



Health

# FIT FAMILIES



Get active (and have fun) with the whole crew

BY LAURIE KAISER

In this harried era of modern parenting, much of our free time is spent watching children's organized sports, gymnastics or dance classes from the sidelines. As for our own fitness, we might squeeze in a quick trip to the gym or jump on the treadmill for 20 minutes — if we're lucky. Exercising as a family? Not so much.

However, with a little thought and effort, quality family time can double as fitness time. From bike paths to parent/child exercise classes, there's a wealth of fitness-related recreation in Western New York that families can enjoy together. Here are a few options.

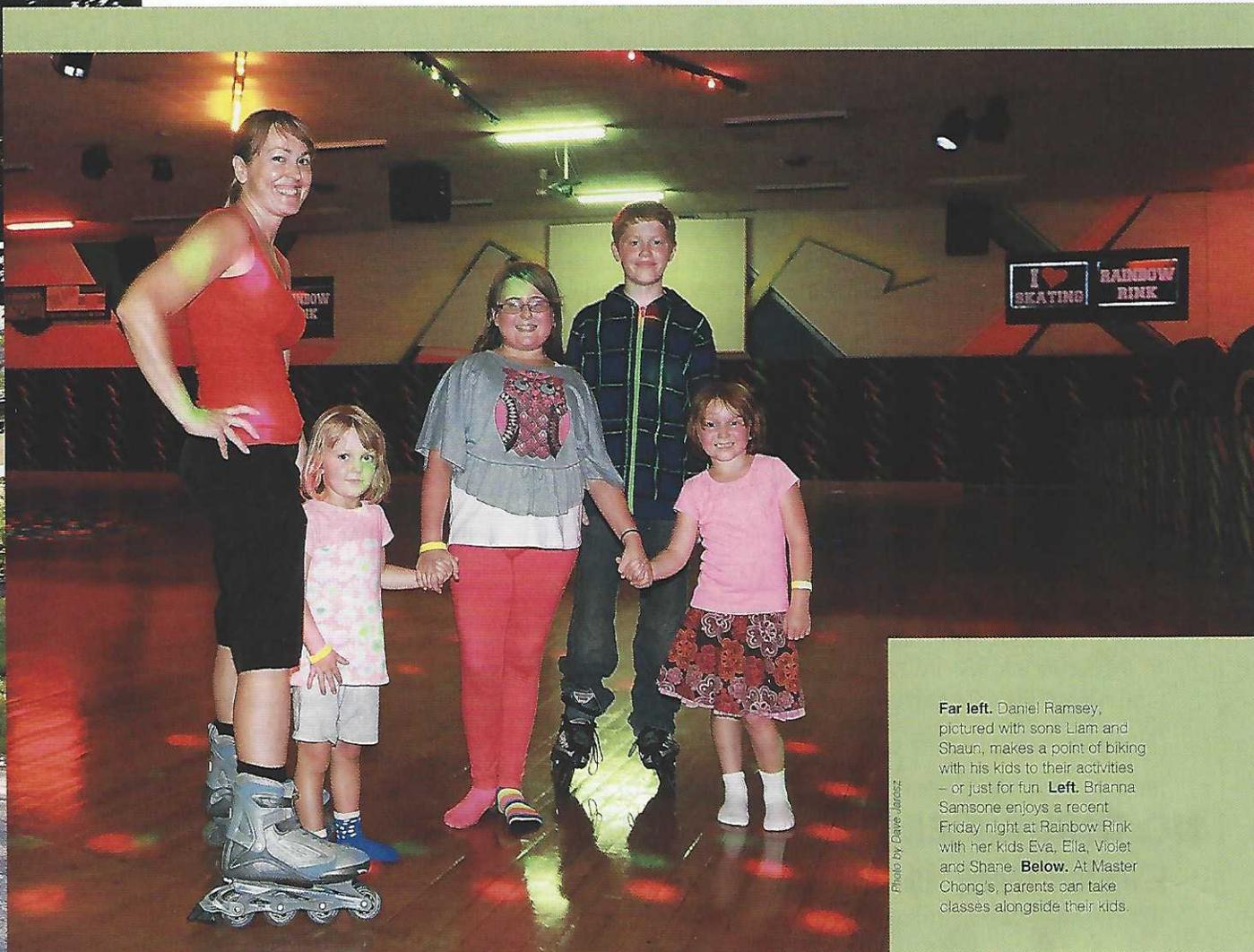
## Two-wheeling it

If you haven't heard, Buffalo is beefing up its bike lanes and improving interconnectivity in an effort to make the city more bike-friendly. Already, there are numerous paths throughout the city and suburbs that families can tackle together.

Daniel Ramsey, an Amherst father of three

who regularly rides his bike to work and makes long weekend rides, said he likes to practice by example.

"As a parent, I bike with the kids to the community pool or the movies under the stars at UB. I also enjoy the quality time cycling with the kids to their camps or other activities," he said. "Most often



**Far left.** Daniel Ramsey, pictured with sons Liam and Shaun, makes a point of biking with his kids to their activities – or just for fun. **Left.** Brianna Samsone enjoys a recent Friday night at Rainbow Rink with her kids Eva, Ella, Violet and Shane. **Below.** At Master Chong's, parents can take classes alongside their kids.

Photo by Dave Jarosz



Photo by Dave Jarosz

we take the back routes to our destinations. And I see many families out and about the cycle path around Ellicott Creek Trail (the UB North Campus).”

There are many websites where you can find bike trails throughout WNY, such as [Mapmyride.com/us/buffalo-ny](http://Mapmyride.com/us/buffalo-ny) and [Campuswheehworks.com/wny-bike-ride-maps](http://Campuswheehworks.com/wny-bike-ride-maps).

Events like Slow Roll Buffalo, held every Monday night seasonally, bring thousands of bikers together to explore city neighborhoods – its measured pace makes it very family-friendly, too. ([Slowrollbuffalo.org](http://Slowrollbuffalo.org)).

### Dust off the roller skates

Many of us have fond memories of the roller rink from childhood (disco night, anyone?) But skating still provides a thorough aerobic workout that involves all the body's

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muscles, especially the heart, and is equivalent to jogging in terms of health benefits, according to the American Heart Association. Who knew? So lace up those skates and show the kids how the crossover move is done. (It'll come back to you.)

Most rinks charge less than \$10 per person for admission and skate rentals, so skating also makes an affordable family outing. Rainbow Rink in North Tonawanda offers a family of four special for \$40 on Friday nights that includes admission, skate rental, a pizza, pitcher of soda, admission to the Bounce Zone and 20 tokens for the arcade games ([Rainbowrink.com](http://Rainbowrink.com)).

Other local roller skating facilities include:

Kiddie Skateland, Buffalo. 882-2104

Spinners Family Skate Center, West Seneca,

[Westsenecaspinner.com](http://Westsenecaspinner.com)

### Tae Kwon Do

Experts say that this ancient Korean martial art increases attention span, self-confidence and respect for others. What's not to love?

Sun Ki Chong, a former Korean champion and head coach for the U.S. National Tae Kwon Do team, opened Master Chong's World Class Tae Kwon Do in 1993. Now with five locations, his

school offers several family classes each week that allow parents and children to practice the martial art together.

"It's a timesaver because rather than heading off to the gym to get a workout and then going to kids' activities, it's all rolled together," said Michel Mertens, Master Chong executive director. "Like a Disney movie, the plan for our classes has been scripted from the beginning to be appropriate for a family audience. Our instructors break down the concepts in a welcoming environment where both kids and adults feel willing to try something new."

When a family joins, they can mix and match the classes they want to take. For pricing and more information, visit [Buffalotkd.com](http://Buffalotkd.com).

### JCC and YMCA

Although it's always been focused on family fitness, the Buffalo-Niagara YMCA's five facilities now feature a growing number of parent-child fitness classes, such as the Mommy and Me Barre for children ages 6 and up, as well as kids' versions of classes once just geared just for adults, such as Zumba and yoga.

"In recent years, as news of the childhood obesity epidemic became more prevalent, we've been more intentional about offering fitness classes for kids of different age

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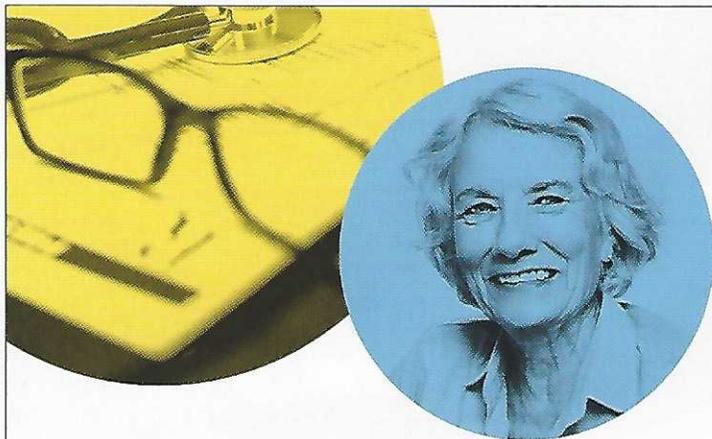
groups and providing opportunities for busy families to come to the YMCA and do something healthy together," said Kelly Standage, associate executive director of the Southtown YMCA.

In addition to classes, the Y also offers a "Train with your Tween," program that introduces kids age 10 and older to the exercise machines in the Wellness Center that they can use with a parent.

At the Jewish Community Center (JCC) of Greater Buffalo, little ones can jump into classes such as KidsFit designed just for them while their parents burn off stress on one of the many elliptical machines or treadmills. The JCC's Getzville location has a large outdoor pool where families can play and relax together during warm weather. And year-round, the JCC offers an array of aqua exercise classes and swimming lessons for all ages ([JCCBuffalo.org](http://JCCBuffalo.org)).

For cutting-edge family fun, visit the Ken-Ton branch of the YMCA. At the start of 2016, the branch updated its kids' fitness area to include virtual reality bikes, a traversing wall, and a multisensory SMARfit Pro Trainer where families can play myriad games with a grid. Executive Director Greg Larson said the new fitness area has been very popular with families ([YMCABuffaloniagara.org](http://YMCABuffaloniagara.org)). ■

Laurie Kaiser is a local freelance writer and mom who exercises when she can.



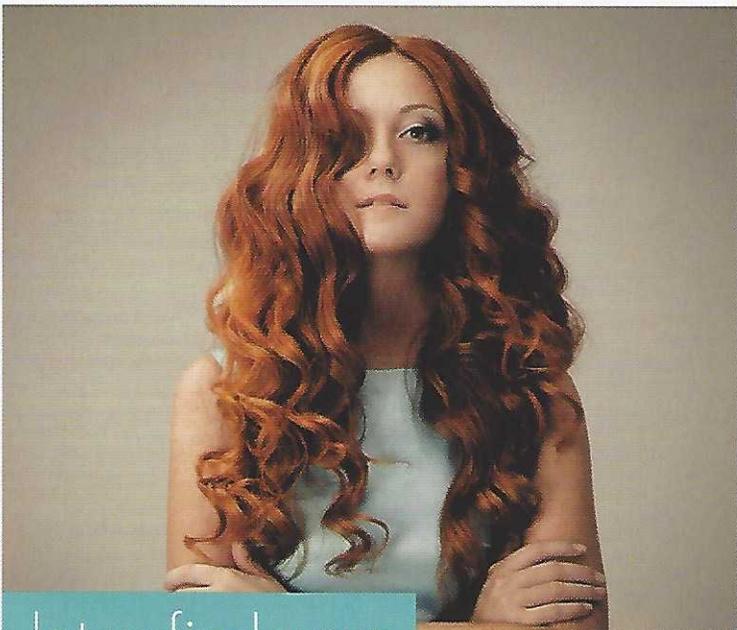
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