

# FOUR STEPS TO MAKING THIS THE BEST SUMMER EVER!!

Summer is here! It is easy to get caught up in the free flow of summer and as the light begins to fade and another summer passes, we realize that there was so much that we had *hoped* to share with our kids over the warm months that we never got to. THIS summer, be prepared to live those warm happy sunny months to their fullest!! Prepare to look back and say, “WOW! That was a GREAT summer!”

## **STEP ONE: Have a family meeting**

Meet with the whole family before June is gone. In the meeting ask everyone to share the two or three things that to them, make a summer great. For example, this is the list my kids brainstormed when they were 7 and 9:

- Eating snow cones at Sellwood Pool
- Doing crafts on the back deck
- Going to Enchanted Forest in Salem
- Going fishing
- Camping
- Setting up a lemonade stand
- Riding bikes at Greenway Park
- Have a picnic dinner at Gabriel Park with friends
- Swimming at Wilson Pool
- Playing in the Rose Garden fountain

Remember to include your own ideas. Trips as a family to the farmers’ outdoor markets or berry picking followed by pie making are great additions can be enjoyed by all!

## **STEP TWO: Schedule the summer fun ideas right away.**

Put them on your calendar as soon as possible (DURING or right after the meeting!) Figure out NOW when you can take time to camp or take a day to go to Enchanted Forest or an afternoon to ride bikes at Greenway Park (or whatever your list says) and make a commitment to them by scheduling them. Some things can be combined: picnics plus swimming or fishing plus camping, for example. Plan around your summer fun by announcing these outings in bold marker on your calendar. That way, everyone can look forward to them.

I use a full sized desk calendar that I mount on a bulletin board in the kitchen, but posting regular sized calendar pages on your fridge for the 3 summer months would work well, too. You can set the calendar in the photocopier so your pages can be filled out with fun and posted. Be sure everyone in the family can see them. Remember to leave time available for spontaneous fun!

## **STEP THREE: Get everything you need up front**

With your summer list in hand, do a shopping trip to gather as many necessary items and supplies as you can ahead of time...a one time, “get it all” shop. This may seem over the top, but over many years this has proven to be my best tactic because I never seem to be able to think clearly when I am trying to “shop as I go” throughout the summer. Things don’t get bought and the activities we’d hoped to do get forever pushed into the future “until we have the supplies together”...which then never happens! Instead, consciously plan a day to venture out and gather. (It is a great feeling to know you are ready for summer!)

For my kids, having crafts to do in down time was a favorite past time in lazy summer days. I would buy one or two parenting magazines that included craft ideas for summer (my favorite was Family Fun). I'd rip out the pages that had crafts I thought the kids would enjoy and stick them into an old binder. Then, I'd quickly jot down all of the materials I would need for all of the crafts and would make one trip to Michael's craft store to get all the kids' crafts called for. (This has actually been great for us because when you keep the binder summer to summer, you have saved craft ideas that the kids love to do again and again and usually some supplies left too) Then, I put the items in the closet, but have the binder out. When we have an afternoon of crafts scheduled, or when there is "nothing to do" the kids can go through the binder and choose a craft. Pull out the supplies they'll need and off they go.

Many picnic items can be frozen or stored...French bread, cold cuts, hummus, dips can all be frozen and drinks kept ready. Frozen lemonade can be kept ready and paper cups purchased ahead, ready for when the stand is created. Maybe you'll need the ingredients to make ice cream. I've successfully kept whipping cream frozen and ready to thaw so that we can use it in our summer batch of handpicked berry ice-cream. When I have taken the time to consciously devote a day or a part of the day to planning and gathering for summer, I have found that it was time very well spent!

#### **STEP FOUR: Follow Through**

When adults look back at their childhoods, they tend to remember holidays and summers more than any other times. These times are what your child will remember, too. There is so much richness available in each summer that can be lost if we move through summer just as we do the other seasons, rushing around doing the same indoor activities and classes as during the school year OR when the kids hang out watching TV rather than using the warm months to explore the summer world around them. *It is up to us to facilitate this exploration.* So, we need to follow through and give summer the importance it deserves. Kids will follow our lead. When we get out of our yearly ruts and get outside to use all of our senses while we explore what summer has to offer, we ALL benefit, while magical childhood and family memories are created!