



NEW DIRECTIONS

Summer 2014

Early Childhood Direction Center

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ECDC is a regional clearinghouse that provides free information, referral, technical assistance and support to families, professionals, and community agencies concerned with children birth to five with suspected or diagnosed delays or disabilities.

We provide ongoing community training programs for both parents and professionals.

ECDC is funded by the New York State Education Department, hosted by Women and Children's Hospital and provided in-kind support from People Inc.

If you would like to be included on our listserve to receive the latest federal, state and local updates, please send an email to ecdc@kaleidahealth.org and indicate whether you are a parent or a professional.



www.facebook.com/ECDCWNY1

Ten Awesome Summer Activities To Do With A Child Who Has Special Needs

By Lauren Savino

Summer can be a challenging time for children with special needs and their parents. Many families face a decrease in school and therapeutic hours. This may leave parents with extra time to fill during the day. Parents are also on alert as children with behavioral or social skill challenges encounter bullies and controlling peers at parks. A trip to a recreational center may seem like an easy answer for some families, but not always the most accommodating for a child with physical disabilities or special needs.

As a result, here is a list of **ten summer activities** to do with your child that don't require weeks of planning, a small loan or traveling further than your backyard.



1. **Backyard Water Park.** You can quickly create your own water park in the backyard for an afternoon of fun. If your child's tolerance is low for water play, sit them on your lawn (if they are sensitive to grass, put them on a shower curtain or towel for more comfort) and use your finger and a hose to create a variety of sprays for your child to experience. For more active children, you can have a variety of "water rides" including: small splash pool, garden sprinkler to run through, water table, beach ball sprinkler.
2. **Sloppy Sensory.** With the nice weather, partake in some "goopy" activities outside that will help your child to integrate their senses. Spray an outside table with shaving cream and let your child smear it around or fill a bin with rice and dig your fingers in. Lastly, create a mud pit to roll around in. All you need afterwards is a hose!
3. **Train Time.** Most children love trains. Make a day of it and ride the train with your child. Choose departure times during non-commuting hours so you can get a seat next to a window and deal with fewer crowds. Bring along snacks to keep your child engaged. If you don't have commuter trains in your city, check out other public transportation options. A bus ride could be just as exciting as the train when presented as an adventure and not an everyday experience.
4. **Tent Building.** Make "the best tent ever" by pulling out all your blankets and chairs and have the tent overtake your living room or backyard. Tent play can occupy your children for hours. It may also be a great resource to soothe a child, providing a hide-out or quiet place. Place a bean bag chair inside along with books or a flashlight.

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5. **Fossil Find.** Take a trip to a sandy beach or to your backyard sandbox and bury some “fossils” (a.k.a. painted rocks). Provide your child with a small shovel and bucket to dig up these archeological finds. Afterwards, you can dust them off, with a paintbrush. You and your child can take turns hiding and discovering these wonderful fossils. You can also work on counting and grouping the rocks once you have collected them all.
6. **Bounce Houses.** Bounce Houses are private indoor arenas, filled with gigantic bounce houses, obstacle courses and more. Franchises can be found around the country. Many of the franchises offer times for children with special needs to work on their social skills and/or sensory development. It is definitely worth finding a center near you and inquiring about jump times for children with special needs.
7. **Mall Meandering.** Need to escape the heat? Take advantage of someone else’s air conditioning by walking the mall on hot days. Malls are cool and not too crowded on the weekdays. It is a good way to keep your child moving and active as you pace back and forth in a controlled environment; less worries about children darting in front of traffic. Stores like Brookstone and Apple offer interactive displays, and a chance for you to take a brief break. A quick game on an iPad or a rest in a massage chair can add a breather to your mall meandering.
8. **Movie Madness.** A home cinema experience is a great way to get your children out of the sun for a couple of hours and allow some down time. Instead of just plopping down in front of the TV, make it a production – homemade movie tickets and a bowl of popcorn with pillows and blankets in front of the flatscreen. It will seem like a special event in your child’s day with these little extras. Just be cautious of 3-D movies since some may cause over stimulation.
9. **Firehouse Visit.** Call your local fire department and ask if you can stop by with your children for a quick visit to see the fire trucks and meet the firemen. This is a great way to break up your day, learn about fire safety and introduce your child to rescue workers (especially if your [child wanders](#)). Firemen are often good with children and will spend time talking to your child about what to do in an emergency. Take pictures of your visit and make it into a social story.
10. **Soothing Swing.** If nothing else, find a swing with your child this summer. Swings are beneficial for physical, social and cognitive development, and they offer certain therapeutic benefits. They promote movement and perceptual skills, spatial awareness, general fitness, social interaction, mental representation, and sensory integration, including vestibular development. If your child has trouble with crowds, visit the park in the morning during summer camp hours.

Award Winner



Our own Tracey Banks is the recipient of the Quality Care Award from the Child Care Resource Network.

Tracey has been working at ECDC as the Child Development and Inclusion Specialist for the past 12 years. In this position she provides consultations, training and technical assistance to early childhood professionals in Western New York with the goal of identifying children who need additional services and providing support to enable children to remain in typical child care settings.

Congratulations Tracey!

SAVE the DATE

Saturday, September 20th, 2014
10 AM – 3 PM

Buffalo Niagara Court Center
425 Meyer Rd. West Seneca, NY

An all-day Adaptive Recreation Expo. A showcase of recreation opportunities in WNY, that are available for children and adults. It is a day to share and explore recreation opportunities.

For More Information

Facebook: WNY Adaptive Recreation Expo
Email: wnyadaptiverecexpo@gmail.com

Websites to investigate:

Learning Outdoors (and In)

<http://ecdc.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/10-Summer-Activities-2011.pdf>



One place for special needs- Peer match program

<http://www.oneplaceforspecialneeds.com/>

