

The Harbor's solution to "I'm bored"!

"Moving Grays Harbor"
By Maryann Welch

It's a favorite mantra of children everywhere: "I'm bored". I can recall with my own two children how soon the excitement and relief of the last day of school wore off and then there would be "nothing to do". And as many of you parents know, when kids are bored they either find a way to get into trouble (or at least push the limits) or they just camp out in front of the screen of some electronic media device and waste the day away. I know that we can all benefit from some down-time every once in a while, but with the current trends in childhood obesity, active lifestyles should be highly encouraged.

I had a hard time convincing myself that if I had young children in this day and age that they would be as active as they should be. Yes, they would probably have a game system or computer that would be a deterrent to activity; however, I know that we would also have some rules about how much media-time they would be allowed on a daily basis. I also realize that we would place more limitations on where they could go during the day as well. I still feel that it is possible to raise active kids in today's world. It may not include the same activities that we did as children or allowed our own children to do, but there are many options available.

I recently picked up a Grays Harbor Summer Guide and was both surprised and delighted with the number of free and low-cost recreational

opportunities available to children in the area this summer. Activities range from enjoying time at local parks to overnight camps at Kamp Kiwanis and Camp Bishop. Best of all, most activities are free or offer some kind of scholarship opportunity!

Hoquiam's line-up of activities is very impressive. They offer free lunch and daily activities to all children under the age of 18 at two different sites: Central Play Park, on the corner of Emerson Avenue and Lincoln Street; and Washington Elementary School at 3003 Cherry Street. Lunch is served at Washington School at 11:00 am and at Central Play Park at 11:30 am. Both sites provide fun games and activities for children until 2:30. They also have special event days scheduled and numerous field trips. If you are interested in getting a schedule of events, contact the Hoquiam AmeriCorps office 532-5700 x 242.

The Aberdeen Parks Department is also offering some fun activities this summer including Bowling, Skating, a trip to Lake Sylvia and a Dynamic Sports Challenge. Again, if you are interested in the summer line-up from the Aberdeen Parks Department, please call them at 537-3230.

The Aberdeen free lunch program is from 11:30-12:30 at Pioneer Park, West End Playfield, Robert Gray Elementary Playground, Finch Playfield and Cosi Lions Park. This is for children under the age of 18. Activities are not supervised at these locations, but each location has play structures and fields available for unstructured play. For more information on the lunch program, please call 538-2816.

Grays Harbor College in partnership with the Washington State Department of Ecology is offering 2 sessions of day camps. Alder Creek

Day Camp's mission is "through scientific investigations, hikes, arts and crafts, and games, explore the plants and animals of Alder Creek and Lake Swano, and learn ways to protect them". The week day-camp is very affordable and includes snacks and a t-shirt. For more information call Lorena Marchant at 538-4179 or email at lmarchan@ghc.edu.

Montesano Parks and Recreation also has a summer of fun activities for kids. Foremost is the summer action camp for kids entering k-5th grades. The camp runs Monday through Thursday from 12-5 at Simpson Avenue Elementary School. Of course, there is a sign up and fee to participate and you can call the Montesano Parks Department at 249-3021 ext 112 for more information.

Montesano Parks is also hosting a summer Soccer Camp with Challenger Sports British Soccer and has day trips to a Mariners game, Wild Waves and the Skate Barn Skateboard Park.

The YMCA, as always, has a vast array of summer programs for kids in addition to their great facility. You can view their offerings at www.ghymca.net or call them at 537-9622.

And lastly, the overnight camp programs...both the YMCA Camp Bishop at Lost Lake and Kamp Kiwanis at Lake Quinault offer great overnight camping experiences. My two kids considered "Y" camp a "must" every summer - a whole week of activity! To find out about either of these programs you can call the YMCA at 537-9622 or the Hoquiam AmeriCorps office at 532-5700 ext. 242.

And never dismiss the idea of family activity time. When my kids were younger we used to ride our bikes

around the North River area for miles. It was great fun and is still a favorite memory for my daughter – and we are still enjoying biking together as adults!

I know many of you will undoubtedly hear the frustrated rants of "I'm bored!" a few times this summer, but arm yourself with the knowledge of possible solutions and you'll be opening the door to a summer of fun and safe activity.

Maryann Welch is the director of Grays Harbor County's Public Health and Social Services Department.

If you have questions about becoming more active or have information about free or low-cost activity in the area, contact the public health department at 532-8665 ext. 483, e-mail us at moving@co.grays-harbor.wa.us or visit our web site at www.ghphss.org.