

Better Parenting: Summer Fun for Kids of All Ages

By Sonia Spackman

A lot of us are experiencing economic times that stink, right now. But we don't have to go to Disneyland to have fun with our kids. We can have great family fun without leaving Vernonia or even our own homes or back yards. As families, we can have old-fashioned fun and create cherished memories with our kids without spending lots of money! Doing things together can bring us closer as we get away from the TV, video games and the computer, and we choose to hang out doing new and crazy things together.

I have listed several of our favorite family activities. I pulled a few off the internet and thought up a few fun things for Vernonians. I hope these ideas trigger some new ones for you to try. Don't forget you can videotape some of these outrageous activities to watch later this winter while drinking hot cider.

- 1. Sleep-over movie night:** Move all of your mattresses onto the family room floor for an energetic and fun family sleep-over night. The kids will love it as you pop some corn, make root beer floats and watch a funny movie. Or better yet, family movies.
- 2. Backwards day:** Take a day and reverse everything to create your own backwards day. Have breakfast for dinner and dinner for breakfast; put your clothes on backwards, watch a movie first thing in the morning and cartoons in the evening. Have the kids

help with the planning and enjoy the ideas they come up with. Anything that breaks the daily routine will make it fun.

- 3. Treasure hunts:** This can be as big or small as you wish. Ask the kids to find something "purple" and as soon as they find it and bring it back, ask for something else. At the end, give a little treat or reward. To make it bigger, give them a list of things you have hidden and let them go.
- 4. Eat like a pig:** Kids love a mess. So, break the rules one night and have a dessert-eating contest with one rule-- no hands-- any excuse to eat without silverware will be funny.
- 5. Culture and Dinner Night:** This is a great way to get kids to try new foods, and learn about other cultures, even from your family roots. For example, get them involved in cooking Greek food, play Greek music, dress up in the colors or the ethnic clothes and watch the movie "My Big Fat Greek Wedding." Have each member of the family bring one fact about that country and have fun with it.
- 6. House Camp-out & Flashlight Fun:** This one has been a favorite over the years and now with the grandchildren, as well. Make a fort with blankets, or sheets over chairs, or over the dining room table. You might use a wardrobe box from Uhaul; or call an appliance store for refrigerator, dishwasher, or stove boxes. For an individual play fort, cut pretend windows and doors on the sides. Give each child a little flashlight or use larger ones for finger shadows inside the forts or on the walls.

for the winners.

- 8. Put on a family play:** Go to the library, check out books with one-act, two-act, or three-act plays and act them out as a family for other relatives, or as a dinner theater. Or go to the Senior Center and act out your play at a luncheon there. Ask a family friend, relative or neighbor to videotape for future Academy Awards if you decide to do this a lot. It would be nice to have everyone sit in a circle and share, one by one, about what they liked about each person's performance.
- 9. Play board games or cards by candlelight:** Years ago, there was a terrible snow storm. The power was out for several days. I placed two large candelabras on the dining table and six of us played a Monopoly game late into the night. For years, the kids would ask if we could turn out all the lights in the house and get out those candelabras and play Monopoly in the dark! You don't have to lose your power to have this kind of fun!
- 10. Draw the music:** Get a roll of butcher paper, large art tablet, or poster board, crayons, markers, colored pencils or pastel crayons. Without talking, put on different types of music the family is not familiar with, and have everyone draw what the music sounds like using soft and hard scribbles, strokes, figure-eights or lines in different colors expressing creative pictures of the music. When the family is finished, have each share what they were experiencing while playing the music again.
- 11. Which is true and which is a lie?** At the dinner table or sitting around the family room, have each family member take turns telling a true story-- something that actually happened. And tell a false story that did not happen. Everyone take turns guessing which story is true and which is a lie. A prize and cheers to the winner that can trick the family. This is fun for a gathering of teens or adults.
- 12. Junk trade-off hunt:** Have the family each get something weird-- the tackier the better-- from your attic, basement, or garage. Pair up in teams or groups and go door to door and try to get someone to

Free Class Teaches About Medicare Learn now – avoid costly problems later

What you don't know about Medicare health insurance could hurt you financially. For example, if you miss important enrollment deadlines, your Medicare can cost more for life. If you don't understand what your health insurance covers, you might pay bills you don't owe or miss out on benefits you may have been eligible to receive.

On Tuesday, August 4, you have a chance to learn about Medicare and how you can get free, personalized help with Medicare.

A free, two-hour class titled "Medicare ABC and Ds" at Vernonia Senior Center starts at 9:30 AM. Register by calling 503-429-3912.

In addition to learning about your Medicare benefits, you will learn about the Senior Health Insurance Benefits Assistance program (SHIBA). SHIBA is sponsored by Medicare and the State of Oregon and offers free Medicare counseling. It also produces "user-friendly" materials that explain your health plan and drug coverage choices. These materials will be provided at the class.

This class is for anyone who is interested in learning more about Medicare. That includes people who

are already enrolled, but need to be aware of changes. For example:

- Did you know that in October you may receive a letter from your health insurance plan announcing that your premiums will go up and you will receive fewer benefits?
- Some private Medicare Advantage health plans may discontinue coverage in your area.
- Your drug plan will probably change its rates and increase co-pays and drop drugs from coverage, too. If you don't review your benefits each November/December, you may find out at the pharmacy in January that your plan no longer covers one of your very important medications. By then, it will be too late to change plans.

If you can't attend the class, but would like help with Medicare, you can reach SHIBA at: 1-800-722-4134.

7. Have (your last name here) Olympics: Hold Olympics just for your family. Events can range from cakewalks, walking relays with an egg on a spoon, and include the famous water balloon toss. Use your imagination for individual and team events. Make sure everyone is included. Use your imagination on this one; you can even make gold, silver and bronze medals out of cardboard and put them on ribbons

For Goodness Sake... Promoting Health of the Mind, Body, Spirit and Community

by Heather Lewis, LMT, CLT, NT

Phew! Bridgette and I just finished our walk around the lake and back home again. Even though we set out early, it is already building up to be another warm one. As we step into the house, the first thing Bridgette does is head for the water dish. Smart dog. The importance of proper hydration is not something she dwells on, I'm sure, it just comes naturally.

As people, we tend to let "busyness" take priority in our day, while pushing the signs and signals of our bodies' needs to the back of our mind. This time of year, that can be a danger.

Did you know that more than 70% of the body is water? For someone weighing 120 pounds that equals roughly 10 gallons of water. Water plays essential roles in every major system of the body. It is key in eliminating toxins, regulates body temperature, helps maintain muscle tone, and aids in transporting nutrients to our cells. In the normal process of bodily functions, we lose between 1/2 and 2/3 of a gallon in fluids a day. It typically takes 8+ glasses of water to replenish that loss.

In warmer weather, with the tendency to be more active, those needs increase. Dehydration sets in when there is a loss of the water and minerals needed for proper bodily functions. Physical signs can range from fatigue, loss of appetite, heat intolerance, and low quantities of dark yellow urine. Severe dehydration can cause muscle spasms, high body-core temperatures, and complete exhaustion. The best way to counter the possibility for dehydration is to frequently drink plenty of water.

Often, we replace fluids by consuming beverages such as milk, fruit juices, coffee, tea, and sodas. Our bodies will extract the water from these sources through digestion. However, caffeinated beverages tend to hinder more than help in hydrating as they actually act as a diuretic; so don't count them (sodas, coffee or energy drinks, caffeinated teas and alcoholic beverages) toward your daily intake.

So, enjoy the warm weather, but stay safe out there with plenty of readily available beverages! Here's wishing you good health...

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