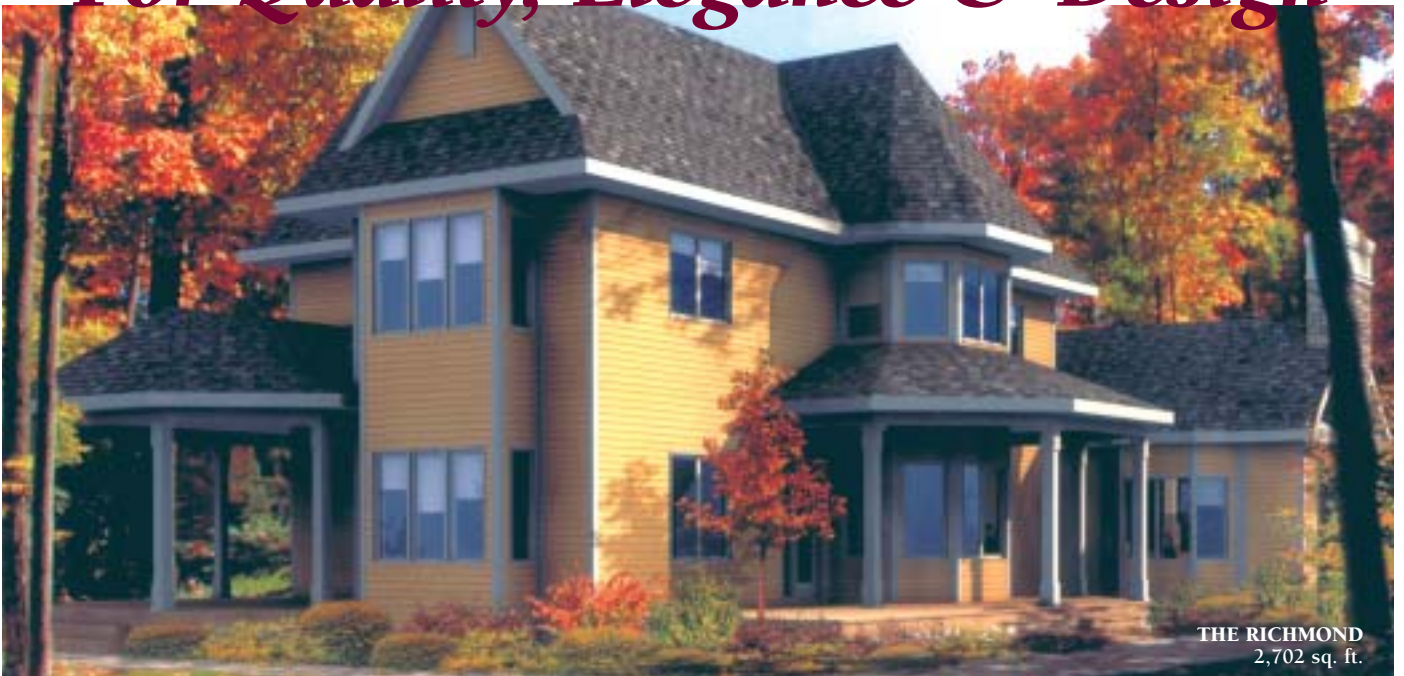
Ottawa-area libraries offer a wonderful environment for children of all ages—newborns and up! Nestle in with some new books or sign up for storytelling, games, and even crafts. Some events require advance registration but are almost always free of charge. Check out the web site for more information on what's going on at your local branch: [www.library.ottawa.on.ca/english/library/kids/programs/index.htm](http://www.library.ottawa.on.ca/english/library/kids/programs/index.htm).

## Check out your local Ontario Early Years Centre

The Ontario Early Years Centres are an oasis for parents and caregivers of children up to six years. A tremendous number of free services are offered at different locations around the city: drop-in playgroups, toy and book lending, and workshops for parents on topics that include parenting support and a range of health and social issues. The Early Years website at [www.ontarioearlyyears.ca](http://www.ontarioearlyyears.ca) offers up-to-date calendars for each location.

large, with a real movie-sized screen, digital theatre sound, and comfortable seating. But don't expect a traditional movie-going experience. The hosts go onstage before the show, shout out birthday greetings, tell jokes, and give away door prizes. Ottawa Family Cinema is in the auditorium of Notre Dame Secondary School

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**CARLETON:** 2 MacNeil Ct.  
591-3686 oeyccarleton@communityresourcecentre.ca

**NEPEAN-CARLETON:** 810 Greenbank Rd.  
825-5990 nepeancarletonc@bellnet.ca

**OTTAWA WEST-NEPEAN:** 1365 Richmond Rd.  
820-4922 oeycottawawestnepean@pinecrest-queensway.com

## Invite the kids into the kitchen

In my kitchen, there isn't enough counter space for little hands and multiple mixing bowls. In fact, most days I'm shooing the kids out of the kitchen. Time for special kid-friendly projects requires serious planning, stamina, and a good night's sleep (for me). Seldom do all three elements come together at once.

At Barrhaven, College Square, and Merivale Loblaws, your kids can play with their food under the supervision of a professional handler. Weekly workshops, professionally planned for their educational, nutritional, and entertainment value, will inspire and delight. Little Hands costs \$7 per child and is free for the parent/care-



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giver. Intended for children three-to-five years of age, the class is an hour long and includes cooking-related activities and a craft. Kitchen Kids is a two-hour kids-only class for children six to twelve. The cost is \$12 and emphasizes how-to, nutrition, safety, and kitchen etiquette.

Workshop days, times, and topics vary at each location. Registration is required.

For more information, call your local store or go to the Loblaws web site at [www.loblaws.ca](http://www.loblaws.ca).

**BARRHAVEN MARKET:**

3201 Greenbank Rd. 823-8302

**COLLEGE SQUARE MARKET:**

1980 Baseline Rd. 723-3204

**MERIVALE MARKET:**

1460 Merivale Rd. 226-2946

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