It is Important for Youth to Keep Learning and Stay Active During Summer

Organized Learning Opportunities

Of course there are the many camps, sports, workshops and programs planned for the summer. But what happens to the children who don’t have these opportunities due to a financial situation, transportation or schedule? Research shows these children have more learning loss. There are many free, low-cost and educational activities available for everyone.

Many communities have special days sponsored by organizations that provide free entrance to the zoo or museum. Libraries offer summer reading programs and activities. Some communities have special summer celebrations that include activities for children. As a parent, prepare a priority list and schedule for your family or caregiver; be sure to take in these opportunities and educational activities.

County and state fairs are another fun and educational experience for the family. This opportunity is especially fun for city children to see farm animals up close and learn about agriculture. The 2015 Lancaster County Super Fair will be July 30–Aug. 8 at the Extension Center, 84th and Havelock.

The Lincoln Convention and Visitors Bureau website has a list of local attractions and events at www.lincoln.org.

Lincoln Parks & Recreation has information about their recreation centers, School’s Out programs and more at http://lincoln.ne.gov/cityparks.

Learning Activities at Home

Families can include learning in their daily activities by including children in daily chores, meal preparation, doing dishes, cleaning, etc. Children’s learning can be enhanced year round — but especially when they are home during the summer — by including them in daily routines. Children as young as 3 or 4 can help in the kitchen cooking by stirring and measuring — this is an excellent time to include math skills. Make a game of counting, matching, etc. when picking up toys, folding clothes and putting items away. Be creative and think of ways to continue the learning experience in everyday activities.

Let’s start with math — learning to love math can be a struggle, but there are ways parents and caregivers can help youth see real-life math. For younger children, have blocks, magnetic shapes and numbers, clocks, timers, calendars, measuring cups and spoons for learning.

Reading — books are favorites of all children. Talk with your children about their books. Have them write or talk about what is special about the books they read. Enhance reading by using puppets or acting out the story. Consider books that encourage math such as Eating Fractions by Bruce McMillan, Over in the Meadow by Ezra Jack Keats or Somewhere in the Ocean by Jennifer Ward and T.J. Marsh.

Other activities:
- Take walks outside and study nature.
- Counting and matching activities when traveling by car.
- Scavenger hunts — create a hunt of the city, a park, your local area, etc.
- During and after these activities discuss with the children what you see and include science, math and reading activities.
- Physical activity — The American Heart Association recommends children over age 2 engage in at least one hour of moderate, physical activity each day. Children who are physically active and develop basic motor skills are more likely to become healthy adults.

Additional Resources
- Nebraska Extension’s “Early Childhood Development” website: http://child.unl.edu
- Nebraska Extension’s “Expanded Learning Opportunities” website: http://els.unl.edu
- Lancaster County 4-H Youth Development Program website: http://lancaster.unl.edu/4h
- Nebraska Extension’s Participant Guide “Keeping Children Moving, Active and Healthy” (HEF609); www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/sendIt/HEF609.pdf
- Nebraska Extension’s “365 Ways to Spend Time with Your Family” http://go.unl.edu/365

Opportunities at Home
- Nebraska Department of Education’s “Nebraska’s Early Learning Guidelines” for ages birth-3 and ages 3-5; www.education.ne.gov/DEC/ELG.html

4-H Camps

4-H Summer Camps

Nebraska 4-H offers nearly 50 summer camps for youth ages 5–18 (need not be in 4-H) at the Eastern Nebraska 4-H Center near Gretna and Nebraska State 4-H Camp near Halsey. Camps range from half day to seven days/six nights. A variety of programs are offered between May 31 and Aug. 6, including:
- Nature programming and GPS
- Team building courses
- Aquatic — canoeing, fishing, tubing, kayaking, swimming
- Arts, crafts, games, songs
- Science — animal life, plant life, physical science
- Music and dance
- "Capstone event" your family is likely to become healthy adults.

- Research supports the need for children to experience in a variety of ways. Some fun activities include planting and caring for flowers or a garden. Bubbles and running through the sprinkler add more summer fun.

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4-H Clover College

Lancaster County 4-H offers four days of hands-on workshops June 16–19 at the Lancaster Extension Education Center. Classes fill up quickly! Details in this issue on page 7.