

Fresh air and fun! – Written by Jenny Hadfield, ADC – District 3 Representative

It's that time of year!! The weather is warm, the leaves are green and there's so much to do! It's a time of year when we should be taking full advantage of outdoor life, but do we always do this? What happened to the need for fresh air and community connection? It is so easy to plan those events that are within the four walls of our buildings, but what about all of the opportunities that lie outside? Sure we plan the occasional lunch outing, trip to the zoo, trip to the park and maybe go to the movies, but do we really take the time to stop and look, listen, and feel the atmosphere we are in?

No matter what arena we work in or what age group we serve, everyone can benefit from the vast source of supplies that the outdoors can provide. Do you live in a farming town? Get out to the local farmers market and explore the wide variety of fruits, veggies and goodies that can be found! If you are able, encourage your group to purchase items to be incorporated into a group cooking class upon your return! Make a farm fresh salad, use fruits to top ice cream or make them into a pie. Encourage your participants to fully experience the textures, smells, sights and sounds that are around them. For them, this may be much more than just a trip to the market; it may be their re-connection to the outside world! If you're not near a farming town or don't have access to a farmers market, or maybe an outing isn't an option for you, bring the market to your group. Get out to the local grocery store and purchase veggies, fruits and other items that might be found at the farmers market. Set them up in baskets, bowls, or other containers in your activity area and create your own farmers market. Recruit volunteers to act as "market assistants" as your participants shop your in-house market.

Get out to the local state parks and go for a walk! Recruit some volunteers to assist with those that may need some help, or to push wheelchairs. Create a scavenger hunt to assist participants to fully enjoy the park. Include items that encourage listening to their surroundings (listen for a dog barking, or bird singing, point it out to your leader,) items that encourage exploring textures (find a smooth stone or a rough piece of bark,) and items that encourage movement and technology (have someone take your picture using a bench to stretch.) The possibilities are endless! If you can't get out to the state parks, utilize any outdoor area that you have available to you. Fresh air and sunshine can go a long way to improve a person's overall sense of well-being.

Need assistance in figuring out what is close? Here's a website to get you started!

<http://www.visitpa.com/pa-events-festivals#1> the opportunities are endless!!

ENJOY!