

Visalia fitness experts talk about tips and ideas for spring break

BY HILLARY S. MEEKS • hmeeks@visalia.gannett.com • March 29, 2010

Spring break shouldn't be an opportunity for kids to play marathon video games or watch endless hours of television, according to local fitness experts.

"For vacation, we hope that parents would limit the amount of time [children] play video games and watch TV," said Diane Biehle, a roving elementary physical education teacher for the Visalia Unified School District.

It's always important for children to have at least one hour a day of physical activity, even when they're on vacation, she said. This activity could also be a great time for the family to do something together.

"They're just happy to do anything with their parents. Parents work and are so busy, so when they do spend time together, [children] enjoy it," Biehle said.

It doesn't take a lot of money or even creativity to get kids' moving, she said. Parents should refer back to their own childhood games, such as soccer, basketball, playing catch, volleyball and jump-roping.

If parents do want to get even more creative, they can set up a course in the yard with different stations: one minute on jump rope, 20 push-ups and holding the plank position for as long as they can.

"For parents, that's a piece of paper and a pencil," Biehle said. "It doesn't take money to be healthy."

But perhaps there are some parents who need a little extra help in the energy and creativity department. For that, parents can check out local gyms and activity centers in Visalia, including Toddle Fitness, The Little Gym and Boingo's.

The Little Gym features a spring break drop-in daily camp from 9:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. for children age 3-10 years old, said Audrey Lebda, owner of the gym.

"Our theme-based camps include obstacle courses, group activities, gymnastics, arts and crafts, snacks and more," she said.

It's \$30 a day for nonmembers, and 20 percent off for each additional sibling. Themes include super heroes, Hawaiian luau, jungle safari, spring sports and an egg hunt.

Boingos, a center that features large inflatable bounce houses and activities, has a full-time and part-time drop-off spring break camp for first-through sixth-graders. Here, there will also be a theme each day, such as crazy cooks, treasure hunt, mad scientist, fear factor and fireman's follies.

Full-time camp is 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. today through Friday, and is \$125 for five days. Part-time camp is today, Wednesday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. for \$75. Drop-ins are welcome at \$30 per day.

Toddle Fitness offers a different experience for parents who want to interact with their little ones during classes, said Betsy Sorensen, owner of the

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gym. She offers special classes just for children 6 months old up to about 5 years old. The classes are:

- 4:30 p.m. today, Toddle Fitness 2, for 3- to 5-year-olds. In this one, parents watch while staff guide the children in movement and fun.
- 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, Baby Class, for children 6 months to walking. Parents help their children exercise.
- 5:30 p.m. Wednesday and 10 a.m. Thursday, Toddle Fitness, for new walkers to about age 3. Parents engage with the children in movement and music. Sorenson offers a complimentary class to any child, which parents can take advantage of during spring break week. Just call ahead at 622-9095 to reserve a spot because there is a limited amount of space.

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