The Cure for Cabin Fever
6 Unique Stops for Winter Family Fun
By Nancy Riddle

I have lived on the North Shore for over 25 years and truly appreciate all it has to offer. As a former science/tech teacher – now local business owner and mom to a 12-year-old son and 6-year-old daughter – I like to explore our area for resources that are a little off the beaten path. Here are some fun spots for you and your family to check out this winter.

The Grove (1421 Milwaukee Ave., Glenview)

Rich in nature and history, this 145-acre site is truly amazing. Make the Interpretive Center your first stop. Here, knowledgeable volunteers and staff are happy to acquaint you with their live collection of native turtles, frogs, fish, snakes and birds. History buffs will enjoy the Native American Village with many hands-on activities, and experiencing pioneer life in the Log Cabin and One-Room Schoolhouse. There are always great events happening here too, like festivals, workshops and a vintage market.

Abt Electronics (1200 N. Milwaukee Ave., Glenview)

This isn’t just a place to buy appliances! Abt has it all for an afternoon of family fun. There are enough snacks to feed you all, like free popcorn and freshly baked cookies on Saturdays and Sundays from one of the demonstration kitchens. Sit down with your goodies to watch a movie in one of the reclining chairs, or visit the massive aquarium, choreographed dancing fountain, giant bubble maker, “audiokinetic” Mouse Trap ball machine, or a digital display of virtual butterflies that “land” on you. Of course, there are plenty of electronic gadgets for the grown-ups to “play” with too.

Wilmette Pet Center (625 Green Bay Rd., Wilmette)

Owner Dave Cozzolino and staff are so knowledgeable and helpful. I like bringing the kids to look, learn and touch. They have cats, dogs and bunnies to pet, birds to mimic you, and fish and reptiles too. In business since 1945, the store became the first 100% foster home “pet shop” in our area. As partners with Adopt-A-Pet Illinois, any dog or cat you find here is a rescue being fostered until they find a loving forever home.

Little Beans Café (430 Asbury Ave., Evanston)

If you’re a parent of little people, sometimes you want to have a play date with friends, but don’t want the cleaning or coffee-making. This latest addition to the kids’ indoor play space scene is an awesome alternative. Very well decorated and designed with separate areas for little kids, big kids (and the owners of both), there are many different play stations, like a mini town, interactive tree house, Ninja Warrior obstacle with zip line, and a café serving treats like Intelligentsia coffee, smoothies and panini.