

SPORTS & RECREATION

When camping with kids, do it the easy way

*It can be close,
cheap and fun*

By ANNIKA WALLEDAHL
Contributing writer

Starry skies, s'mores and campfire stories are what summer is all about. Not just for kids, but for parents, too.

Taking the kids camping is easier than you think. There are several great camping locations just a half an hour's drive away. So if you haven't already, just grab a tent, the family and take the plunge — with some tips to keep the kids safe and entertained.

Don't go far on the first trip

Susie Winkowski is the Campground manager at Bellevue's Vasa Park Resort, a private campground that has been operating on Lake Sammamish since 1926. She offered this advice for the maiden camping voyage with kids.

"Stay close to home for the first time. Don't go too far in case you forget something or the kids get scared," she said.

So skip the four-hour drive to a remote campsite. There's no need to drive all the way to Lake Chelan to have a great campout.

Stay close to home. As a bonus, you might be able to eliminate restless-car syndrome altogether.

Active kids are happy kids

Winkowski recommends choosing a campground with lots of activities for kids — things like a fire pit, swimming area and playground.

Vasa Park offers a swimming beach with an on-duty lifeguard from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the summer. The park's tent sites have picnic tables, and the restrooms have a diaper-changing area for wee ones.

Denise Nahnke, the outdoor program manager for Girl Scouts Totem Council, also has several tips for keeping camping fun. Among other things, "stay focused on what kids want to do," she said.

Some things don't change. Remove the power supply, and kids these days still enjoy the basics — climbing trees, building sand castles, roasting marshmallows and playing cards. Remember to bring "fun" supplies, too, said Nahnke, who recommends letting the kids roam around in the woods and fields.

"Just being outside is very important for human develop-



ment," she said.

So let 'em loose, but make sure the kids stay within sight or earshot, depending on age.

Staying safe

Nahnke has these tips for keeping kids safe and cheerful while camping.

- Kids should have their own water bottle to help them stay hydrated.

- Start the campfire circle 10

feet back. Never leave children unattended by the fire.

- Wear sandals or water shoes instead of going barefoot to avoid stepping on glass or sharp sticks.

- Sleeping pads insulate from the cold ground in addition to adding comfort.

- Bring a PFD (personal flotation device) for kids to wear if they will be playing near water. Many of Washington's rivers and lakes are very cold

and can cause muscles to freeze up quickly.

- Bring a fuzzy friend. Stuffed animals help kids fall asleep, especially if they are in a separate tent from parents.

- Bring a bedtime book. Kids love a nighttime story read to them by flashlight.

Secrets to success

Here are 10 ways to ease

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BRIEFLY

Kohlrus is national track-meet qualifier

Kayli Kohlrus, 14, qualified for the National Junior Olympics by placing in the top three in two events in the Region 13 Junior Olympic qualifying track meet in Salem, Ore.

Kohlrus, who lives in Sammamish, achieved personal records of 16 feet, 5 inches in the long jump and 33 feet, 8 inches in the triple jump.

The national meet took place July 25-30 in Baltimore, Md. About 6,000 athletes competed.

Putting tourney raises scholarship money

The Golf Club at Newcastle hosted the fourth-annual Association of Women in Communications' Scholarship Putting Challenge Aug. 16.

Proceeds from the tourney, which took place on an 18-hole putting course, raised money for communications scholarships statewide.

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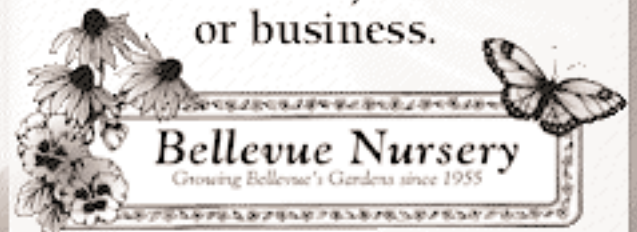
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your transition from nature channel explorer to campground explorer.

- 1) Bring a tarp and raingear.
- 2) Get to the campground early, with enough time to set up before it gets dark.
- 3) Bring a first aid kit and sunscreen.
- 4) Bring baby wipes — not just for diapers, for dirty hands too.
- 5) Make kid food for dinner — roasted hot dogs, grapes and s'mores.
- 6) Bring one flashlight for each kid.
- 7) Bring a change of clothes (kids usually manage to get wet).
- 8) Pickup firewood and a disposable camera from your local grocery store.
- 9) Don't forget the tent, sleeping bag and pillows.

10) Finally, if the kids aren't having fun, cut it short. There's no point in sticking it out if the kids are miserable.

Try something new with Go Play Outside

"Go play outside!" How many times did you hear that growing up? In addition to camping with the kids, consider trying a new sport or outdoor activity with them, too. The state Department of Fish and Wildlife has teamed up with the Washington Wildlife Federation to create the Go Play Outside program to encourage people to play outdoors.

The program provides opportunities to learn new skills. It coordinates groups that teach the basics of angling, back-country horseback riding, rock climbing, archery and other skill-driven activities. There are 28 organizations that partner with the

Department of Fish and Wildlife to put on the activities.

Ray Wilson is the former state coordinator for the Washington Wildlife Federation and the Go Play Outside program. Part of the outreach for the program is coordinated with schools, which is a great way to "gets lots of kids involved right away," he said.

Kids are spending too much time on video games, television and in front of the computer, Wilson said.

"There is another life beside what they're doing. There is a fulfilling experience if you try an outdoor adventure," he said.

Wilson has helped coordinate many Go Play Outside activities. At one event, a 92-year-old grandmother said she just had to try shooting a bow. And she did. While Go Play Outside strives to reach out to youth, the activities aren't just for kids.

The activities provide the basics. From that point, kids (or adults) can pursue whatever they are interested in.

Often, the activities kindle memories in parents, who say, "This is so much fun. I haven't done this since I was a kid," Wilson said.

According to Keith Underwood, the angler-education coordinator for the Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Go Play Outside activities help youths find their interests, build self-esteem and "see outside the concrete and the city."

Another benefit is that many of the Go Play Outside activities are free. There may be fees associated with the state park or national forest where the activities are held, but compared to the cost of a family night out to the movies, "it's cheap outdoors," Underwood said.

Information is available at (360) 902-2344 and <http://wdfw.wa.gov/gpo>.

Camping locally

Campgrounds in and near the Eastside include:

- Vasa Park in Bellevue. Private campground. Amenities: tent camping, restrooms with diaper-changing station, showers, swimming beach with water-slides and playground. Call (425) 746-3260 for reservations. Web site: www.vasaparkresort.com
- King County Parks
- Tolt-MacDonald Park in Carnation. Part of King County Parks system. Amenities: 13 tent sites, restrooms, showers, hiking and mountain-bike trails, orienteering course, soccer field and playground. No reservations; first come, first served. Information at (206) 205-7532. Web site: www.metrokc.gov/parks/rentals/toltmac.htm
- Seattle/Renton KOA in Renton. Private campground. Amenities: tent camping, restrooms with baby-changing stations, showers, swimming pool, playground, horseshoe pit, bird watching and bike rentals. Call (253) 872-8652 for reservations. Web site: www.seattlekoa.com

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REAL ESTATE IN STATE OF FLUX
 The real estate market generally is in a state of flux. The economy is in a complicated position with mixed economic signals creating uncertainty in the marketplace, it was noted in a report from Freddie Mac, a major buyer of existing home mortgages. Consumer prices sprinted upward in the second quarter of this year, as oil prices edged up near \$75 a barrel and the consumer price index grew at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 3.1 percent - up from a 2.2 percent increase for all of last year. The Federal Reserve Board responded to these indicators by continuing to raise the federal funds rate, now set at 5.25 percent.
 Whether we will see more elevations in the federal funds rate depends on future inflation rates and growth factors. In the second half of this year consumers will need to adjust to an economy in transition from a housing boom to a slowing trend exacerbated by higher energy prices, according to the report.
 "We expect some volatility in mortgage rates as they continue to bounce around a gently rising trend, averaging 6.8 percent over the remainder of the year for a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage. Also, investors in the housing market that were once emboldened by the expectation of strong home price appreciation may now contribute to waning housing demand," the report stated.
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