



By Donna Pitino

The Parent Connection

A Monthly Newsletter for Parents

Here Comes Summer

Explore the possibilities!

With the end of the school year in sight, your child will soon experience the sense of freedom that only summer can bring. While we want to give our children this time to recharge their batteries (as well as giving ourselves time to recharge ours!), providing a little structure can keep you from hearing those dreaded words, "I'm bored!"

Summer is the perfect time to try out a new activity. Swimming lessons can help your child learn water safety. How about music lessons? The child who discovers she loves the drums this summer may want to join the school band in the fall. Summer drama or tennis lessons can teach your child a new skill.

Take a look at the engaging summer programs available around town. Your local parks and recreation department, your library and the local museums are just a few of the places that offer summer activities for kids.



"Well, you can't decline to be interviewed."

Not All Fun and Games

The value of structure during the summer months

It's important for kids to have a little structure during the summer break. Keeping your child on a meal and bedtime schedule will add structure to his or her day. Bedtimes and mealtimes can be more flexible than during the school year, but establishing a summer routine may actually help to reduce boredom because children will know what to expect.

As the new school year approaches, you can begin to streamline and tighten your family's loose, carefree summer routine to prepare everyone for the responsibilities that lie ahead. Good luck and have fun!

Thank a Teacher

You and your child won't be the only ones taking a break this summer. Teachers have worked hard all year and they'll genuinely appreciate any expression of gratitude for their efforts. If you'd like to give a unique teacher gift, try the new Thank You, Teacher cd: 60 minutes of tranquil music along with 50 ways teachers can relax. For more information, call 800-248-8946 or visit www.twinsisters.com

Books

Worth a Look

Yesterday I Had the Blues by Jeron Ashford Frame (Tricycle Press, 2003). This picture book uses incredible rhythm (and illustrations by R. Gregory Christie) to explore the colors of moods.

I.Q. Goes to the Library by Mary Ann Fraser (Walker & Company, 2003). Children aged four to eight will love learning about the library through the eyes of I.Q. the mouse.

Butterfly Fever by Lori Haskins (Kane Press, 2004). Six- to eight-year-olds can learn fun facts about the monarch butterfly with this fiction book. It's just one of many titles in the "Science Solves It!" series from the Kane Press.

Play Ball Like the Pros by Steven Krasner (Peachtree, 2002). This book has been approved by Little League Baseball® and offers advice from 20 pro players. Eight to 12-year-old baseball fans will love using this book to hone their skills.

The Meanest Doll in the World by Ann M. Martin and Laura Godwin (Hyperion, 2003). For ages eight to 12, this is the fabulous sequel to *The Doll People* by the same authors (Hyperion, 2003).

Summer Safety

Warding off burns and bites

- F**ollowing these rules will help keep your family healthy as they hit the beach and the hiking trails.
- Use sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15 or greater. Reapply sunscreen every few hours and after swimming, towel-drying or sweating – even on cloudy days. For more information, go to www.fda.gov/fdac/features/2000/400_sun.html
 - Wear sunglasses and a hat.
 - Avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. That's when harmful UV rays are at their strongest.
 - Always supervise children around water.
 - Drink plenty of fluids in warm weather, to guard against dehydration and heat stroke.
 - In the woods, wear long sleeves and a hat, and tuck your pants into your socks to keep ticks from attaching to your skin.
 - Use an insect repellent with DEET to protect against ticks and other disease-carrying insects, and follow the label's directions carefully. For more information, visit www.epa.gov/pesticides/factsheets/chemicals/deet.htm

The Great Outdoors

It's often said that only a fool doesn't know enough to come in out of the rain, but you just might find it refreshing to go outside and get a little bit wet! On a warm, rainy day this spring, go a little crazy and run around in the rain for a few minutes with your child. Then come back in the house, dry off and snuggle under a blanket to enjoy a story or rainy-day poems together.

This is also a great time of year for nature walks. Get the whole family outside to see what nature has brought us this season. Whether you've got five minutes to spare, or a whole hour to wander through the woods, slowing down to observe the world around you can do great things for your mind, body and spirit.

Addressing Academic Needs

Whether our children are avid or reluctant readers, it's a good idea to encourage 15 or 20 minutes of reading time each day during the summer break so the child doesn't lose skills he or she gained during the school year. Challenge your child with questions: What has happened so far in the story? What do you think will happen next? Do you know what that word means?

It's also a great idea to read books to your child that he or she can't read alone yet. This adds to kids' growing vocabulary and helps to increase fluency when they read independently.

Board games usually involve math skills (shapes, counting, money, etc.), so play some of your favorites on a rainy day. Why not try some simple science experiments? Make juice pops, predict how long they'll take to freeze and record the results.

For the child who needs help in a particular subject, consider hiring a summer tutor to come once or twice a week. Don't make this the focus of the entire summer, though. Too much work might leave a child feeling drained before school even starts.

Write Away

Check out a magazine that's by kids, for kids

Does your child love to read or write poetry or short stories? Potluck Children's Literary Magazine: THE Magazine for the Serious Young Writer is created for and by writers from the ages of eight to 16.

Though it's always fabulous when a child's work is selected for publication, Potluck responds personally to every submission. Even if a child's piece is not accepted, it will be returned with suggestions for making the piece better and comments that encourage the child to keep writing.

Each issue also features a short essay by a professional writer who offers tips and inspiration to the youngsters who read the magazine. For a subscription or more information on how a child can submit a piece of his or her writing, go to www.potluckmagazine.org or call 847-948-1139.

Books Worth a Look, cont'd

The Revealers by Doug Wilhelm (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003). Find out how a small group of kids decide to raise awareness about bullying at their middle school.

The River Between Us by Richard Peck (Dial, 2003). For ages 10 and up, this is Peck at his best. With talk of war, mystery surrounds the appearance of two young women in a small Illinois town. Taking them in changes the lives and outlooks of all involved. Not only will your child be reading good literature, but he or she will walk away with a deeper understanding of the Civil War experience, the cascading damage of prejudice and the realization that our choices ultimately affect the lives of others.

PICK FOR PARENTS

Covering Home: Lessons on the Art of Fathering from the Game of Baseball by Jack Petrash (Gryphon House, 2000). With insight into the demanding job of parenting, this is a great Father's Day gift for that special dad!

Quote of the Month

"In fathering as in baseball you must work on fundamentals, develop good habits, avoid errors, work on control, and always keep in mind that you can't win them all."

—Jack Petrash
Covering Home

What Works?

Take a minute this summer to e-mail me at mdbc@aol.com with ideas that have worked for you.