

Kimberly Blaker  
P.O. Box 5585  
Plymouth, MI 48170  
(734) 397-3510  
[info@KimberlyBlaker.com](mailto:info@KimberlyBlaker.com)

Word Count 1,415  
Copyright 2002 by Kimberly Blaker

## “Family Fun in the Sun”

### Summer Recreation and Activities for the Whole Family

By Kimberly Blaker

The season you’ve been waiting for has finally arrived so don’t let it pass you by. Maximize the season and celebrate to its fullest with these outdoor activities and adventures your whole family will enjoy.

#### **BACK TO NATURE**

**Trail blazing** – Head to a local, state, or national park and make a day of nature hiking. Before you go, make a list of things for your family to find and identify, such as a black oak tree, woodpecker holes, a gardner snake, or a raccoon paw print. Carry a backpack with binoculars, sunscreen, visors or sunglasses, and plenty of water and snacks. Don’t forget your hiking shoes and a lightweight jacket in case the shade becomes cool.

**Ride ‘em, cowboy** – You don’t have to be a horse owner to enjoy the pleasure of riding one of these majestic beings. Visit your nearby horse rental stables and catch the sunset on horseback. For a stable near you, visit <http://www.horserentals.com/index.html>. Make sure your child is provided a helmet for his safety before you ride.

**Z is for zoo** – Summer wouldn’t be summer without a trip to the zoo. Visit the wild at one of the many zoos that have created natural, spacious settings for their animals, and

teach your children the importance of these habitats. Check the schedule for animal presentations, and don't miss the petting zoo where youngsters can walk and talk with the animals and feed them from their palms.

**The strawberry patch** – Perk up those taste buds 'cause strawberries are now in season. Round up the family and head to the strawberry patch for a day of fruit filled fun. When you get the strawberries home work together rinsing, removing stems, and preparing them for shortcake, smoothies, and fresh strawberry pie.

### **WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE**

**Beach bummin'** – Load up the beach ball, buckets, and blankets, and get ready for a day at the beach. For added fun, take along goggles, snorkels, and fins for underwater exploration.

**Wet your whistle....and more** – Spend a smoldering summer day chilling off at one of the many water wonderlands where your family can swoosh down waterslides, catch the man-made waves, and tube around narrow canals. Before you go, ask about age and height requirements and what activities are available for the younger set. Don't forget to protect your family's skin. Apply sunscreen throughout the day.

**A trip downstream** – Canoeing is a fun-filled family adventure for all ages. Look for canoe rentals on a clear river and take a cool dip when the day heats up. Carry belongings such as wallet, keys, and snacks in a waterproof bag that floats since tips are not only common (although can easily be avoided if caution is exercised), but can be half of the fun. Give kids plenty of opportunities to paddle and steer.

**Ride the waves** – So, you don't have an ocean nearby? Don't despair. You can likely find plenty of wave action at a wave pool in your own community or nearby. These

pools often supply tubes and rafts for riding the waves. Call in advance to find out, and if they don't, ask if you can bring your own.

**Backyard water blast** – Plenty of cool fun can be had right in your own backyard.

Make it a family tradition to have an annual water spree. Fill water balloons and play a game of catch, hook up the sprinklers for a cool game of tag, load up the squirt guns and super soakers, and make sure everyone stays drenched. Then take a refreshing break in the wading pool.

**Putt around the lake** – You don't have live on a lake or even own a boat to enjoy this luxury. Contact your nearby marinas, lakeside stores, and resorts to find out where you can rent a pontoon or motor boat for a cruise around the lake.

### **YOUR OWN BACKYARD**

**Under the stars** – Take full advantage of the peaceful summer nights and campout in your backyard. Kick off the evening by watching the sun set then build a bonfire (if it's permitted in your area), roast marshmallows, and gaze at the stars. Bring out your guide to the stars and see what you can spot: the Little Dipper, Hercules, or Sagittarius.

**Croquet champs** – Set up this outdoor game that the whole family can play. Then hold a summer's end family croquet match. Give handicaps to each family member based on their most recent scores for a game that's fair to all.

**Up, up and away** – Is the wind hampering your fun? It won't be for long. Make the most of that breeze, and get your kite up in the air.

**Step right up** – Organize a backyard carnival to raise funds for your favorite charity. The whole family will have a ball putting on this event. Hang posters in local businesses, and submit a press release to your local radio station and newspaper. Ask friends and

neighbors to help man the booth, and set up games such as a bean bag toss or number wheel, a baked goods stand, fortune telling, face painting, and refreshments.

**Green thumbs** – Make summer gardening a family affair. Ask each member to choose a favorite vegetable to plant. If you’re getting a late start, look for starter plants that have already sprouted. Work together to get the garden ready and plant it, then give each person his or her own responsibility for keeping it up: watering, pulling weeds, picking ripe produce, cleaning it and preparing it to eat or store.

**Swiss family who?** – What’s a backyard without a hideout or special place to kick back? Little ones will thrill at building a tree house or fort. Older kids will look forward to a covered hangout, such as a gazebo, for visiting with friends. Whatever you build, have the whole family pitch in. Small children can feel a part of the project by carrying small materials, dispensing nails, and occasionally swinging the hammer.

## **OUT AND ABOUT**

**Dancin’ in the street** – Summer abounds with fairs and festivals along riverfronts and in the streets. Enjoy live music, new foods, boating and ski shows, magic acts, and arts and crafts. Look for upcoming festivals in the entertainment section of your newspaper, or pick up an event guide from your state travel bureau or chamber of commerce.

**Batter up** - Family fun centers offer a variety of recreation for the whole family. Get ready to practice your batting swing, holler “fore,” speed around the race track, bump another boat, or have some wacky golfin’ fun.

**Recycled treasures** – Join the craze, and spend the day rummaging for treasures. This is a great way for kids to get the most out of their limited earnings and to teach them the importance of recycling and how to get the best value for their money.

**Summer sights** – Places and things to see in the summer are abundant from checking out the big city with its tall skyscrapers, old architecture, and murals and art displays, to viewing the wonders of nature from sand dunes and mountains to waterfalls and never ending shorelines.

**Performing arts in the park** – Unwind listening to a summer concert in the park or taking in a movie under the stars. These events are often under publicized so contact area parks for a summer schedule.

**Big wheels and small** – Paved trails are popping up everywhere: in parks, along riverbanks, and even through town. Pull out your bikes and roller blades, and take advantage of these smooth paths. For a better work out and to keep everyone moving at an equal pace, have small children ride bikes while older ones and parents push off on their blades.

**Coasters, cars, and ferris wheels** –A trip to a theme park can be the highlight of the season. If your children are at different ride levels, invite another family or two with children similar in age to your own. Then divide up so everyone can get the most out of the day. Meet up for lunch and dinner to swap kids, so all adults get time with each age group.

**Park play** – Take your little ones for a picnic and an afternoon at the park. Scout your area for an updated park with a large, enclosed fort-style playground. Bring along a playmate for your child, and they’ll be content for some time. Don’t forget to bring your reading to catch up on.

PULL QUOTE: Organize a backyard carnival to raise funds for your favorite charity.

PULL QUOTE: For added fun, take along goggles, snorkels, and fins for underwater exploration.

SIDEBAR IDEAS OR WAYS TO LOCALIZE: Include local details such as location of parks or boat rental facilities.

Kimberly Blaker of Michigan writes for parenting and women's magazines.

***NOTICE: PUBLICATION OF THIS ARTICLE WITHOUT PRIOR CONSENT CONSTITUTES COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT. RECEIPT OF THIS MANUSCRIPT DOES NOT IMPLY CONSENT TO PUBLISH. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO PUBLISH THIS ARTICLE, CONTACT KIMBERLY BLAKER, ABOVE. Fees for publication are based upon article length, type of publication, and area of distribution. Thank you for considering this article!***