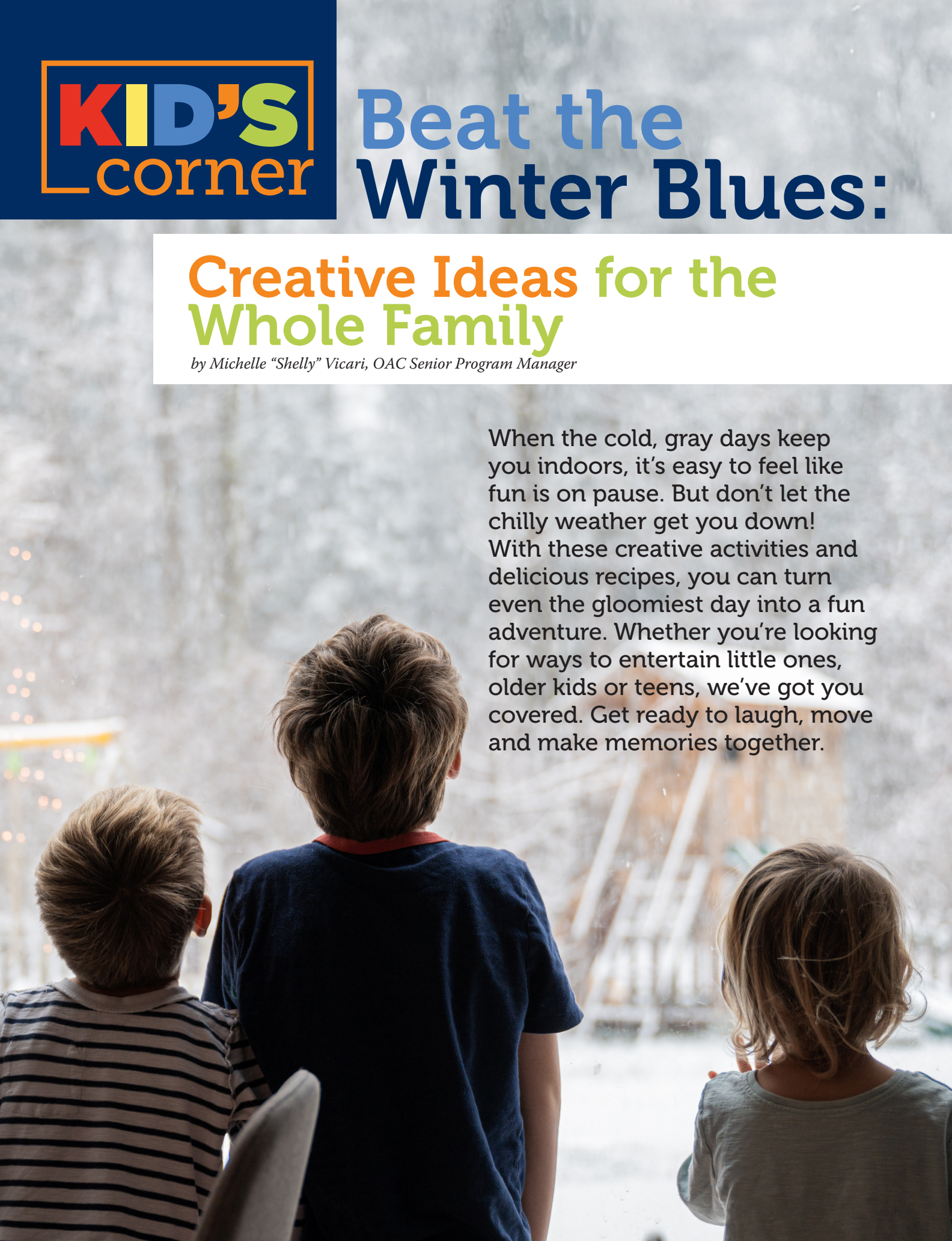


Beat the Winter Blues:

Creative Ideas for the Whole Family

by Michelle "Shelly" Vicari, OAC Senior Program Manager

A photograph of three children from behind, looking out a window at a snowy winter scene. The child on the left is wearing a striped shirt, the middle child is wearing a dark blue t-shirt, and the child on the right is wearing a light-colored t-shirt. The window shows a snowy landscape with trees and a wooden structure, possibly a playhouse or fort, in the snow. The lighting is soft and natural, suggesting an overcast day.

When the cold, gray days keep you indoors, it's easy to feel like fun is on pause. But don't let the chilly weather get you down! With these creative activities and delicious recipes, you can turn even the gloomiest day into a fun adventure. Whether you're looking for ways to entertain little ones, older kids or teens, we've got you covered. Get ready to laugh, move and make memories together.

Fun Indoor Activities for the Whole Family

For Young Kids (Ages 3-8)

Pillow Fort Adventures

Gather pillows, blankets and couch cushions to create the ultimate indoor fort. Once it's built, turn it into a story time nook with books and flashlights.

Book suggestion: "We're Going on a Bear Hunt" by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury. This timeless classic follows a family journeying through rivers, forests and caves in search of a bear. Bring stuffed bears into your fort to create a "bear cave."

Animal Moves Game

Take turns acting out different animals and guessing what they are. Gallop like a horse, slither like a snake or hop like a frog.

For older kids, use the animal moves to create a group story. For example: "Once upon a time, there was a horse galloping through the forest. Suddenly, it met a snake slithering on the ground, heading to the store." Encourage everyone to take turns adding to the story with a new animal and movement. It's a great way to blend creativity and physical activity!

Balloon Volleyball or Keep It Up

Blow up a balloon and use it to play volleyball in your living room. Set up a "net" using a piece of string or tape on the floor. If space is tight or you're playing alone, see how long you can keep the balloon in the air.

DIY Playdough Making

Most people have fond memories of squishing and shaping playdough into fun creatures. You can buy tubs online or from the store, or even better...try making your own!

Playdough Recipe

Ingredients:

- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup salt
- 1 cup water
- 1 tbsp. vegetable oil
- Food coloring (optional)

Mix the flour and salt in a large bowl. Add water and oil, stirring until a dough forms. Knead until smooth. If you want colorful playdough, add a few drops of food coloring while kneading. Store in an airtight container for up to a week. Use kitchen tools like rolling pins, cookie cutters or a garlic press for your creations. Add buttons, rocks, twigs or pipe cleaners for extra details.



For Older Kids (Ages 9-12)

DIY Escape Room

Create a mini escape room challenge using puzzles, riddles and clues hidden around the house. Include a mix of brain teasers and active tasks to keep players engaged:

- **Brain Teaser:**

“I have keys but no door.”

Place the clue near a keyboard for players to find.

- **Active Task:**

Tape a note on a mirror that says:

“Spin three times and hop on one foot while chanting, ‘Next clue, where are you?’ Once you’re done, look behind the mirror!”



Art Gallery

Break out the art supplies and have everyone create something unique. Once the artwork is finished, display it and hold a “gallery showing” to admire the masterpieces. Invite each artist to describe their work, and consider inviting neighbors or grandparents to join the event.

Mini Sports Tournament

Host an indoor tournament with games like sock bowling (use empty plastic water bottles as pins) or paper airplane races. Keep a scoreboard and create medals or ribbons for the winners.



For Teens (Ages 13+)

Indoor Photography Scavenger Hunt

Give teens a list of creative photo challenges and let them use their phones or cameras to capture each item. At the end, share and compare photos.

Creative Photo Challenge Ideas:

- **Patterns:** Find something with an interesting pattern, like tiles, fabrics or shadows.
- **Close-Up Mystery:** Take a close-up photo of something small and let others guess what it is.
- **Colors of the Rainbow:** Find objects matching each color of the rainbow.
- **Emotion in Objects:** Snap a photo of an object or scene that makes you feel happy, calm or curious.
- **Seasonal Theme:** Find something that reminds you of winter, like a warm blanket or a frosty window.
- **Action Shot:** Snap a photo of something or someone in motion, like a pet running or a sibling dancing.
- **Nature Indoors:** Find something in your home that reminds you of nature, like a houseplant or a wood grain surface.
- **Family Favorites:** Take a picture of something that represents a family member's personality or hobby.



Friendly Fitness Contest

Turn your living room into a mini gym with challenges like planking, jumping jacks or push-ups. Let everyone take turns being the “coach,” calling out moves and setting timers.

Learn a Dance Routine

Learn a trending social media dance. It’s a great way to stay active, laugh and bond with family or friends. Include loved ones virtually by practicing the routine together online.



Something for the Whole Family

Snowflake Quesadillas

Ingredients: Whole-wheat tortillas, shredded cheese and veggie fillings (like diced peppers, onions, tomatoes or spinach).

Fold a tortilla in half and cut shapes into the edges, as if making paper snowflakes. Open the tortilla, sprinkle cheese and veggies on one half, and fold it back. Cook in a skillet over medium heat or bake in a 400°F oven until the cheese is melted.



Spring Cleaning

Take some time to clean out closets, basements or attics as a family. Create three piles: donate, toss and keep. This is a great way to declutter and get a head start on spring cleaning while working together to organize your home and help others.

Winter days don’t have to feel gray when you fill them with creativity, movement and family fun. Whether it’s building a cozy pillow fort for story time, learning a trending dance or cooking up a batch of snowflake quesadillas for dinner, these simple activities bring warmth and laughter to the season and turn chilly days into cherished memories.

About the Author:

Michelle “Shelly” Vicari, OAC Senior Program Manager and Past OAC Chair, majored in Child Development and Family Studies as well as Political Science at San Diego State University. She was formerly the Curriculum Director at the largest Child Care Centers accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in Southern California. She has authored numerous curriculum guides for teachers working with young children and was lucky enough to once meet Mr. Fred Rogers!



ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



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The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
 - Community Discussion Forum
 - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



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