

Remarkable Activities Add Interest and Return Business

Big or small, snowbird or family park, developing an activities program for your guests adds immense value and encourages positive memories and return visits. An activities program can be wall to wall events or an occasional card tournament or potluck gathering. This all depends on your guests' desires, staff levels and facilities available. Many owners and operators begin small, see interest and participation and continue to develop their programs.

Contributed by Evanne Schmarder, Editor, ARVC Report in conjunction with the below noted Recreation Specialists

Ask your guests' what interests them. Offer something for everyone from the brainy to the brawny. Consider theme weekends, special events and everyday entertainment.

I've assembled several ideas for a wide variety of activities to jump start your program. Perhaps you host similar activities or you're just getting started. Either way, here's food for thought.

Noodlemania

Bryan McLean, Assistant Rec Director at Normandy Farms in Foxboro, MA developed this popular pool activity. It's best played with teens and up due to the swimming and water skills required.

Supplies needed: Various colored foam noodles for a pool and a giant beach ball or weight training ball. (I find the weight training ball works better because it doesn't float in the air as much and you spend less time running around the outside of the pool chasing the ball down.) Staff needed – one staff member to run the game.

First determine how many people are playing. Many guests are hesitant at first because they don't know what the game is but, with a little convincing from your Rec Counselor, you should be able to get a decent sized crowd - more will join in once they see how fun the game is. After you have a count of players, throw the appropriate amount of noodles into the pool. One way of splitting up teams is to say anyone with a red noodle is on one team and anyone with a blue noodle is on the other team. You will need one person on each team to be the goalie; they are the only players in the pool who can use their hands.

The object of the game is to use your noodle to throw, push, carry or hit the ball to the opposite side of the pool and make

it touch the edge before the other team can take the ball away from you. When a team does this they receive a point. You can play the game as a timed event, and the team with the most points at the end of regulation is the winner, or you can have a point limit, and the team to reach it first is the winner.

The game is started with a face off in the middle of the pool where the Rec Counselor will throw the ball in front of the two players facing off and they battle for control of the ball. The players cannot use their hands to control the ball - they must use the noodle or another part of their body. If they use their hands, a penalty is called and the ball is automatically turned over to the opposite team. If the ball goes out of bounds, just throw the ball back into the middle of the pool and continue play. If a point is scored, play begins with the opposite team receiving the ball.

Safety Concerns: Be sure to keep an eye on the game at all times. The older adults can get physical with the noodles, especially if they're playing against friends. You want to announce before the game starts that the noodles are to be used for going after the ball ONLY!!! You cannot use them to hit other players!! If fair play is not followed, you may call a penalty on the offending team and turn the ball over to their opponents. If it persists, you can ask that person to leave the game.

This is a relatively inexpensive and easy game to play in the pool if you're looking for an alternative to water volleyball and basketball. Enjoy!!

Flashlight Candy Hunt

Robyn and Tim Chilson, owners of Brookdale Family Campground in Meadville, PA offer this extremely popular activity for children of all ages. This event can be tweaked for any group – the sky's the limit.

Supplies needed: Eight to 10 large bags (Sam's Club) of bite size candy bars. Time required – one to two hours. Staff needed – one to two.

Inform participants that the hunt is done by age and they need to bring a plastic grocery bag and flashlight to gather and carry their loot.

One hour prior to scheduled time for the hunt to start (which should be after dusk) staff members go to an open short grass (mowed) field and hide the candy. We use the shotgun method. Starting on the far end of the field in a golf cart loaded with candy we throw handfuls of the bite size candy bars throughout the field, working our way to the staging area.

Guests are separated by age: 4 years old and under, 5-6 year olds, 7-8 year olds, 9-10 year olds, 11-12 year olds, 13-15 year olds, 16 and up.

Review THE RULES:

We review the boundaries (tell them that there isn't any candy outside the boundaries - not near the road, pond, creek, etc.). We remind them that aren't allowed to start the hunt until their age group is called and if they leave early they will be fined with a five second penalty. We also remind them that pushing, shoving, or bullying younger children is not acceptable. And, to be nice, share, and help others!

We then release the kids (in order of age) allowing a few seconds between age groups to allow the youngest children the best chances to get their share. We give a 30 second head start for the 4 and under category, 15 seconds after ages 5 and 6 go then a 10 second gap between the rest.

The goal is to collect as much candy as possible. There will be flashlights going everywhere in the field - it's a lot of fun to watch! When they return to the staging area

congratulate them on a good hunt, listen to their funny stories, and see how much candy they found.

Rec Director Tip: Make sure everyone gets some candy. We save one part of a bag of candy just in case someone doesn't get anything. They get a big handful of candy if they got skunked. This way everyone wins.

(Additional hint: 9-10 year olds sometimes try to leave early, so make sure you announce a five second penalty for people who leave early.)

Scarecrow Building

Carolyn Mucha of Pine Acres Family

Camping Resort in Oakham, MA shared this great family or individual activity.

Supplies needed: old clothing (typically jeans, sweatpants, old pants) can be found in the back of your closet or at yard sales, nylons (NOT knee highs), flannel/long sleeved shirts, hats, wooden crosses to hold the scarecrow up, arts and crafts beads, glue gun, hay. Time required – 30 minutes to 1 hour. Staff needed – 1. We charge a small amount for this event - \$10.

Once the participant has paid and is ready to build their scarecrow they pick out clothing and nylons. Using the wooden crosses to hold them up, put the clothing on around the cross and stuff the hay in. Fill the nylons with hay. Once the clothing is stuffed, maneuver the nylons (this is the head of the scarecrow) into the clothing so the opening of the nylons (tied closed of course) is at the top of the scarecrow. If you have a floppy hat or even a baseball hat, it adds personality. Using the arts and crafts beads, foam, etc. you can make a face for the scarecrow. The kids really go to town on the face, putting their own creativity on each face. The families then take them back to their sites and put them on display for the weekend.

Scavenger Hunts

An old standby and campground favorite, scavenger hunts can be physical, photographic, word hunts or anything else you can imagine. You'll be amazed at how the participants get other campers involved.

Supplies needed: scavenger hunt sheets and pencils for all participants and a watch for the facilitator. Time required – 1 hour. Staff needed – 1.

Inform players that this is a timed event. You will be handing out a scavenger hunt list and a pencil. Guests will have a limited time to find and collect all items on the list. Their goal is to return to you, with all listed items in tow, as quickly as possible. They may work in groups, however, the group may not split up.

Have everyone synchronize the time, hand the scavenger lists and pencils out – telling them not to look until you say "go". Once everyone has a list and pencil shout "ready, set, go!"

When players arrive back check off each individual item returned. If they didn't find something suggest they "borrow" from another player or point the item out if you spy one close by. Congratulate them on a job well done. Prizes are awarded to all players. Offer a grab bucket of inexpensive goodies – the earlier players arrive back the more prize choices they have.

Rec Director Tip: Devise several scavenger hunts and keep them on file for future use. Theme hunts if desired.

Steal the Bacon

A neighborhood team game from way back, this field game is action packed and exciting.

Supplies needed: 4 cones to delineate a square – placed at least 20 paces apart, a marker (can be a baseball base, etc) in the center of the square for the bacon's home point, 18 inch piece of a bright swimming noodle (as the "bacon") on the home point. Time needed – 1 hour. Staff needed – 1.

This game requires at minimum eight players. Separate players into two teams. Create two opposing team lines that are in line with the cones at each end. Each team lines up on their side and counts off one, two, three, etc. The opposing team counts off across the field. For example, if there are 10 players, number one is across the field from the other team's number 10.

To begin play, the staff member calls a number (corresponding with the number of players on each team.) That number player on each team rushes to the center to steal the bacon and return it to his or her team's base line. The other player tries to tag the bacon holder before they can bring home the bacon. Both teams should stay inside the cone boundaries. If a player goes out of bounds the bacon is returned to the home point and another round begins.

If playing with eight to 12 players the team that brings the bacon home receives a point. If the bacon holder is tagged the tagging team receives the point. The game plays to 15 points – or a time limit – whatever you choose.

If playing with more than 12 players the player that didn't grab the bacon is out of the game unless they tag the bacon holder. If tagged the bacon holder is out of the game. The game plays until there is only one player remaining on the field.

The following two activities are ideal for theme weekends. Loads of fun that keeps them coming back!!

Take Your Tractor

Camping Weekend

Mi-Te-Jo Campground owner Gary Marique of Milton, NH found a way to turn his passion into a profitable weekend event that fills his park in an otherwise slow shoulder weekend.

The Take Your Tractor Camping Weekend originated because of the love Gary has for antique tractors. This year will be our fifth year having a Tractor Weekend. The secret is to start small, grow slowly, and ask campers and friends for input and ideas. Have a weekend that centers around something that you have a passion for. It doesn't need to be tractors - it could be cars, fishing, crafts, dogs, etc.

Our first year was a partial day event consisting of tractor displays, a few tractor games, a tractor pull and a bean supper. Over the past four years it has grown into a full campground and a daylong event. We recently completed a new "Event Area" which will be used for this and other events. A lawn mower pulling club called the Sugar Hill Snubbers hosts a pull with about sixty lawn tractors. A tractor pull is similar to a horse or ox pull which you may see at a fair. They have several weight classes which run both stock and modified tractors. Fans bring chairs or sit on the grass and cheer for their favorite pullers. Campers are invited to bring their tractors, which are displayed on their sites for the weekend, then moved to the Event Area for the day.

Over 50 tractors, along with antique farm implements, are displayed along the edge of the Event Area. It is believed that Gary may have more than 30 tractors himself, but no one quite knows for sure. He has learned not to leave them all in one spot, that way his wife is unable to get an accurate count. Most tractors are in running condition, but it is not uncommon to see a group of men gathered around an old tractor trying to figure out why it is not running.

During this event the local volunteer Fire Department provides food and sells raffle tickets. The bean supper is still an attraction, but the Fire Department has added sausage, corn, hot dogs and hamburgers making it a very successful fundraiser. The afternoon ends with a tractor parade. This gives all qualified drivers a chance to show off their favorite tractor. Lawn chairs line the road as children and families watch for their favorite tractor drive by. Many enjoy this day as they reminisce about their days on a farm. Children are

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