



NEWS RELEASE

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Unexplored Opportunities for Children at Your Local Parks

Ever wonder how you can give your children a break from their electronics and enjoy the outdoors? The answer may surprise you: your local parks. With an abundance of parks located in Santa Maria, there are plenty of innovative ways to help get your family back to nature. Some easy and free activities that everyone can participate in are:

- **Walking** - Before or after dinner, take time to walk together as a family. Discuss what happened during the day while getting a little exercise. Also, participate in the monthly Community Walks that take place in a different park every month.
- **Encourage your children to watch for wildlife** - There is often wildlife at parks including birds, bugs, and sometimes larger friends. Children can log the wildlife they see into a notebook, create drawings, or take photos.
- **Go on a scavenger hunt** - Work together to create a list of items you could see in a park like a leaf, a pinecone, sand, a swing, a fence etc.
- **Picnic in the park** - Your sandwich often tastes better when you are sitting in a beautiful park. Bring a blanket and your favorite foods to enjoy the nice weather.
- **Running games** - Teach your children to play "Hide and Seek," "Red light/Green light" or "Red Rover" Or with keep it simple by racing from one tree to another.
- **Make art from nature** - Press flowers, glitter, and pinecones, or draw part of your favorite park. Bring a little bit of nature back home with you.
- **Watch the clouds** - We have a lot of sunny days in Santa Maria, so why not enjoy them? Lie down on the grass and identify the different cloud shapes.

Remember, in order to get the most out of the experience, keep all toys and electronics to a minimum when visiting a park (this goes for parents too). Step away from the smart phones and enjoy the experience with your family.

In collaboration with the National Recreation and Parks Association and PBS, Explore the Outdoors campaign is designed to help families rediscover the vast benefits of their local parks. For more ideas on how to "Enjoy Your Local Parks", "Getting Your Kids to Plug into Nature," and help "Encourage Green Habits" visit www.pbs.org/parents/outdoors.

Questions may be directed to the Recreation and Parks Department, 925-0951 ext. 260.

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