

# Eight tips for a successful summer

By Cheri Burcham  
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With the lazy days of summer upon us, Extension Educator Karla Belzer has a great article about how to make it more successful and enjoyable with our kids. Karla says: around my house, summer is a cherished time of year. Routines are more relaxed, the pace is slower, and the "rules" are bent a little. Even though everyone in my family is enjoying a little more freedom from the frantic school year, we're equally ready for a little more "normal."

What does having a successful summer mean to you? Fulfilled kids, relaxing days, a break from the norm? Have you ever thought about what a successful summer looks like? While each family may have its definition of a successful summer, I think it's safe to say that most parents want their children and family to enjoy all that summer brings.

Before long, the chorus of "I'm bored" rings through my house. To prevent that, I thought it would be helpful to share a few tips on how to have a successful summer with kids.

## Stick to a Schedule

While summer certainly offers opportunities to sleep in and stay up late, children (and adults!) generally function better with predictability. As humans, we are conditioned to want routine and structure – it helps us feel safe and secure. Children are no different! Oftentimes, when structure is thrown out the window, negative behaviors increase, and chaos ensues.

While it's not necessary to engage your children in a schedule with military precision in the summer (or at any

time really), simple routines like regular waking, bed, and meal times are often enough to ensure structure and stability, while maintaining the carefree spirit of summer that we all love.

## Stay Involved in Activities

Summer is a great time to cut back on your child's activities, but be sure to keep them involved in something. As more and more parents are concerned about over-scheduling children during the school year, summer can be a precious three months with fewer activities. It is important to stay involved as activities can provide a sense of structure and routine. Consider having your child try a new sport, activity, or club. Parents can even offer summer learning activities like enrolling in a class, introducing an online educational game, or even providing commercially available educational workbooks. Summer camps are another popular summer activity and there are many opportunities to volunteer during summer festivals, community events, and county fairs. The key to staying involved is summed up in one word: balance. Resist filling your child's schedule to the brim and embrace "free" time for play, exploration, and good old downtime.

## Set (and stick to) Screen Time Limits

If your children are like mine, screens are very popular! Phones, TVs, computers, tablets, and hand-held games are choice activities on sweltering summer days. While we have guidelines for screen time that we are pretty rigid about

during the school year, I've noticed my kids stretching those limits over the past few weeks. It's a good idea to set screen time expectations in your home and to stick with it throughout the year.

While the expectation may be relaxed somewhat during the summer, parents are strongly encouraged to keep some sort of limit on screens. Families should aim to find balance in screen time and develop a digital use plan that works for them. Maintaining the limits you set on screen time year-round provides the structure that helps kids thrive! While it may be difficult to set and keep screen time limits, there are plenty of other ways to engage your children this summer, like...

## Tackle Chores and Responsibilities

Summer is an excellent time to teach children to take on (or continue) their household responsibilities. Even very young children can help with simple household tasks and all children can grow their confidence and skills in helping out around the house! Assign chores that are developmentally age-appropriate for your child's skills and abilities. It is also important that parents ensure children have all of the tools and knowledge they need to complete the chore.

## Read, Read, Read

Children who spend time reading in the summer have been found to make gains in their reading achievement over children who do not read during the summer. Many public libraries offer summer reading programs with incentives and prizes to encourage and entice children and families to keep reading! Take a weekly

family trip to your local public library and read in front of your children. Consider making reading a part of your daily family routine and make sure that you are modeling good reading behavior yourself by showing interest in reading.

## Get Outside

Summer offers plentiful opportunities to get out and enjoy the great outdoors. No matter your age, it is important to incorporate physical activity into your daily routine. Aim for at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day for children. Families should try to spend time together outside for maximum benefit. Family bike rides or walks trips to the beach or pool, gardening, and visiting playgrounds or parks are great ways to get out and get fit together. While the heat and humidity of Midwest summers may prevent some outdoor physical activities, there are plenty of options to stay physical indoors including indoor playgrounds/jump centers, bowling, visiting a recreation center, or even walking around a museum. As your family gets out and about this summer, it's also important to...

## Stay Safe

Trips to the park or the playground, fun family outings, swimming, and attending community festivals are all at the top of my children's summer bucket list. As summer naturally brings about many more opportunities to get outside, the risk for accidental injury increases. Keep your children safe by implementing common safety measures. Wearing sunscreen and staying hydrated is especially important on hot summer days. Supervise your children in all outdoor activi-

ties – especially water activities including swimming and water play.

## Keep It Fun

Whatever your plans are for a successful summer with your children, make sure it remains fun! Everyone, including children, needs downtime in a lifetime to relax, unwind, and restore – and summer offers a

perfect opportunity for kids to do just that. Many families create summer bucket lists to keep the summer fun, interesting, engaging, and, perhaps, unscheduled.

Whether your family is breezing through these summer days or is experiencing the boredom that summer can bring, your family can have a successful, fun, engaging, and rewarding summer!

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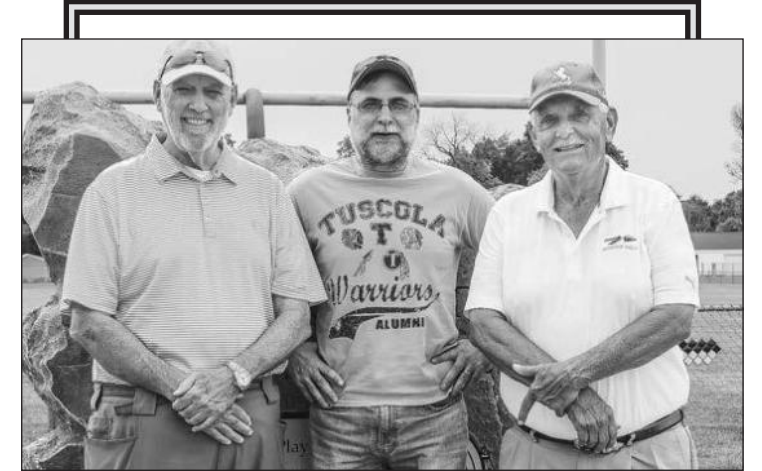
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## Review

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across the country," Porter said. "The pandemic made things worse with the loss of event advertising. But steep increases in printing costs, postage and personnel also added expense during a two-year revenue drought."

However, those were not the only factors in the decision to sell, he said. "My wife and I are nearing retirement age, so we knew this was a probability within the next several years. We were not yet actively seeking a buyer, but in today's economic climate, it would be a huge risk to turn down a legitimate offer."

He said Better Newspapers, Inc., is a logical fit because many of their newspapers are located in the MetroEast and in Douglas County where his newspapers circulate. "We've

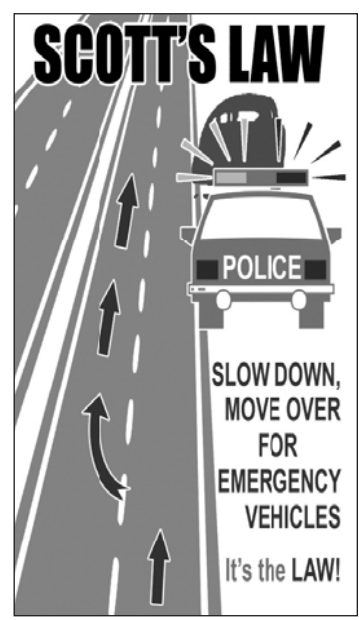
been chopping the pot in those markets," he said, "so it makes sense to pool our resources. I'm proud of the work we've done, and I'm looking forward to being a part of the solution to ensure that our communities will continue to be served by newspapers that they can be proud of, too."

Publisher Greg Hoskins welcomed Porter to the staff and said he believes the communities will be served even better through this consolidation. The merger will bring more resources to the papers, and Porter will be able to focus on editorial content without the burden of overseeing the business and delivery side of three newspapers.

"We have a lot of exciting plans for these communities," Hoskins said. "David is well-known in the communities and in the industry for his writing and reporting skills.

Our team will be stronger with him on board, and the communities will be better served as well."

Better Newspapers, Inc. owns more than 30 newspapers in Illinois and Missouri.



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