

County: Harlan

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### SUMMER FUN ACTIVITIES

When we are on a tight budget, it can be hard to find interesting and challenging activities for our children and grandchildren for the summer. However, with a little thought and sometimes just a little planning, we can find plenty of summer fun activities. Here are just a few suggestions.

- You don't have to travel far to have a picnic. In fact, you don't have to travel any farther than your own backyard. The fun isn't only in the picnic alone, but in the planning of it. It is a perfect way to create some cheap summer fun.
- Gardens offer kids a perfect opportunity for learning about plant life. If you start early enough in the season, you can start the garden from seeds. That is the ideal way to start a garden since the kids can watch the garden grow from the very beginning sprouts. However if you start too late in the season to plant seeds, you can buy a few seedlings from just about anywhere, including many grocery stores. The kids can still watch the plants grow. Have them keep a chart of the growth every day or two. They can even draw pictures of the plants as they grow. And be sure that your child waters the plants and gets rid of the weeds. Most children in Harlan County participated in the 4-H Windowsill Garden Project and have had a head start on tomatoes. I don't think I have planted a single seed in my garden this year that my five year old grandson, Dylan, didn't help plant. He loves working in the garden with Popaw.
- Libraries are wonderful sources of free fun kids. For one thing, libraries often have free programs for children. But it's not just the programs that make libraries fun for kids. It's the books the libraries hold that kids will also find fun and exciting.
- Families don't need to go on vacations or spend lots of money to enjoy some time together. All they need to do is plan some fun activities to share. Among the possibilities are watching movies or playing games

together. Family nights can provide summer fun anytime, but especially on those rainy days when the kids can't play outdoors. Wallins Principal Bristol Belcher and his wife Vanessa treat their kids to outdoor movies using projector and screen.

- You don't need to travel any farther than your own backyard to plan a camping trip. Part of the fun is in the planning, so take your time to find the right spot to pitch a tent and decide on activities the whole family can enjoy.
- A waterpark in the backyard? Absolutely! If you already have a playset, all you have to do is get a hose (or two) and prop them up to spray water on it. If you don't, this might be the time to get one. You may have to spend money on one, but it will still be cheaper than what you'd pay for a family vacation. If you don't want to go with a playset, get a small backyard pool. Again, all you have to do is set up some hoses to spray either over the pool or around it. You're limited only by your imagination! Our kids, Tonja, Todd and Travis have invested in blow up water slides for the grandkids. They love them on hot summer days and find them less expensive than a trip to the waterpark.
- You can encourage your children to explore nature with a nature scavenger hunt which could include items as simple as different shaped stones and leaves. Or you can hide objects of your own around the yard and give your children clues that will help them find them! Last week at 4-H Day Camp, we took the campers on a tree identification hike.
- Have a Yard Sale! This activity can have several goals. You can get your house cleaned of clutter, give your kids something to do, and make a little money! You can also take the opportunity to teach your children a little about economics! You might consider donating to Good Will or the Wallins Fellowship Center if the yard sale doesn't seem right for you. Tonja loads up bags of clothing and takes them to the Consignment Store. Her children split the money!
- Make a Map of the Neighborhood. This activity can provide a little exercise, too, since children have to walk around the neighborhood to make notes of what they see and determine what belongs where on a map. You should set boundaries so your children don't go farther than you want them to go. For areas farther from your house than you

would like your children to go and for children who are too young to walk around the neighborhood on their own, you can go with them and get a little exercise yourself!

- Most of us don't have a handy list of easy experiments to draw from, but libraries have plenty of books with experiments for children. Plan a trip to the library (another great activity) and find a book or two with experiments. You can also go on line to look up experiments. We made silly putty last week at 4-H Day Camp. It is simple to make and the ingredients of Borax, Glue, and Food Color are easy to find.
- Put on a Play. This activity can be as simple or as complex as your children would like it to be. The simplest way to put on a play is to act out a familiar story (like *Little Red Riding Hood*), using whatever you can find around the house for costumes. The more complex methods of play production would start with the children making up their own story, writing a script, planning the costumes (that mom and others might help make), rehearsing, creating a flyer, and making tickets. This past Christmas, we kept our grandkids for a week. Danielle wrote a Christmas Play for them. We rounded up costumes and Danessa, Dannah, Lindsay, Emily, Danton and Dylan all had parts to play. It was a huge success especially for Gran.

There are still spots available for 4-H Camp at J. M. Feltner 4-H Camp for July. Camp is one of the few activities 4-H offers which has a cost. Contact the Extension Office at 573-4464 for more details.

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