

2015 Best Of Our Valley Winners: Kids

Written by Suzanne Koch

Kids

Families all around the Valley have a plethora of choices to ensure their children receive the best care possible—whether it be medical, academic or just a fun-filled trip to the hair salon.

BY ASHLEY R. CARLSON



BEST WATER PARK

>>THE OASIS WATER PARK AT ARIZONA GRAND RESORT & SPA

Voted by the Travel Channel as one of the top 10 water parks in the nation, Oasis Water Park has eight-story thrill slides, a lazy river, a 25-person hot tub, and a giant wave pool that are open to resort guests. The 18-hole golf course and athletic club nearby offer more options for families to have fun with fitness together, and when it's time to eat, the Oasis Bar & Grill is conveniently located in the park. arizonagrandresort.com.



BEST SPLASH PAD

>>SCOTTSDALE QUARTER

This shopping destination in the heart of Scottsdale is an oasis in the desert, with luxury boutiques and restaurants lining the avenues and beautiful architecture highlighting the area. Appropriately named “the Quad,” Scottsdale Quarter’s public park-like gathering place has the largest splash pad in the region, perfect for bringing the little ones on a warm day. With frozen yogurt and cafes just around the corner, families can enjoy a cool drink and pop-jet fountains in a luxury setting. scottsdalequarter.com.

2014 WINNER

BEST BIRTHDAY PARTY SPOT AND BEST KIDS' ENTERTAINMENT: INDOORS

>>GREAT PLAY CHILDREN'S GYM

Designed to make fitness fun and effective for kids, Great Play offers a variety of activities including birthday parties, camps and fitness classes, and changes its play arena constantly to offer new, exciting ways for play. Great Play is hosting a special for children’s classes at \$49 per month per child and gives significant discounts for sibling enrollment. Great Play has been the recipient of this award four years in a row and is a definite favorite for families in the Valley. greatplay.com/chandler.

BEST SUMMER DAY CAMP

>>AZ ON THE ROCKS

Constructed in 2003, AZ on the Rocks has quickly become the Valley’s go-to indoor rock-climbing gym not only due to its size but for its varied

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and exciting classes and events. With 14,000 square feet of textured terrain, your little ones will never tire of rappelling down ropes and scaling the treadwall, as trained staff monitor their safety constantly. Adults can take yoga classes in the upstairs studio while the children play. azontherocks.com.

2014 WINNER

BEST TOY STORE

>>TOYS & PLAYTIME OASIS

Toys & Playtime Oasis (formerly known as The Doll House & Toy Store) is proud of its title as the oldest family- owned toy store in North America, offering an extensive line of educational toys and games, puzzles and miniatures for every type of dollhouse. Staff members carefully select the wide selection of furniture styles and designs, including Southwestern, handcrafted artist furniture and lighting, and one-of-a-kind accessories. Story time is every Tuesday at 9:30 a.m., and fun events like princess tea parties and live theater are always on the schedule. azdollhouse.com.

2014 WINNER

BEST CHILDREN'S HAIR STYLIST

>>TARA FARNSWORTH, COMB-A-CABANA

Comb-A-Cabana in Scottsdale exudes a kid-friendly atmosphere, with car-shaped chairs for children, video games to play, and books and movies to watch so that every kid has a great experience during their haircut. Led by head stylist Tara Farnsworth, the entire team focuses solely on providing great service that is fast, fun and tailored to every child's needs. Comb-A-Cabana is excited to offer the full line of Hot Tot hair care products in their salon. combacabana.com.

BEST KIDS' CLOTHING STORE

>>BABYLUX BOUTIQUE

This luxury boutique offers one-of-a-kind items for every child from infancy to age 7, with the promise that owner Melissa Teegarden would only ever sell what they she would adorn her own children in. In addition to its specialized clothing choices, BabyLux offers accessories, nursery furniture, strollers, bedding, as well as educational classes, gender reveal parties and nursery organization and design services. babyluxonline.com.

BEST KID-FRIENDLY HOTEL

>>THE WIGWAM

This historic hotel in Litchfield Park was originally built in 1918 and opened in 1929 and has grown to offer guests a plentitude of amenities. Take the children to one of the four swimming pools, nine tennis courts, or out on the Wigwam's fun bocce courts for some friendly competition. After recreational time, bring the kids to Red's Bar & Grill for burgers or Litchfield's for an upscale meal. wigwamarizona.com.



BEST PRIVATE HIGH SCHOOL

>>NOTRE DAME PREPARATORY HIGH SCHOOL

This private Catholic college-prep school in Scottsdale has been challenging students since 2002. Girls and boys in grades 9-12 have access to honors courses and 14 advanced- placement classes, and the average class size is 19 students, with 75 percent of faculty having received their master's degree or higher. Notre Dame offers a robust fine arts program and sports teams, having won state championships for football, baseball, golf and more in the past. ndpsaints.org.

2014 WINNER

MOST ENTERTAINING DINNER SPOT FOR KIDS

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>>BARRO'S PIZZA

This family-owned pizza restaurant originated in Chicago and California in the 60's, with the first Arizona location opening in 1980. Now with 35 locations Valley-wide, Barro's is a favorite with families for its affordable pizza, delectable wings and fresh salads. Because Barro's wants everyone to enjoy their delicious pies, they specialize in offering gluten-free dough at every location. Every year in December, the owners hold their "Doran Barro Holiday Hunger Fight," donating all proceeds to St. Mary's Food Bank Alliance. barrospizza.com.

BEST CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

>>CARDON CHILDREN'S MEDICAL CENTER

This state-of-the-art facility in Mesa has 206 beds, a neonatal intensive care unit and various dedicated pediatric departments to offer the best care for children in the Valley. Cardon Children's Medical Center ensures that every patient room is spacious enough for numerous family members, and even provides lounges, dietary stations and laundry rooms for family use. Brightly colored walls, whimsical wall decals and dedicated playrooms entertain patients while the staff is among the highest-trained in the state. bannerchildrens.com/ CardonChildrens.

BEST PEDIATRICIAN IN SCOTTSDALE

>>DR. KATHERINE LICHTSINN

Dr. Katherine Lichtsinn has become one of the top pediatricians in the Valley over the last 30 years, practicing with a family-oriented direction that promotes collaboration between parents and physicians to best assist each child's needs. A graduate of Purdue University and the Indiana University School of Medicine, Dr. Lichtsinn pursued her residency at Phoenix Children's Hospital's Pediatric Residency Program. Her special interests include care of the newborn, promotion of healthy lifestyles and prevention of obesity and the enhancement of quality care in the pediatric community. When not at work, Dr. Lichtsinn enjoys community outreach, kickboxing, photography and cooking. scottsdalechildrensgroup.com.

BEST KIDS' SALON

>>KID CLIPS CHANDLER AND SNIP- ITS CHANDLER

The family-owned and -operated salon, Kid Clips Chandler, specializes in children's haircuts, with their staff always staying up to date on the latest trends and offering suggestions for styles to suit every kid's personality and needs. Kid Clips strives to accommodate every family, and welcomes walk-ins and those who have children with special needs. Besides haircuts, Kid Clips offers special occasion styles for events and bang-trims at affordable prices. Snip-Its Chandler excites with floor-to-ceiling murals in vibrant colors when families enter, with kids being given their Snip-Its Adventure Card and watching a short cartoon film about "Snips and the Gang." Each style station is equipped with games for kids, safety straps for toddlers, and chairs for parents, and when the cut is complete, each child turns in their Adventure Card for a prize. kidclipsaz.com; snipits.com.

2014 WINNER

BEST PRIVATE OR CHARTER SCHOOL

>>CHANDLER PREPARATORY ACADEMY

This public preparatory academy in Chandler is unique in one major aspect: there is no tuition required to attend. Funded by Great Hearts, a nonprofit in the Valley dedicated to providing top-tier education to students for free, Chandler Preparatory Academy provides a classical liberal arts curriculum to its students. Athletics and extracurricular activities are also encouraged of students, with teams and clubs available for every type of interest. chandlerprep.org.



2014 WINNER

BEST ACADEMIC TUTORING SERVICE

>>PIMENTEL ACADEMIC SERVICES

Founded in 2010, this family-owned and -operated tutoring service caters to students of all ages in the Phoenix and Scottsdale areas. They offer tutoring on a variety of subjects including college placement exams SAT and ACT, as well as university-level exams like the GRE. Pimentel Academic Services' staff strives to build close relationships with their students, with impressive and measurable results. pimentelacademicservices.com.

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BEST NANNY AGENCY

>> ALL ABOUT NANNIES AND CARING NANNIES

All About Nannies offers a variety of options for every family's needs and has been doing so since 2002. Choices include temporary newborn care, month-to-month sitters, permanent nannies, as well as personal assistants/house managers. Led by owner Cynthia Littwin, every nanny candidate goes through a rigorous interview process and is matched carefully with every family. In business for 31 years, Caring Nannies has been a staple of childcare excellence in the Valley. Staff are given personality tests and intensive interviews before hire and placement, with many other options such as resort nannies, mother's helpers, and corporate backup childcare also offered by the agency. allaboutnanniesinc.com; acaringnanny.com.

2014 WINNER

BEST OVERNIGHT SUMMER CAMP

>>CAMP SKY-Y

This summer camp in Prescott has been giving Arizona children a fun escape from the heat for 78 years. Sky-Y campers can expect to participate in activities such as archery, ceramics, canoeing, a weekly dance, and hiking amongst the ponderosa pines. Kids are separated by age group and placed in cabins tailored to promote friendship and comradery, with experienced staff nearby through the camp's duration. Founded by the YMCA, Camp Sky-Y focuses on its founder's principles: caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. azycamps.org.

2014 WINNER

BEST KIDS' RESTAURANT AND BEST PLACE TO DINE WITH KIDS WITHOUT CRAYONS

>>PITA JUNGLE

This Mediterranean eatery, originating in Tempe in the mid-90's, was started with a specific mission in mind: to help guests maintain a healthy lifestyle by offering an eclectic mix of nutritional foods that appeal to even the pickiest kid's palate. Colorful local art adorns each location's walls and is rotated monthly, while those families with vegetarian or vegan needs have many options. Kids' meals are comprised of a choice from every main food group and come with a fun activities booklet. pitajungle.com.

2014 WINNER

BEST KIDS' ENTERTAINMENT: OUTDOORS

>>SUPERSTITION FARM

Open to the public since 2007, this working dairy farm in Mesa invites Arizona residents to come and see where their dairy products actually come from, while offering a variety of fun farm activities to kids and adults alike. Go for a hayride, feed rescued farm animals, or try one of the 12 flavors of milk at Superstition Farm's milk bar for an exciting outdoor experience. superstitionfarm.com.

2014 WINNER

BEST MASTER-PLAN COMMUNITY FOR CHILDREN

>>ESTRELLA BY NEWLAND COMMUNITIES

This community nestled among the hills of Goodyear is set apart from others of its kind, priding itself on providing a beautiful, peaceful and engaging lifestyle for every resident. Numerous golf courses, hiking trails and shopping are available for all, and Estrella even has a dedicated Lifestyle Director to schedule events and programs that draw the community closer. Schools for K-12 are all part of the community, and kids have a plentitude of extracurricular activities to choose from all year long. estrella.com.