

# Best of the Best



## Family Favorite **WINNERS**

*Discover the Best...*

Children's Clothing

Library Storytime

Family Restaurant

Family Festival

Party Location

Pediatrician

Music Class

Bookstore

Preschool

Toy Store

Daycamp

Local Park

Dance Class

... and More!



*Voted on by Readers!*

## Outdoor Family Fun

### Family Fairs & Festivals

**Gold Medal** ■ **H** There is a reason why **San Carlos Hometown Days** continues to win the *Bay Area Parent* Best Family Fair and is one of this year's inductee into the Hall of Fame. The community favorite for more than 25 years appeals to kids and parents alike with a parade, live music and dance performances, art exhibits and rides. *Burton Park, San Carlos. 650-594-2700. sancarloshometowndays.com.*

**Silver Medal** ■ **H** The **San Mateo County Fair** attracts thousands of visitors each year with its bright lights and carnival rides. With competitive exhibits, such as youth livestock competitions, and big name performers like KC & The Sunshine Band and "Weird Al" Yankovic, this year's fair from August 8-17 promises to be a great family event. *San Mateo County Expo Center, 2495 S. Delaware St., San Mateo. 650-574-3247. sanmateocountyfair.com.*

“The playground near the beach at Coyote Point State Recreation Area [is the best]. It has the tallest slide I have ever seen outside of an amusement park!”

– Jennifer Benesis, Pacifica

**Silver Medal** ■ **Stafford Park** in Redwood City is also a reader favorite for its small, fenced-off play space for toddlers and water play area. The park also has picnic tables, a grassy field, and a free concert program on Wednesday nights during the summer. *King St. at Hopkins Ave., Redwood City. 650-780-7250.*

### Outdoor Recreation Areas

**Gold Medal** ■ Scenically located on the San Mateo Marina, **Coyote Point Park** offers an opportunity to observe and enjoy nature up close. The park has a series of paved trails for walking and biking, and it is a popular spot for windsurfers. *1961 Coyote Point Dr., San Mateo. 650-573-2592.*

**Silver Medal** ■ **H** As far as I can tell, **Golden Gate Park**, and the nearby Presidio, is known worldwide for its gardens and museums. The Conservatory of Flowers and Japanese Tea Garden provide a peaceful departure from the busy city lifestyle. Hosts of other recreational activities are also available at the park and adjacent presidio. Be sure to check out the grand re-opening of the California Academy of Sciences in September. *Bounded by Stanyon St., Fulton St., Lincoln Way and the Great Highway, San Francisco. 415-831-2700. sfgov.org/site/rec-park\_index.asp.*

### Swim Centers

**Gold Medal** ■ The **Peninsula Jewish Community Center** (PJCC) features both an indoor and outdoor pool for open and lap swimming. The PJCC offers year-round

swim lessons for all ability levels and birthday parties. There are aquatic fitness classes for adults and a swim team for more advanced youngsters. *800 Foster City Blvd., Foster City. 650-378-2782. pjcc.org/health/aquatics/aq-index.html.*

**Silver Medal** ■ **H** A highly trained staff and small, age-appropriate classes are what make **La Petite Baleen** such a popular swim school. With three locations to choose from, the school focuses on teaching water-safe techniques and pre-swim team skills. *Half Moon Bay: 775 Main St.; San Bruno: 434 San Mateo Ave.; San Francisco: 933 Mason St. 866-896-3603. swimlpb.com.*



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Pacifica resident Dakota, 5, perches on a purple dragon at the Magic Mountain Playground in Coyote Point Park in San Mateo.

### Playgrounds

**Gold Medal** ■ The **Magic Mountain Playground** in **Coyote Point Park** features six slides and a three-story castle structure that will enchant any child. With plenty of square footage to run around in, this playground is a winner with princes and princesses alike. *1961 Coyote Point Dr., San Mateo. 650-573-2592.*

**H** = Bay Area Parent Hall of Fame Member.  
See page 46 for full listings.

## Rainy Day Fun

### Library Storytime

**Gold Medal** ■ The **San Carlos Library** packs a lot into its small space. In addition to regular storytime hours, the library provides family programs such as puppet shows, book clubs and movie night. They also offer a Mandarin Chinese/English bilingual storytime targeted to preschoolers. 610 Elm St., San Carlos. 650-591-0341. [sancarloslibrary.org](http://sancarloslibrary.org).

**Silver Medal** ■ The **San Mateo Library** features storytime six days a week, with programs aimed at infants to older children. The library also has a summer reading program and free activities for children throughout the summer. 55 West 3rd St., San Mateo. 650-522-7802. [smcl.org](http://smcl.org).

### Indoor Playspace

**Gold Medal** ■ Kids just love **Pump It Up** with its giant inflatable slides and bounce-houses. Pump It Up is especially popular for birthday parties, but they also provide open playtime to bounce around in a clean, safe environment. The inflatables are a winner with kids and with *Bay Area Parent* readers. Various locations. [pumpitupparty.com](http://pumpitupparty.com).

**Silver Medal** ■ **Safari Run** in San Mateo not only promotes fun, but health and fitness as well. Besides free play on the jungle-themed play structure and private birthday party opportunities, the entertainment center offers fitness programs and camps for children ages 3-14. 341 N. Amphlett Blvd., San Mateo. 650-342-1977. [safariirun.com](http://safariirun.com).

### Children's Museum

**Gold Medal** ■ **H** The **Coyote Point Museum** is a fun destination for kids, as well as the Peninsula's only environmental science museum. Kids can watch eggs hatch or feed the museum's foxes and river otters. The museum features wildlife shows where guests can view animals up close. 1651 Coyote Point Dr., San Mateo. 650-342-7755. [coyoteptmuseum.org](http://coyoteptmuseum.org).

“The Presidio is the best. There are so many lovely places to walk and explore with your kids. All the paths are great for bikes or rollerskates, too.”

— Emma Thompson, Petaluma

**Silver Medal** ■ **H** The **Bay Area Discovery Museum** in Sausalito is as much a tribute to the Bay Area as a museum. With an interactive Port of Oakland and a replica of an under-construction Golden Gate Bridge that kids can work on, this



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Gawron family of San Mateo rests in a nook of petrified wood at the Bay Area Discovery Museum in Sausalito.

popular museum – which draws visitors from across Northern California – combines interesting, playful exhibits with an appreciation of the bay. East Fort Baker, 557 McReynolds Road, Sausalito. 415-339-3900. [baykidsmuseum.org](http://baykidsmuseum.org).

## Enrichment

### Children's Art Studio/Craft Center

**Gold Medal** ■ **All Art Studio** presents a relaxed environment where students of all ages can practice art in a professionally equipped studio. Aspiring artists can take weekly, drop-in, or private classes, no matter what their ability level. The studio has a new, larger location in San Carlos. 1217 Laurel St., San Carlos. 650-654-6181. [allartstudio.net](http://allartstudio.net).

**Silver Medals** ■ With the motto that “Anyone can draw,” **ArtWorks Fine Art Studio** in San Francisco works to train students to be better artists by learning basic skills, then moving on to more advanced techniques. Artworks also provides opportunities for students to display their artwork, such as the specially chosen Master Student, whose work is featured at the studio for six months. 360 A & D West Portal Ave. 415-759-5757. [artworksfineartstudio.com](http://artworksfineartstudio.com).

**H** Survey respondents also liked **Laurel Street Arts**, a craft studio specializing in paint-your-own pottery, mosaics, and glass fusing. Young artists can paint ceramics that will be glazed and fired on location. The studio also offers birthday parties and other special events – even Mom’s Night Out! (See below) 733 Laurel St., San Carlos. 650-591-1005. [laurelstreetarts.com](http://laurelstreetarts.com).