

Chicago Free Family Fun



**A handy guide filled with ideas for
FREE family fun around the Chicagoland area**

Summer 2011

**Visit ChicagoKids.com to find
more fun activities for your family!**



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About ChicagoKids.com

ChicagoKids.com launched in October 2001, and is the leading online source of information for Chicago area parents looking for fun, kid-friendly activities, events and resources. Our mission is to promote family time, providing parents with a comprehensive, user-friendly resource of places to go and things to do.

The ChicagoKids.com web site provides a searchable Calendar of Events, a database of “Places to Go,” Children’s Theater listings, coupons and special deals, a local Party Guide, Camp Guide, and a Resource Guide with information on kids classes, activities and other family resources.

This guide is just a small sampling of the activities available for your family this summer. Visit all of our resources to make sure you’re getting the most for your family:

Web Site: <http://www.chicagokids.com>

Chicago Family Finds Blog: <http://suezeiler.blogspot.com>

Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/chicagokids>

We welcome your feedback: feedback@chicagokids.com

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MUSEUMS/CULTURAL

Chicago History Museum Free Mondays

<http://www.chicagohistory.org>

Clark St. at North Avenue, Chicago

(312) 642-4600

The Chicago History Museum has plenty of fun for kids of all ages. The exhibit “Sensing Chicago” lets kids try out Chicago style fun like riding a high-wheel bicycle down a wood-paved street; hearing the Great Chicago Fire; catching a fly ball at Comiskey Park; discovering history through their noses with a Smell Map; and being a Chicago-style hot dog. There are also interactive gallery stations the let kids construct bridges, play with a hands-on model of the John Hancock building, investigate native plants, and more. Admission is free on Mondays.

Chicago Children’s Museum Free Days

<http://www.chicagochildrensmuseum.org>

Navy Pier - 700 E. Grand Avenue, Chicago

(312) 527-1000

Enjoy free admission every Thursday from 5pm – 8pm for KRAFT Free Family Night. With 15 permanent exhibits and new activities daily, the Chicago Children’s Museum is a special place of education, exploration, stimulation and delight for children and adults. Some current exhibits include: BIG Backyard, Skyline, Kids Town, Dinosaur Expedition, WaterWays, Kovler Family Climbing Schooner, Inventing Lab, Treehouse Trails, and the Kraft Artabounds Studio. Also on the first Sunday of every month, there’s free admission for ages 15 and under.

Chicago Cultural Center

<http://www.chicagoculturalcenter.org>

78 E. Washington Street, Chicago

(312) 744-6640

This building is breathtaking in beauty, and families can visit simply to take in the stunning mosaics, marbles and architectural wonders. Even more fun is a visit when there’s great family entertainment taking place. The center hosts hundreds of artists, musicians and performers year-round, with activities not only for adults but for families as well. Visit the web site for a schedule of family friendly performances and activities.

Chicago Model City

<http://tours.architecture.org/cmc>
224 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago
(312) 922-3432

If your kids have an interest in architecture or city planning, let them check out this free exhibit at the Chicago Architecture Foundation. Chicago Model City is an exhibit that explores the planning of Chicago to help audiences understand how the intricacies of a city impact lives, shape regions and impact the planet as a whole. The exhibit teaches using scale models, photos, maps, video and digital imagery. The Chicago Architecture Foundation (CAF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing public interest and education in architecture and design, and presents a comprehensive program of tours, exhibitions, lectures, special events, and adult and youth education activities to enhance awareness and appreciation of Chicago's architectural legacy.

Des Plaines History Center

<http://www.desplaineshistory.org>
781 Pearson Street, Des Plaines
(847) 391-5399

The Des Plaines History Center is the place to learn about all things Des Plaines. The Visitor Center features a children's play room full of classic toys for all ages, exhibits about Des Plaines history, and a gift shop packed with locally handcrafted items.

Downers Grove Park District Museum

<http://www.dgparcs.org/Facilities/museum-information.htm>
831 Maple Avenue, Downers Grove
(630) 963-1309

Step across the threshold of the Blodgett House for a glimpse of the past. Enter a bygone era when families rested on fainting couches instead of recliners, stored food in iceboxes instead of refrigerators, and entertained themselves with parlor games instead of cyber games. Kids will find a treasure trove of fascinating facts and fun, and can view the museum collections that include everything from buttonhooks to butter paddles, washboards to wedding dresses, and baby frocks to clocks.

The Field Museum Free Days

<http://www.fieldmuseum.org>
1400 S. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago
(312) 922-9410

There's a lot going on at The Field Museum this summer, and you can enjoy it for no charge on special free days this summer. Free days this summer are June 6-10 and August 31. Kids will enjoy the Museum's permanent and temporary exhibits like *The Horse* and *Whales: Giants of the Deep*, Sue, and of course the *Crown Family PlayLab*, a place where kids can dig in, dress up, and explore and grow. (Note: temporary exhibits are an additional fee.)

Museum of Contemporary Arts Free Days

<http://www.mcachicago.org>
220 E. Chicago Avenue, Chicago
(312) 280-2660

The MCA documents contemporary visual culture through painting, sculpture, photography, video and film, and performance. On Tuesdays this summer, from June 21 through August 30, kids can enjoy a hands-on art experience with Summer Studios. This event takes place between 11 am - 2 pm on the front plaza, and again from 5 pm - 8 pm on the terrace. Families can have fun together with art activities that vary from week to week. Activities are best suited for ages 4-12. Admission is free for everyone on Tuesdays.

Museum of Science & Industry Free Days

<http://www.msichicago.org>
57th St. and Lake Shore Drive, Chicago
(773) 684-1414

The Museum of Science & Industry is one of the best places for kids to learn about science in a fun and interactive way. This summer you can check out exhibits like Body Worlds, Science Storms, Suited for Space, Coal Mine, Colleen Moore's Fairy Castle and many more. There's only a handful of free days in the summer, June 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9.

Smart Museum of Art

<http://smartmuseum.uchicago.edu>
5550 S. Greenwood Avenue at University of Chicago, Chicago
(773) 702-0200

The Smart Museum's permanent collection includes objects from classical antiquities to the art of today. The Smart's intimate galleries and outdoor sculpture garden are perfect spaces for children and adults to explore art together. The Museum hosts a variety of family-friendly art activities and programs, including Art Afternoons on Wednesdays in July for kids 4-12.

FARMS

Bonner Heritage Farm

http://www.lcfd.org/bonner_farm/
Country Place near Sand Lake Road, Lindenhurst
(847) 968-3400

This historical farm was established in 1848 when two Scottish immigrants, William and Margaret Bonner, built two farmhouses on the site. The farm site grew over the years, and now families can visit and see the pump house, chicken coop, hog house, storage shed – and even the outhouse. Your kids will enjoy the maze exhibit, where they can explore a quilted grid of interactive activities; the windmill and weather stations; and exhibits that include cows and chickens.



Kline Creek Farm

<http://www.dupageforest.com/page.aspx?id=228>
1N600 County Farm Road, West Chicago
(630) 876-5900

Kids can visit the farmstead and view original artifacts and reproductions to see what it was like to live on a farm in years past. They'll get to see an authentic garden and livestock such as sheep and chickens on the farm grounds, and they can learn more with hourly tours on topics such as baking, canning, quilting and cleaning. The farmstead and visitor center are open Thursday - Monday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and the surrounding Timber Ridge Forest Preserve is open daily.

Wagner Farm

<http://www.glenviewparks.org/Wagner-Farm/Wagner-Farm.htm>
1510 Wagner Road, Glenview
(847) 657-1506

Show your kids where milk really comes from! One of the last working dairy farms in Cook County, Wagner Farm is open to the public for recreation and learning. Mondays – Saturdays at 4:30pm, see a public milking demonstration in the Heritage Center's milking parlor. Mondays – Sundays, meet costumed interpreters as they go about daily life on a 1920s working farm. Every Tuesday and Thursday at 4pm is free storytelling with Miss Mary Beth. "Dollar Drop-In Days" activities are held Monday through Friday at 10am, and also Monday and Wednesday afternoons from 3:30 – 4:30pm for \$1.

NATURE

Chicago Botanic Garden

<http://www.chicagobotanic.org>
1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe
(847) 835-5440

The Chicago Botanic Garden boasts beautifully designed gardens brimming with plants, with 23 garden areas and native habitat areas. Free kid-friendly activities are offered throughout the summer, including Family Drop-In Activities on most Saturdays and Sundays through early October. Kids can get close to nature and discover where food comes from with fun activities on topics like pollinating flowers, dissecting seeds, seeing roots grow, composting with worms and much more. Note: While admission is free, parking is not!

Crabtree Nature Center

<http://fpdcc.com/nature-centers/crabtree-nature-center>
3 Stover Road, Barrington
(847) 381-6592

Do your kids like birds? The Crabtree nature center is known for birding, and a total of 263 bird species have been observed at this location. Numerous ducks and geese can be seen in spring and fall on Crabtree Lake, and spring wildflowers carpet the forested areas, as do summer and autumn blossoms in the meadows and prairies. A spacious exhibit building and several miles of self-guiding, educational trails will help you teach your children to enjoy wildlife and native plants.

Emily Oaks Nature Center

<http://www.skokieparkdistrict.org/spdcm/EmilyOaksNatureCenter.aspx>
4650 Brummel, Skokie
(847) 674-1500

At this thirteen acre savanna and nature center, families will enjoy this natural oasis full of native wildflowers, grasses, oak trees, a 3-acre pond and trails. Walk the trails around the center and see if you can spot native animals that frequent the area, including great blue herons, flying squirrels, northern water snakes, red foxes and Cooper's Hawks. The Nature Center also provides programs in earth education and outdoor recreation, with entertaining nature activities offered year-round.

Garfield Park Conservatory

<http://www.garfield-conservatory.org>
300 North Central Park Avenue, Chicago
(312) 746-5100

Kids will love touring the conservatory here, with multi-faceted greenhouses and two grand exhibition halls. Stroll through prehistoric ferns, step across trickling waterfalls, and experiencing a botanic haven in the City where your children can run, laugh, and learn. Discover a world under glass where plants are accessible, understandable, and most importantly fun! Saturdays and Sundays, drop by between 1-3pm for a Family Make & Take activity, where your kids can make something fun to take home while learning about plants.

Heller Nature Center

<http://www.hellernaturecenter.org>
2821 Ridge Road, Highland Park
(847) 433-6901

Hike three miles of marked trails, have a picnic in the woodlands, check out the Design in Nature exhibit in the Goodman Log Cabin, and learn about the prairie and wetlands native to our state of Illinois. Kids can observe, identify and even draw birds they see from a birdwatching station, and they can see native fish and aquatic plants in a 450 gallon aquarium.

Hidden Oaks Nature Center

http://www.bolingbrookparks.org/Attractions_and_Facilities/Hidden_Oaks_Nature_Center/General_Information.aspx
419 Trout Farm Road, Bolingbrook
(630) 739-2600

Who lives in a tree? What's that noise? How did that mouse get in a bottle? Wander the exhibit area and discover the answers to these and many other questions. Visitors can find bluebirds, a raccoon, snakes and many other critters while exploring the nature center lobby. Search the exhibits and interpretive signs along the trails for information about savannas, geothermal heating, restoration, archaeology, and what Bolingbrook looked like a million years ago. Once kids have explored the information inside the building, they can head outside and put that new knowledge to use while hiking the trails.

Lincoln Park Conservatory

<http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/index.cfm/fuseaction/parks.results.cfm>
2391 N. Stockton Drive, Chicago
(312) 742-7736

Located just steps away from the Lincoln Park Zoo, the Conservatory is a true oasis in the heart of the city. Bring your kids and step inside to be transported to another place and time, where you'll find tropical palms, ancient ferns exotic plants. Enjoy all four of the Conservatory's display houses: the Palm House, Fern Room, Orchid House and Show House.

Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum

<http://www.naturemuseum.org/>
2430 N. Cannon Drive, Chicago
(773) 755-5100

The Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum has free admissions on Thursdays, with a donation suggested. This museum is ideal for children of all ages, with plenty of activities and exhibits. Kids can get up close and personal with butterflies, search for stick bugs camouflaged on a twig, ssssay hello to a rattlesnake, and squish through wetlands discovering why they are beautiful and important. There's also a beautiful path that runs along the outside of the Museum where your kids can look for geese, ducks and other wildlife.

Plum Creek Nature Center

<http://www.reconnectwithnature.org/visitor-centers/details.asp?id=8&name=Plum+Creek+Nature+Center>
27064 S. Dutton Road, Beecher
(708) 946-2216

Plum Creek Nature Center is situated in the 890-acre Goodenow Grove Nature Preserve. Nestled among forests, fields, cattail marshes, and a small pond, the Nature Center is the perfect place for discovering the outdoors. It

offers something for children who like to touch feathers and rocks, those who marvel at animal skulls, adults who wonder how to attract butterflies in their gardens, and seniors who enjoy watching winter birds at the feeders. Outdoor recreation opportunities as well as indoor experiences make this a great place for learning and exploration.

Spring Valley Nature Sanctuary

<http://www.parkfun.com/spring-valley>
1111 E. Schaumburg Road, Schaumburg
(847) 985-2115

Spring Valley is a refuge of 135 acres of fields, forests, marshes and streams. Spring Valley also features over three miles of handicapped-accessible hiking trails, a Nature Center with natural history displays and information, and an 1880s living history farm. It's an outdoor living museum where visitors can learn about nature and local history. Your whole family can enjoy a peaceful day of walking, birdwatching, photography, relaxing and learning.

Thorn Creek Nature Center

<http://www.villageofparkforest.net/index.php?submenu=NatureCenter&src=endocs&link=NatureCenter>
247 Monee Road, Park Forest
(708) 747-6320

Explore the trails at Thorn Creek Nature Center, with over 3 1/2 miles of trails that take you through an oak-hickory woodland, floodplain and scenic ravines and pine plantations. Owl Lake is located at the far end of the trail system, which leads to a wetland overlook. Located within the preserve is the Hornicek Farm and restored prairie. The nature center resides in a building built in 1862 and sits at the trail head. Several displays are located within the nature center, including a bird viewing station, insect display and children's science corner.

ZOOS/AQUARIUMS

Lincoln Park Zoo

<http://www.lpzoo.org>
2200 N. Cannon Drive, Chicago
(312) 742-2000

The Lincoln Park Zoo is located in a beautiful park setting near Chicago's lakefront, and admission is always free. Kids can visit the Kovler Lion House

and Sea Lion Pool, Flamingo Habitat, the McCormick Bear Habitat, the Helen Brach Primate House and many more beautiful animal buildings and exhibits. The Farm in the Zoo is ideal for little ones, and offers free songs and storytelling on Wednesday and Friday mornings at 9:15 and 10am through September 9.

Living Sea Aquarium

<http://www.livingseaaquarium.com>
811 East Devon Avenue, Park Ridge
(847) 698-7258

Living Sea Aquarium is a fantastic treasure, and is one of the largest aquarium stores in the area. They specialize in freshwater, salt water and reef aquarium. Bring the kids by and let them marvel at the beautiful live rocks and coral, and watch the fish swimming in the in-store pond. You can also stop by to watch free feedings every Saturday and Sunday at 2pm.

Old Town Aquarium and Wells Street

<http://www.oldtownaquarium.com>
1538 North Wells Street, Chicago
(312) 642-8763

Start out looking at fish and then take a stroll down quaint Wells Street in Old Town. This adorable aquarium is kid friendly and lets your little ones get up close to hundreds of beautiful fish and sea life. They can see stunning corals, starfish, snails, sea cucumbers and many more exotic water residents. After checking out the fish, you can walk a few minutes south to Collar & Leash, a pet store with resident cats and dogs looking for homes. And don't forget to pop into the Fudge Pot (just a few doors south of the Aquarium) if you're in the area – a chocolate covered Oreo cookie is sure to make the kids smile!

Phillips Park Zoo

<http://www.phillipsparkaurora.com>
1000 Ray Moses Drive, Aurora
(630) 978-4774

The Phillips Park Zoo provides a safe and natural habitat for animals, and lets visitors enjoy the display of the animals while also learning about their history and way of life. Kids can visit this free zoo and see alligators, Arctic foxes, cougars, eagles, elk, llamas, wolves and more. The zoo is open year round from 9-5, and the Reptile House is open daily from 9:30 – 4:30. While you're there, check out the visitor center at Phillips Park and check out the mastodon

bones that were discovered in the 1930's during the excavation of what's now known as Mastodon Lake.

FUN FAMILY OUTINGS

Adams Water Playground

<http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com>
1919 N. Seminary Avenue, Chicago
(312) 742-7787

Tucked away in Lincoln Park, Adams Playground is truly a treasure in the community and welcomes neighbors into the park year-round. The park features a small field house that hosts indoor activities for the little ones - from Moms, Pops and Tots to Summer Camps. The playground is big with lots of equipment and activities, and on the hot summer days, you'll want to stop in here for the free water play. This park has some of the best outdoor water play options in town!

Buckingham Fountain

http://www.cpdit01.com/resources/buckingham_fountain.cfm
South Columbus Drive and East Congress Parkway, Chicago
Buckingham Fountain is a true Chicago landmark, and it's one of the largest fountains in the world. The Fountain runs from 8am – 11pm daily from April to mid-October. Every hour and every 20 minutes, the Fountain produces a major water display and the middle jet shoots water 150 feet into the year! When the sun goes down, the show really begins, with a major light and music show in synch with the water show. The last display of the night is at 10pm. Consider taking your family to the Fountain and having a picnic in one of the many scenic areas around Grant Park and the lakeshore.

Fireworks at Navy Pier

<http://www.navypier.com>
600 E. Grand Avenue, Chicago
(312) 595-PIER

Let the kids enjoy a spectacular fireworks display – free! Every week, Navy Pier offers a dazzling display of fireworks to light up your nights with color and sound. These spectacular shows are synchronized to the music of seven different soundtracks. You can enjoy strolling around Navy Pier before the show starts, and then find a great seat for the display. Free shows take place

Wednesday nights at 9:30pm, and Saturday nights at 10:15pm. Fourth of July show takes place on Monday, July 4 at 9pm.

Fosco Park Water Playground

<http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/index.cfm/fuseaction/parks.results.cfm>
1312 S. Racine Avenue, Chicago
(312) 746-5086

Fosco Park boasts of an 80,000 square foot Community Center, gyms, a fitness center, a playground - and a fantastic, free water playground. The outdoor playground is a great place to get wet this summer, and there are many ways to do it. Your kids may choose to stand beneath buckets that fill with water and then dump on their heads; they can play with water guns and sprayers, and take a ride down a water slide. Indoors, there's a pool with zero-depth on one side for little ones just getting their feet wet.

Green City Market

<http://www.chicagorencitymarket.org>
1750 North Clark, Chicago
(847) 424-2486

The Green City Market is located just next to the Lincoln Park Zoo, and on Wednesdays and Saturdays this market is bustling with fresh locally grown produce and food products. Kids can get some tasty treats while also learning of the importance of sustainable farming. The Edible Gardens program provides hands-on gardening education and activities for adults and kids, and Club Sprouts is a program for kids that encourages them to sample market items to earn a certificate and prize. Bring a blanket and make a picnic of it!

Millennium Park's Family Fun Festival

<http://www.millenniumpark.org>
Michigan Avenue between Randolph/Monroe, Chicago
(312) 742-1168

Every day, from June 13 through August 21 between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., family performances and hands-on activities will take place in the Family Fun Tent, located on the Park's Chase Promenade North. The fun includes music by Wiggleworms at 10am; The Reading Circle at 11 a.m., and concerts by some of the most notable names in local and regional entertainment at 1 p.m. Throughout the day, the Family Fun tent's Activity Zone will include hands-on craft projects and garden, science and environmental activities led by some of the region's popular museums and cultural institutions.

Movies in the Park

<http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com>

Chicago Park District – Various Locations

Break out the blankets and picnic baskets, and take your family for a night outside at the movies. The Chicago Park District's 11th annual Movies in the Park features more than 120 screenings of current and classic movies in more than 120 citywide parks from June 3 – August 26. Several of this year's selections include screenings of *Despicable Me*, *Some Like It Hot*, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* and more. For daily listings and updated weather-related cancellations, call the hotline at (312) 742-1134.

Navy Pier's Family Pavilion Stage

<http://www.navypier.com>

600 E. Grand Avenue, Chicago

(312) 595-PIER

Historic Navy Pier provides hours of fun for the entire family! And all summer long, you can enjoy free daily interactive entertainment with Navy Pier's cast of characters at the Family Pavilion Stage. From Buccaneer pirates to circus performers to magicians, and even Patch the Pirate Dog, Navy Pier's own mascot, there's family fun happening every day. And of course there's plenty of admission-based fun as well, from the 15-story Ferris Wheel, to the the IMAX Theatre, to Chicago Children's Museum and much more.

Skokie Lagoons

http://www.fpdcc.com/tier3.php?content_id=68&file=map_67x

S of Lake-Cook Rd., N of Willow Rd., E of the Edens, and W of Forest Road
The Skokie Lagoons provide the opportunity for hiking, biking, fishing, kayaking and birdwatching. Take a hike on the trail and you might see deer, muskrats, turtles, geese, herons and more. Bring your bikes and you can ride on a 4-mile path that goes around the lagoons between Tower Road and Dundee Road. You can also rent a kayak or canoe and take a leisurely ride, or do some fishing from your boat - the lagoons are teeming with bass, walleye and pike.

Skokie Northshore Sculpture Park

<http://www.sculpturepark.org/index.htm>

McCormick Boulevard between Touhy and Dempster, Skokie

The Skokie Northshore Sculpture Park is located on a two mile long stretch of land along the north channel of the Chicago River. The park is a free facility

that combines recreational features with an exhibit of over 60 large-scale contemporary sculptures. Biking paths, jogging paths and seating areas are located throughout the park, and spending time here is a relaxing way to introduce your kids to the art of sculpture.

Lurie Garden Family Activities

<http://www.millenniumpark.org>

Millennium Park's Lurie Garden

201 E. Randolph, Chicago

(312) 742-1168

The Lurie Garden is a stunning setting for some great free family activities throughout the summer. Visit the web site for details on events like Free Family Stories and Songs, Raptors in the Garden, Wiggly Worms and Super Soil, Wild About Insects and more.

Summer Farmers Markets

<http://www.chicagofarmersmarkets.us>

Throughout Chicago

Chicago's Farmers Markets bring more than 70 vendors selling fresh fruits, vegetables, plants and flowers in over 20 neighborhoods throughout the City of Chicago. Take your kids to a market and let them help you pick out fresh products for your home. A few popular markets to choose from include the Green City Market at 1750 N. Clark on Wed and Sat 7am – 1pm; City Farm Heirloom Tomato Stand at 1204 N. Clybourn on Tues – Fri 3-6pm and Daley Plaza Thursdays 7am – 3pm. Check out the web site listed above for information on other Farmers Markets located all over Chicago.

Chicago Summerdance in Grant Park

<http://www.explorechicago.org>

601 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago

(312) 742-4007

Chicago SummerDance returns for another summer of outdoor dancing July 7- September 18, transforming the Spirit of Music Garden in Grant Park into an urban dance space each Thursday through Sunday. The event features live bands with swing, waltz, salsa, cha-cha and more, with one-hour dance lessons by professional instructors, followed by two hours of live music and dancing on a 4,600 square foot open-air dance floor. The activities take place Thursday – Saturday from 6 to 9:30 pm, and Sunday afternoon, 4 to 7 pm, weather-permitting.

Bubbles Academy at Whole Foods Lincoln Park

<http://wholefoodsmarket.com/storesbeta/lincolnpark>

Whole Foods Lincoln Park

1550 N. Kingsbury Street, Chicago

Come on out to Whole Foods Lincoln Park and enjoy a free show every Wednesday and Thursday morning at 10am. The creative teachers from nearby Bubbles Academy will be on stage, entertaining kids in a half hour of exciting songs and stories. This event is a favorite for lots of moms and kids and always draws a crowd. Kids can dance and sing along with their favorite songs, and then shop at this enormous Whole Foods to help mom pick out some great snacks to take home.

Building Blocks Toy Store Craft Fridays

<http://www.buildingblockstoys.com/>

2130 W. Division Street, Chicago

(773) 235-1888

Building Blocks Toy Store, one of Chicago's best independent kids toy stores, hosts a free Craft Fridays event every Friday from June 3 - August 27. Drop in with your little ones age 3 and up any time between 3-5pm. Registration is not required, but is recommended.

Free Trial Classes

There are so many fantastic children's classes available, and it can not only be hard to decide on what's best for your child, but it can be hard to even know what's out there! Plenty of places offer free trial classes, and it's a great way to find out what might be right for you. Some places that offer a free trial class include Bubbles Academy, Suzuki-Orff School of Music, Language Stars, Breakdance Chicago, Lil' Kickers and so many more. Try it out for one day, and you might find your child's next favorite activity!

Dancin' Sprouts at Chicago Botanic Gardens

<http://www.chicagobotanic.org>

1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe

(847) 835-5440

Wednesdays, June 8 – August 31, Dancin' Sprouts provides free musical entertainment for young visitors. Families can enjoy live music from local favorites like Scribblemonster, Super Stolie, the Dreamtree Shakers, Mr. Singer & the Sharp Cookies and more. You can picnic on the Esplanade.

Concerts are from 5:30 – 7:30 pm on the Esplanade. Admission is free; parking is \$20 per car.

FESTIVALS

There are hundreds of festivals taking place in Chicago and the surrounding areas, and certainly too many to mention here. Here are just a few of the many options taking place this summer listed by date:

Printers Row Lit Fest

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/books/printersrowlitfest/>

June 4-5

Dearborn Street between Polk and Congress, Chicago

The Printers Row Lit Fest attracts more than 150 booksellers from across the country and features seven stages with more than 100 free literary programs. This year's 27th Annual Lit Fest includes great family entertainment including Justin Roberts and the Not Ready for Naptime Players, musician Sandy Lucas, Punch & Cookies puppet show and more.

Chicago Blues Festival

<http://www.explorechicago.org>

June 10 –12

Grant Park

The Chicago Blues Festival is the largest free blues festival in the world and remains the largest of Chicago's music festivals. From Friday, June 10 through Sunday, June 12 and on five stages, more than 500,000 blues fans prove that Chicago is the "Blues Capital of the World" at Grant Park.

City Wilds Festival

<http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com>

June 11-12

North Park Village Nature Center

5801 North Pulaski Road, Chicago

(312) 744-5472

Bring your family for guided walks through the Nature Center's four habitats (prairie, woodland, wetland, savanna) and help inventory and learn about the plants and animals found in the 46-acre preserve. There will be nature crafts,

activities, a storyteller for children, and workshops on the benefits of landscaping with native plants and composting.

Art in Bloom Cantigny Fine Art Festival

<http://www.cantigny.org/>

June 18-19

Cantigny Park, 1S151 Winfield Road, Wheaton

(630) 668-5161

This year's art fest is a Cantigny creation and will bring all new artists, inspired activities, fresh ideas and a colorful weekend. The fun includes more than 100 juried artists, children's art project, live demos, live music and plenty of food. Free admission; \$5 per car parking.

Long Grove Strawberry Festival

<http://www.longgroveonline.com/strawberry.html>

June 24-26

Downtown Long Grove

(847) 634-0888

Strawberry lovers of all ages flock to Long Grove to enjoy chocolate covered strawberries, fruit smoothies, and other strawberry drinks, ice creams, strawberry donuts, baked goods and, of course, the farm-fresh berries themselves. Radio Disney and other kid-friendly media sponsors will be on hand, and little strawberry lovers can have their faces painted; enjoy pony rides, and play games in the kid-friendly booths. Other fun activities for the youngsters include a ride on a spinning apple, a mini carousel, a train, a blow up clown filled with balloons, a jumping castle and a huge blowup slide.

Ethnic Arts Festival

<http://www.cityofevanston.org/events/2011/07/ethnic-arts-festival-2/>

July 17

Dawes Park, 1700 Sheridan Rd., Evanston

(847) 448-8260

There will be two stages of continuous world music and dance, more than 125 juried artists, international cuisine, hands-on art activities and more. Don't miss the Parade of Nations, which kicks off the festival at noon on Saturday. Local youth parade the flags of more than 100 nations before they are displayed around the Dawes Park lagoon for the weekend.

Chicago Air & Water Show

<http://www.explorechicago.org>

August 20-21

North Avenue Beach, Chicago

North Avenue Beach will again be the spot for the largest free spectator event in the U.S. and the longest ongoing show of its kind in North America when the Chicago Air & Water Show returns to Chicago's shoreline. The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds, U.S. Army Parachute Team Golden Knights and U.S. Navy Parachute Team Leap Frogs will headline the 53rd annual show along the lakefront from Fullerton to Oak Street.

DeKalb CornFest

<http://www.cornfest.com>

August 26-28

DeKalb Taylor Municipal Airport

(815) 748-CORN

Corn Fest is one of the last remaining free summer music festivals in Illinois. Over 100,000 people from around Illinois and the Midwest attend the music festival over a three day weekend. The festival features a carnival complete with rides and games, food booths, live music, craft show, a kiddie korner with large inflatables, family entertainment and much more. Friday night is carnival wristband nights for the kids with unlimited rides from 6-10pm.

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