



CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION
A SAMHSA Supported Drug-Free Community Coalition
Led By Centre County Drug and Alcohol



October 22, 2008 – Outdoor Activities for Families

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The beautiful, crisp, fall weather is a great reason to grab an extra sweater and head outdoors. Centre Region residents are fortunate to have beautiful places to visit in the area, whether it's walking to a local park, biking to a nearby nature center, or driving to a state park. Getting outside and being part of nature may seem like the last thing on your busy to-do list, but I encourage you to make time each week to get outdoors.

You may be familiar with publications suggesting that increases in hyperactivity may be related to the barrage of tv, music, and video games that kids are exposed to. The bottom line is that encouraging children to play outside and explore nature bring a host of benefits, including having a calming effect and promoting physical activity. Understanding and feeling a connection with the living things around them helps children and teens embrace their natural sense of wonder and discovery. This can lead to an appreciation for the natural world and a lifelong love of the outdoors and wild places.

Here are some ideas to help your family re-connect to nature by making outdoor fun a special part of your week.

- **Have a picnic** on a porch or patch of grass near your home. Enjoy the fall colors, drink some hot chocolate, and talk about your day.
- **Walk to a nearby park** – count how many animals you see, borrow a bird book from the library, draw something in a nature notebook, or use a crayon and paper to do bark rubbings.
- **Trees as Apartment Buildings Activity**– fun for kids: find a tree and look very closely. Take your time... who lives in the “basement” around the roots, what is living on the “First Floor” near your knees, what evidence of animals do you see on the “Second Floor” near your waist. You and a child can spend 20 minutes just exploring a tree!
- **Family Scavenger Hunt** – each week, visit a different park with a list of nature items you spotted at other parks. Can you find those things here? What new things can you add to the list?
- **Visit a Nature Center:** if you are not sure how to get started, attend a program at the Millbrook Marsh Nature Center or Shaver's Creek Environmental Center. Both locations offer great programs for kids and families.
- Attend the **Children's Halloween Trail** at Shavers Creek Environmental Center on October 25 and 26, 11:00 am – 4:00 pm. This non-scary walk is a family friendly event filled with costumed characters and fun! Tickets are on sale now. Visit www.shaverscreek.org for more information.
- Come to the free **Historic Harvest Festival** at Millbrook Marsh Nature Center on November 2, 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm to enjoy a day of old-fashioned family fun. Visit www.crpr.org for more information.

Nature is key to children's development in important ways--intellectually, emotionally, socially, and physically. Encourage your family to enjoy the pleasures of outdoor fun this autumn.

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