



# Igniting the SPARK



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Summer 2016

## Summer Fun!

Free Summer Fun in Tulsa from:

<http://thislandpress.com/05/30/2013/75-free-things-to-do-in-oklahoma-this-summer/#sthash.DUXky4QD.dpuf>

1. 5.2 million kids can't be wrong. Like them, you can get bowled over—for free—at Andy B's. Register at [kidsbowlfree.com](http://kidsbowlfree.com) for two free games of bowling every day all summer long, a value of over \$500 per child.
2. Indulge in a range of silver-screen classics, from Pan's Labyrinth to Jurassic Park, shown free as part of the Movie in the Park series at Guthrie Green. Showtime is 8:30 p.m. every Thursday through Oct. 31.
3. Meet some 500-year-old trees on a hike at the Keystone Ancient Forest Preserve, a section of the cross timbers open west of Sand Springs on the second Saturday of each month.
4. Listen to Tulsa's Starlight Band as they play out the stars at Tulsa's Guthrie Green beginning Tuesday, June 24 at 8 p.m. Themes range from Americana Night to Jazz Under the Stars and more.

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## Spark Class Update

Is it really almost over? This year has been a whirlwind of new experiences, exciting opportunities and adventures!

5<sup>th</sup> Grade Armstrong Parents:

I am willing to have an evening meeting in June if several parents request one to talk about the transition to Middle School. I wasn't sure I would survive 6<sup>th</sup> grade, let alone my son! I have learned a few tricks that I will gladly share, and I invite parents who have advice to come and we can have a round table discussion for Middle School 101. If you are interested, please let me know by the last day of school via email and I will get a space reserved.

Summertime Blues

I will admit, sometimes summer is a challenge for me—my kids want to be amused, and I simply want to be someplace quiet. I loved the article about having a private family summer camp. But then I thought, maybe some families would like to share their family camp ideas. If anyone makes a plan, please send it to me so I can share it with the group! Maybe some families eventually would like to form a coo-op?

I look forward to working with you next year!  
Mrs. DePalma

5. Scope out the various foo-foo pups and designer lawn blankets at the Summer's Fifth Night free concerts series in Tulsa's Utica Square. Featuring on stage every Thursday night, 7-9 p.m., are local mainstays from Mid-Life Crisis to Grady Nichols.

6. Trade the tennis courts and the running trail for The Gardens at LaFortune Park in Tulsa, the venue for the free First Friday Concerts. May through September, 7-9 p.m.

7. Take nature up on her offer for a summer stroll at Redbud Valley Nature Preserve, where admission is always free.

8. Tulsa is cut through with bike trails, and not a one of them is a toll road. Get a map of Tulsa trails. No wheels? Bikes rent free as part of the RiverParks Trails system.

9. Parking is scarce in the Brady Arts District on the first Friday night of the month—that's because the monthly First Friday Art Crawl event blows open the doors of every museum, art gallery, and music venue in the district—but why would you care? You've got your sneaks.

10. Guthrie Green isn't just for kicking back at an outdoor concert or film. Tai chi, boot camp, and family fitness sessions are held for free throughout the week. Check out the summer schedule.

11. Visit the grave of Bob Wills, the king of Western Swing, the man credited for putting Tulsa's Cain's Ballroom on the map. Find it in Memorial Cemetery Park.

12. Take a long lunch and hike the Turkey Mountain Urban Wilderness Area, where the trailhead is just seven miles from downtown Tulsa.

13. Make sure the acoustics of the Center of the Universe, in downtown Tulsa just north of the BOK Tower, are in good working order. Be sure to visit the Artificial Cloud, too.

14. Find a whole herd of flowers at the Tulsa Rose Garden and the neighboring Linnaeus Teaching Garden, home of the largest collection

of roses in the state and a sprawling heirloom vegetable garden.

15. Complete the Tulsa City-County Library Summer Reading Program Challenge!



**Calendar of Caring**  
**Summer Focus: Finding Things To DO Together**  
From:

[http://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/Parent%20CK/Summertime\\_and\\_the\\_Living\\_is\\_Easy\\_CMcGee\\_PHP2013.pdf](http://www.nagc.org/sites/default/files/Parent%20CK/Summertime_and_the_Living_is_Easy_CMcGee_PHP2013.pdf)

### **Summertime and The Livin' is Easy by Dr. Christie McGee**

When I think of summer, I always think of the opera Porgy and Bess and in particular, the song "Summertime." During my elementary years, I sang that song with my friend Bonna in talent shows so I have loved it for long time. As a child, my summers were full of adventures. I rode my bike all over our town and surrounding hills and valleys. I left the house early in the morning and usually did not return until supper.

Those were glorious days of pretending, exploring, learning about the woods, and building tree houses. I watched some television, but frankly the three stations available had little programming that would interest an elementary-school-aged child. I read, and read, and read. Reading was also a wonderful escape into another world of adventure for me. There were no planned play dates—the children in my neighborhood just got together. We created magical imaginary worlds. We didn't require a lot of toys or gadgets because we invented all of the "stuff" we needed from common, everyday items. We also went to our pool on most days and many of us were not supervised by adults when we were there. We had a sense of freedom that children today are lacking.

Even when my children were young, I could allow them to ride their bikes in our neighborhood. I didn't have to arrange play dates—kids just showed up at each other's homes. They did have some freedom to just be children. There were far more television channels available, but again, most did not have programming suitable for children during the day. My children read, read, and read and loved getting lost in books. They were not distracted by myriads of electronic toys—except for Pac-Man (which first appeared in 1980) so, like their mother, they created games to play. My children had adventures with their neighborhood friends, but were never too far from an adult eye.

Twenty-first century summers are different. Most children are shuttled to and from arranged play dates. Children go to pools, but they are supervised by parents or babysitters. For some children, everything is structured to the hilt, while others are left to their own devices, which often means they have their noses in front of an electronic game or the television channel that runs children's programming all day long. I realize that there are many learning games on electronic devices, but those interactions are different than participating in experiences that causes them to wonder and learn deeply.

One way to extend learning opportunities for children is for parents to create their own camp experiences. Even parents who work can hold evening camps. Home-based camps can be a wonderful family experience for older and younger siblings alike. Here are some steps to help plan and prepare a great family camp.

Step 1: Explore the child's interest area. If the child assists in the planning, discern what areas of interest he or she would like to explore. Once a topic is decided upon, give it a great name to emphasize both the topic and the idea this is a structured activity (e.g., The Night Sky, Folktales/Ghost Stories, A Writer's Den, Kitchen Chemistry, Poetry Slams, The Human Body, Botany Bash, Rocket Science, Dinosaur Dig, Bugs Galore, Zoo Time Fun).

Step 2: Think about logistics. In order for a family camp to work, a schedule must be followed. Camp leaders need to decide days and times and then stick to them. Think about incorporating the evening meal into the camp experience by deciding on menus that enhance the experience. Giving the menu items names that relate to the camp topic adds to the fun. Another great addition to the home camp is allowing children to sleep outside. There are few things that children love more than sleeping in a tent—even if it is in the backyard.

Step 3: Research and prepare. Now is the time to search the Internet for great activities, science experiments, guidebooks for identification of phenomenon, and so forth. The public library also has a wealth of books on a variety of subjects to support a camp. Don't forget that it is possible to include local attractions as a part of the camp experience. For example, including a zoo or park trip changes the pace of the home camp and can add interest. Many public venues (e.g., zoos, museums, state parks) have websites that provide educational suggestions to enhance visits.

Step 4: Select and plan activities. Featuring two or three activities per evening works well, especially if dinner is included as part of the camp. (One note of caution is to make sure that any selected experiments are tried in advance.) Try to incorporate reading and writing in your camp. For example, having children keep a detailed protocol of their experiments shows them the importance of documenting their work. Reflective journals can be very enlightening for parents to read and children to write. Having children discuss their feelings during camp can give parents a great deal of insight into how their children think and feel.

Step 5: Gather all needed supplies. Individual lists are necessary for the daily planning of the camp activities. As a teacher, I always used a sticky note for the supplies needed for each activity so that in the heat of the moment I could quickly get each student the proper supplies.

Step 6: Execute the camp. As a teacher, I learned to overplan for each day's activities and that is a great practice to incorporate into camp planning. The daily organization and implementation of the camp is critical to success. Remember not to rush through activities; camp is a time to savor spending time together and exploring new ideas. It is also important to set up some camp rules, particularly when dealing with any type of experiment or expensive equipment. Attitude is everything; so camp leaders should go into the camp experience excited and ready to learn and have fun. If more than one camper is involved, it is a great opportunity to allow the children to work together to finish each project.

## Conclusion

The pluses of having at-home camps are many. First, a camp allows families to spend much-needed time together. Shared activities and experiences are so vital to maintaining communication and unity. Second, camp activities can expand the gifted child's area of interest. Many gifted children go through phases when they become immersed in their current interest. Camp is a great way to show support and assist them in developing that interest. Third, for campers who struggle to find motivation, camp can be a way to get them back on track and to love learning again. Finally, camp can accelerate the depth of content and expand critical thinking skills. Gifted children may ask hard questions and find logical thinking strategies intriguing. Happy camping!

#### Author's Note

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For more information about NAGC's Parent and Community Network, visit <http://www.nagc.org/ParentCommunityNetwork.aspx>.