

Commentary... Take your kids camping

By Edie Jones
Correspondent

Recently I read an article about the joys of taking your toddler camping and it took me back to the days when my adult children were little. The memories of those excursions are very precious and the results, as shown in the way they are raising their own children and living their lives, are evidence of the value.

Soon after reading the article, I was visiting with a young Sisters mom who had just taken her 18-month-old on her first camping trip. Unfortunately, it was not a lot of fun. In fact, they cut their outing short and came home.

How sad! I hope I can convince her to try again.

Camping with a toddler is definitely a different experience, and that is probably the first thing to recognize. Your attention needs to be focused on them instead of your own agenda. Being prepared for possible problems will make a big difference.

Toddlers are going to get filthy; relax, let it happen. There are some studies that indicate that children who eat dirt will develop immune systems that may resist allergies and other problems later on.

Whether at home or in a campground you have to keep an eye on your toddler. That's a given. While camping, picking up sticks and running with them is always a danger or the possibility of falling into the fire will keep you on your guard. These are different challenges than in your backyard, but the job of monitoring your toddler's actions is the same.

An idea that came from the article on keeping little ones warm and cozy at night is pretty ingenious. Instead of worrying about how to keep them in a sleeping bag, put them to bed in their snow-suit! Now they can squirm and wiggle to their hearts content and wake-up rested and cheerful. No more worried nights for mom and dad, who also get to sleep through the night.

If the dark of night is a problem, hang small battery-operated lights in the tent and make it a magical place.

Tents can double as wonderful places to play since most young ones love small areas to climb into, onto and around. Use sleeping bags and air mats to create exciting hiding places. Take along favorite toys and turn your home away from home into a fort with all kinds of special surprises. A little planning ahead will make a big difference. And tents create wonderful storytime locations.

Why is it important to take your kids outdoors? Why on earth would you want to put yourself through the hard work of making it happen? There are lots of reasons, one of them being perspective.

Since a toddler's gaze is usually on their immediate surroundings they will naturally be attracted to the things nearer to the ground and under their feet. This causes you to also pay more attention to things that crawl, slither, burrow and glide along the earth or water. When was the last time you spent 10 minutes examining the antics of a colony of ants? What industrious

critters they are, with lessons to teach about persistence. Explore and discover with your children and your life will be enriched.

A book every parent would be wise to read is "Last Child in the Woods," by Richard Louv, who coined the phrase "nature-deficit disorder." This is his way of describing the increasing urbanization of America and the decreasing time children spend in unstructured play.

This book describes in detail scientific studies linking time in nature to a host of emotional and physical benefits including higher self-esteem, stress reduction, better social interactions and prevention of childhood depression. Children who spend time in natural places with lots of free time increase their inventiveness and creativity. Imagination blooms with increased exposure to unstructured elements. The future of our kids and of society depends on the development of these qualities. These are characteristics needed in our next generation of leaders and citizens.

Closer to home, there are few better ways to help your children become inquisitive and prepared to learn in school. The younger you begin, the more opportunity there is for this to happen. And, living here in Sisters, we've a wonderful, natural "school" at our fingertips.

This column was inspired by the writing of Seattle-based freelancer Jeff Layton who writes about outdoor adventures and overseas travels on his blog, MarriedToAdventure.com.

ODOT to brief city council on roundabout

After gathering feedback from citizens, property owners, business owners, the Sisters Area Chamber of Commerce and U.S. Forest Service, the Oregon Department of Transportation will brief the Sisters City Council on plans for the Barclay Drive/Highway 20 roundabout at the 7 p.m. Council meeting on Thursday, August 25.

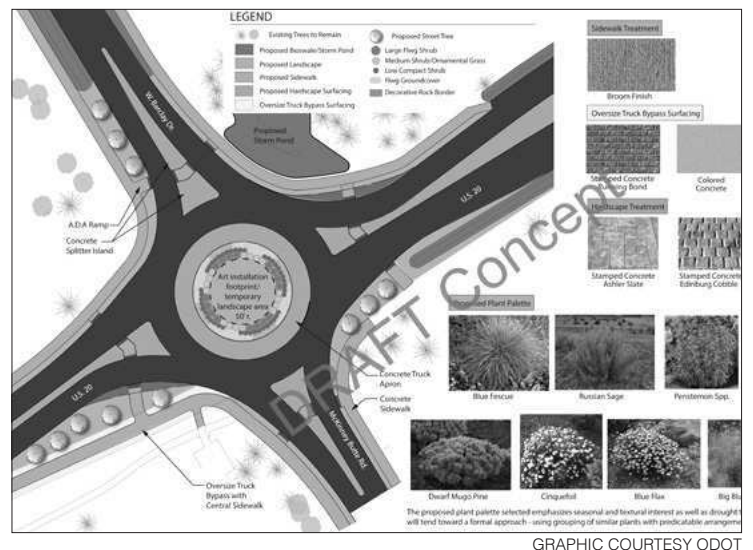
Abby Driscoll of ODOT told *The Nugget* that plans are for bids to be taken in December, with construction on the project starting in February 2017, with a goal of traffic moving through the roundabout by Memorial Day weekend. She said that some finishing touches will still need to be done after that date, but ODOT wants to have the roundabout moving traffic through by that traditional kickoff of the summer season.

ODOT is seeking City Council approval of the roundabout construction traffic management plan and the aesthetics of the installation. The public can view the draft concept plan at <http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/REGION4/Pages/US20atBarclayDrive.aspx>.

ODOT has met with focus groups on management of traffic during construction, and Driscoll assured *The Nugget* that "we're going to make sure people can get through."

A similar traffic management plan was required during the renovation and reconstruction of Cascade Avenue in 2014.

Focus groups have also discussed the aesthetics of the project, including colors of concrete, and art for the installation, which will mark a gateway into Central Oregon.



Landscaping and color choices are part of the plan.

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