



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



**ARTICLE 12 – June 4, 2008 – From Screen To Green**

Kimberly Cassidy is the Community Mobilizer for Centre County *Communities That Care*®. This weekly column, published on Wednesdays, is a collaboration of Centre County *Communities That Care*® serving Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and Philipsburg-Osceola Area School Districts, and Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care*® serving the State College Area School District.

“Today, kids are aware of the global threats to the environment – but their physical contact, their intimacy with nature, is fading.” – Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods*.

The warm days of summer are approaching and youth throughout the County are anxiously awaiting the end of school. Most adults remember a childhood in which they spent carefree summers climbing trees, rides bikes, playing baseball, or simply exploring nature, its creatures, and its hidden surprises. Today’s youth occupy much of their time and free summers with electronics. A 2005 Kaiser Family Foundation study found that the average American child spends 44 hours per week (6 hours per day) staring at some kind of electronic screen and that the average American child grows up in a home with 3.6 CD or tape players, 3.5 TVs, 3.3 radios, 2.9 VCRs/DVD players, 2.1 video game consoles, and 1.5 computers. Video games, televisions, and IPODS keep youth ‘plugged in’, but distracted and disconnected from their environments and although increased technology has many benefits, studies have linked excessive electronic usage to obesity, violence, and reduced intelligence in youth.

Research indicates that youth that spend time outdoors are healthier than their indoor counterparts. An increase in electronics usage and a lack of exercise has contributed to 17.1% of American adolescents aged 12 to 19 years becoming overweight. This prevalence has tripled for adolescents in the past 2 decades. Risk factors for heart disease, such as high cholesterol and high blood pressure, and Type 2 diabetes, previously considered an adult disease, occur with increased frequency in overweight children and they have a 70% chance of becoming overweight or obese adults. Overweight youth may also experience social discrimination, poor self-esteem, and depression.

So, encourage your kids to discover the great outdoors this summer! Centre County, at 1,115 miles, is the fifth largest county in Pennsylvania, and with 6 state parks and 29 community parks it affords a wealth of opportunities for outdoor fun. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) offers activities like boating, swimming, fishing, and hiking at Black Moshannon, Bald Eagle, McCalls Dam, Penn Roosevelt, Poe Paddy, and Poe Valley. Visit the DCNR website for more information and a calendar of planned, inexpensive family fun activities like exploring creatures of the night by pontoon boat: <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us>. Gymnastics, skateboarding, inline skating and BMX freestyle biking can be enjoyed at Woodward Camp. Outdoor learning about topics such as birds of prey and reptiles is available at Shaverscreek Environmental Center. Sports, outdoor events, and swimming is also available through Centre Parks and Recreation: <http://www.centralpacvb.org>. More fun awaits at places such as Stone Valley Recreation Center and Tussey Mountain. You can also find a listing of local activities and recreational resources on the Central Pennsylvania Convention & Visitor’s Bureau Web site: <http://www.centralpacvb.org>. And don’t forget that you can create your own fun! Invite your kids to join you in taking a walk, hiking in the woods, watching a sunset, lying under the stars, or tossing a frisbee or football.

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