

Things to do as a Family before Summer is over

Kathy's Corner

What are some of your favorite memories of summertime as you were growing up?

Do you come from a family that always took a summer vacation? Maybe your family stayed close to home yet still found opportunities to spend time together. If the summer has passed you by and now you find yourself thinking, "What? Only two weeks until school starts?" it's not too late to still get the family together for a few activities that will help make this summer memorable.

Here are a few suggestions that will require a minimal amount of time to plan and carry out.

Go to the park. Sure your kids have had plenty of play time this summer but how many times have you gone with them? Spend an hour, maybe two, watching your kids wear themselves out on the playground at the park. Be prepared to smile when they say, "Watch this, Daddy!"

Have a picnic. Whether it's up the canyon, in the park, or in the backyard, there is something magical about spreading a blanket and sharing a meal from a basket or cooler/ice chest.

Have a BBQ at home with friends. You may have cooked up burgers for the family a time or two this summer but have you enjoyed the experience with neighbors and/or friends? Whether you cook on the grill or use a fire pit or Dutch ovens, bringing people together over a meal builds stronger friendships.

Go camping. There are several nearby campgrounds that can be reached within one to two hours all across Utah. But if that doesn't seem feasible, put the tent up in the backyard. Even though you may only be a few steps away from "civilization," using flashlights and sleeping bags for the night can be great fun.

Harvest the garden together. Start planning now what you will do with fresh garden produce. Whether you bake loaves of zucchini bread and freeze some or plan on canning or dehydrating, the family will enjoy harvesting the efforts of summer. Didn't plant a garden? Take advantage of farmer's markets in the area to purchase locally grown produce and then preserve it.

Visit a national park. Whether a day trip or a two-day venture, most of Utah's state and national parks are within a tank of gasoline from here. Take time to explore our beautiful state through nature hikes or bike rides through the parks. These can be educational excursions by studying up on things to look for like certain rock formations, wildlife or plants.

What about some examples of some more spontaneous or "quick fixes" for summer enjoyment. Sometimes just a few minutes together as a family that didn't require much planning or scheduling can be just as effective. Here are a few additional items for consideration.

Have a water balloon fight.

See the sunrise/sunset.

Read a favorite book aloud to your kids.

Go to the library for story time or to select new books for the week.

Go fishing.

Take pictures of the kids having fun or take a family photo.

Go swimming.

Take an evening walk around the neighborhood.

Take a treat to a new neighbor or someone you don't know well.

Eat watermelon and have a seed spitting contest.

Make homemade ice cream .

Have a formal dinner at home using your best dishes and best manners.

It doesn't always take a lot of money, time, effort or planning to make memories with the family. Summertime memories as children seem magical to some of us adults. It can be fun to try to create the same magic for our own children.

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