



By: Jennifer Gregory

Come Play Outside: Activities For Families!

In this day of video games and 24-hour children's TV channels, many kids gravitate towards inside activities, even in the summer. However, spending time outside is important to both your child's physical and emotional health. "Children learn to understand their world through unstructured play," says Dr. Joanna Dolgoff, pediatrician and author of "Red Light, Green Light, Eat Right." "Outdoor play is also associated with lower obesity rates."

One of the best ways to encourage children to go outside is for you participate in games and outdoor activities with them. They will see that you enjoying the outdoors and it will reinforce how families can 'play' together outside the house. "Nothing brings my family closer than a day spent together in nature," says Dolgoff.

Go Letterboxing

Letterboxing is a great family hobby where you follow clues

to find small boxes hidden in parks or other public places. To get started, your family will need a blank journal, a small ink pad and a rubber stamp. Go to www.letterboxing.org and find clues to a letterbox in your area. For your first box, you might want to pick a location that you are already familiar with. Before you head out, explain to your kids that you may not always find the letterbox, but that part of the fun is enjoying the hike. When you find the letterbox, there will be a small journal and stamp in the box. Stamp your family journal with the stamp from the box and leave your family stamp in the letterbox journal. Many families also record some details about their hike in the journal in the letterbox, such as who found it or any wildlife observed, in their family journal. Carefully re-hide the box so that it will be there for another letterboxer to find.

Look at Stars

Let your kids stay up late on night on a clear night and head out to look at the stars. Before you venture out, check (<http://www.skyandtelescope.com/observing/ataglance>) to see what planets and constellations are visible in your area. Find a spot that is away from the city lights and bring blankets or chairs. Teach your kids how to find the North Star and show them how to find the Big and Little Dipper. For an extra special evening, go stargazing during a meteor shower. Be sure to bring a fun snack, such as popcorn or hot chocolate, for your family to enjoy while watching the stars.

Play a group game

While many kids enjoy playing freeze tag and hide and go seek, try a new game next time you are outside. Show your kids how to play Four Square and help them draw a court on the driveway with chalk. You can organize the neighborhood into a rousing game of Capture the Flag that the kids and grownups alike will enjoy. On a warm evening, head outside to play Kick-the-Can or Ghost in The Graveyard. You can find how to play these games and other outdoor group games on www.familyfun.com.

Plant a Garden

A garden is a fun way to encourage your child to be outside, learn about plants and teach healthy eating. Since many kids are more willing to try vegetables that they grow, plant

Hwang's Martial Arts

Now Enrolling...

After School Martial Arts Fall 2010 for Grades K-5

- Transportation From Local Schools 5 Days a Week
- Daily Martial Arts Classes
- Homework & Snack Time
- 5:30 Pickup

Enrollment is limited, so call or email today!



Currently transporting from Lone Oak, Hendron Lone Oak and Clark Elementary Schools

554-6667

2925 Lone Oak Road • Paducah
hwangsmartialart@bellsouth.net www.hwangs-martialarts.com

a small vegetable garden together. If you do not have a yard, you can plant tomatoes or strawberries in containers on your porch. Encourage your child to take care of the flowers by watering and weeding. If you have a bigger area, you can create a specialty garden, such as a pizza garden, where you grow veggies and herbs that you can put on a pizza. Help your child plant some colorful flowers, such as zinnias or sunflowers, from seeds and watch them grow together. You can get ideas on kid friendly plants and gardens at www.kidsgardening.org.



Play with Outside Toys Together

In addition to the usual outside toys of bubbles and sidewalk chalk, give your child some new toys for outside. Jump rope with them and teach them the jump rope rhymes you used to sing or chant with you were a child. Have a hula hoop contest with them and see who can last the longest. Give your child a small bucket of water, large clean paintbrush and show her how to paint the driveway with water.

Toddlers and preschoolers can be amused for hours with a plastic storage bin filled with water and some toys, like colanders and measuring cups. Be sure to supervise children around water at all times.

Take a Nature Walk

With Land between the Lakes here in Kentucky and The Garden of the Gods in Illinois there really is no excuse for not getting out of the house and enjoying our local national parks and the wonder of nature. Taking a nature walk together is great exercise and teaches your child about observing the world around them. Choose a theme to make it interesting: You and your family can take a 'color' nature

walk where you look for things during your walk that are yellow. Or listen for all the different sounds that you hear on your walk and write them in a notebook. For preschoolers, make a bracelet out of packing tape with the sticky side outside and show them how to press the treasures they find onto the tape 'bracelet'.

To make your nature walk even more engaging, create an Explorer's Kit for your child: Put a magnifying glass, notebook, a field guide for your areas and set of binoculars in a backpack. A younger child can have their own binoculars by taping two empty rolls of toilet paper together. You can also include some zip lock bags for your child to collect treasures along the way. When you get home, put your treasures on a special shelf or in a box to display what you have found. You can find more nature walk ideas at www.greenhour.org. You can also use the Nature Find section of this site run by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) to find other nature areas near your home. †‡

Jennifer Gregory is the mom of three kids and two dogs. She has fond memories of playing kick the can on hot summer nights when she was growing up.

The Market Place
A Unique Gift Boutique at Parcell's

Great Lake Decor and Clothing Items

New collection of lake décor items and Bungalow tote bags. For the children: Alex, Doug & Melissa toys silly bandz & Hello Kitty. Large selection of Tervis Tumblers as well as jewelry, handbags, Lakegirl clothing and more!

Follow both of us on

Hello Kitty

parcellsdeli.com
Inside Parcell's Deli • Draffenville
Diedra Robinette • 270-527-2080