

Provider Spotlights

Bibb County is thrilled to spotlight Mrs. April McMillan. April has been a relative care provider in the Kids and Kin Program for two years. She is also the youth librarian at Brent-Centreville Public Library. April is a mother of 2 sons, an aunt, and the loving owner of a dog named Buddy and a cat named Binx. She enjoys spending time with family, reading, and camping. The Kids and Kin Program is very lucky to have April as a relative care provider, she is full of joy and brings such enthusiasm to our



classes. April is a great librarian and her love of children shows in the dedication given to the programs she brings to her community. Thank you, April, for your support and dedication to the Kids and Kin Program.

Morgan County is excited to spotlight Jessica Ramos.



Jessica has been a relative child care provider since June of 2019. Jessica, her two children, their cousins, and friends attended the Kids and Kin summer program at the Decatur Public Library. Jessica became so involved singing, cutting, coloring, and helping the kids in any way she could. Since that summer day, Jessica has rarely missed a Kids and Kin training. In her own words; "I love the Kids and Kin training classes. Mrs. Tammie Hill, our Child Care Partner, is so amazing. She is always prepared. I learn something from every class. I also really enjoy the

conversations and fellowship with the entire group." Jessica works two jobs, and volunteers at Saint Ann Catholic School in her spare time. She loves road trips, hiking and exploring with the children and her entire family. A big thank you, Jessica, for your dedication to the Kids and Kin Program and for always bringing your sweet smile to every training.

Tallapoosa County is delighted to spotlight Ms. Jo Catherine Smoot. She is one of the biggest supporters of the Kids and Kin Program in Tallapoosa County. She even attends the events occurring in her community with her Child Care Partner in order to help recruit new providers. She is the aunt of three and they call her Auntie Cat. She learned about the Kids and Kin program through an event with the Alexander City Housing Authority. She is an Associate Minister for Liberty Life Christian Center. She has four passions in life: children, helping those in need, telling people about the lord, and singing. She also really enjoys the summer program each year. We are so excited to have Ms. Cat as part of the Kids and Kin Program.



Fayette County is elated to spotlight a unique family of relative child care providers. Trinity Lyons, Tuwana Lyons,

Lester Rogers, and, Charlana Haar have been a part of the Kids and Kin Program for 3 plus years.

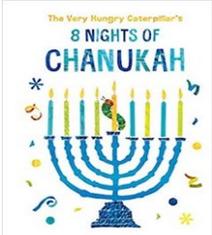
They love the trainings, fellowship and sharing that takes place at the meetings.

They love that they are always learning something new, but appreciate that their experiences, knowledge, and stories are recognized and acknowledged. Mr. Lester loves that he found other grandparents like him, that help to care for their grandkids, and the trainings have helped him with fun ideas that he and his grandchildren can do together. Trinity loves to try new recipes and bring goodies to share with the group, which, we love! They are always helping to spread the word about the program. We love having this awesome family as a part of our Kids and Kin family!





Holiday Books for Every Age: Books make a great gift for any age, and wintertime holidays are the perfect opportunity for sharing stories with the children in your family. Books can be cherished Hanukkah gifts, fun Christmas presents, or an inspiring New Year's present. No matter what winter holidays your family celebrates, these simple stories are perfect for you and your children to snuggle up with on a chilly winter evening.



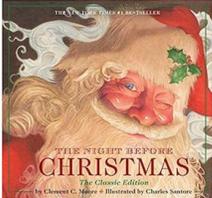
The Very Hungry Caterpillar's 8 Nights of Chanukah

One of the easiest ways to introduce the basics of anything to little ones is to include a well-known, well-loved character, so here's the Very Hungry Caterpillar helping to teach the basic traditions of Hanukkah, from the lighting of the menorah and singing of songs to playing with a dreidel and exchanging gifts.



The Night Before Hanukkah

It's the night before the eight-day celebration of Hanukkah begins, and everyone is excited! Each evening, the family gathers to light the candles and share holiday traditions such as playing dreidel, eating latkes, and exchanging gifts. The seventeenth title in Natasha Wing's best-selling series, *The Night Before Hanukkah* captures all the joy and love in one of the most wonderful times of the year!



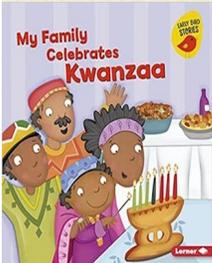
The Night Before Christmas

At nearly 200 years old, this classic holiday poem is still read every Christmas Eve by countless adults to wide-eyed little ones as they await Santa's arrival.



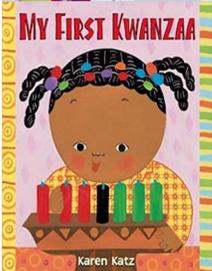
Christmas in 100 Words

There are lots of words that can be used to describe Christmas, so here's 100! Plenty of the words in this book will be familiar to your little one, but combined with more festive words like "wreath," "advent calendar," "elf" and "Nativity," it'll get the whole family in the Christmas mood in no time.



My Family Celebrates Kwanzaa

In this family, everyone has their own special part to play during the Kwanzaa celebration. On each of the seven nights, one family member gets to light one of the candles in the kinara and tell the rest of the family all about one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa. And the youngest family member can't wait for their turn! This story also comes with a few critical reading questions to help older toddlers and preschoolers interact with what they're learning.



My First Kwanzaa

The seven days of Kwanzaa are filled with family and festivities to embrace community and heritage. Get your little one ready to celebrate their first Kwanzaa with this holiday and vocabulary primer.



The Night Before New Year's

This book takes the familiar poem about *The Night Before Christmas* and turns it into one family's celebration of New Year's Eve. Their lively activities range from a late-night feast of their favorite foods to party poppers and the Times Square countdown, helping introduce your little one to some of the common traditions of the American New Year.

Making Christmas Intentional for Kids: Keeping It Simple and Humble



December is an exciting time of year, yet with all the buying, cooking, gatherings, overspending, activities, cleaning and pressure to make Christmas magical, it is easy to lose sight of the magic all together. While the holiday season provides a time for us to focus on loved ones, share good food and participate in family traditions, this time can also be a very stressful one for many. So why not have an intentional Christmas this year.

What is an intentional Christmas and why is it good for children? An Intentional Christmas is all about taking the pressure off of gifts and running yourself ragged trying to

squeeze in every event and party. It's about devoting your time, thoughts, and resources to do nice things for others without obligation or recognition. It's about family, kindness, making others happy and caring for your community. It is about teaching children empathy for others and having gratitude for the things they already have. Check out these ideas to learn how to simplify holiday stress, entertain children with family focused activities, and cherish the memories you create with family. Here are some things you can do to create meaningful, intentional traditions that any child will appreciate more than any stocking stuffer.

Write an Annual Letter to Your Child and/or the Children in Your Care: On my daughter's first birthday, I started a tradition of writing her a yearly letter filled with my observations as her mom, as well as my hopes for her future. The holidays are an equally appropriate time to mark your child's growth with a special message that will be cherished for a lifetime. I sealed my daughter's letters and stored them in a keepsake box until she was old enough to read and enjoy them.

Be Intentional About Gift Giving With Children: Be purposeful with the presents you give to children. The gifts should be carefully picked out to inspire creativity, learning, playing together, and family time. One way to accomplish this is the **4 gift rule**:

- 1 gift they need
- 1 gift they want
- 1 gift to wear
- 1 gift to read

Leave a Legacy that Lasts and Helps the Environment: Each New Year's Day, plant a tree in honor of your child(ren). Hold a special ceremony in which everyone in the family plays a part in planting that year's tree, and take lots of pictures, both when the tree is planted and over the years as it grows. There are tangible benefits to encouraging a connection to trees. Research shows that kids who spend time outdoors grow up healthier, happier, and smarter than kids who don't. Over 90 % of Americans agree that trees are important to the character and quality of life of their community.

Acts of Kindness: Each week in December, have family member draw a name from a bowl. Without sharing who they drew, it's each person's job to perform little acts of kindness for the next seven days to help the other person. I can remember my then 5-year-old daughter went downstairs to set a place setting and pour cereal for her dad for breakfast one morning. Or when my twins organized my shoes in my closet for me. These are simple things, but the thought they put into doing something nice is what counts.

Kindness Bags: Most children notice when people are on the corner holding a sign asking for help or spare change. One way to teach them to care for others and help when others are in need, and one of the easiest, is by creating kindness bags together. The bags can be kept in the car and handed out as needed. Kindness bags are zip lock plastic bags filled with toiletries, snacks, some change, and seasonal items like Chapstick, sunscreen, hand-warmers, hand sanitizer, water, or a granola bar. When you pull up to a street corner and someone is holding a sign asking for help, reach into your center console, roll down the window, and hand them a kindness bag.



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The Thankful Tree



Before starting this activity, sit down with the children and talk about being thankful. Ask them what they are thankful for and why, and what are some of the gifts and talents that they have been blessed with. Talk about how important it is to remember all of the good things we have been given.

Materials: branch from the yard, construction paper, a glue gun, a pot or vase, yarn or string, rocks.

Directions: Place the branch in your pot or vase, if using a pot pour rocks around the branch to steady it. Cut out some simple leaf shapes from yellow, orange and brown construction paper. Write what the children are thankful for on each leaf, or have children write them down if they know how. Glue each leaf to a branch with the glue gun (with adult supervision), you could also hang them with string or yarn.



It's amazing how often we forget about the things we have right now that are beautiful, lovely, and amazing. This activity reminds us to be thankful for the moon that lights up the night, the sun that helps us see during the day, and the little hearts that give us unconditional love and wonder.

To the providers and supporters of the Kids and Kin Program, may you celebrate Thanksgiving with love in your hearts, gratitude in your being, and peace in body, mind and soul.