

Planning Winter Activities Strengthens Family
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The temperature is dropping, the sun is setting earlier, and children are becoming more and more eager about the upcoming holidays. This year, don't let the changing season pass you by. There are many fun activities you can do as a family to take advantage of this exciting time, both outdoors and in.

Heading out into nature is a great way to soak up this colorful season and enjoy the outdoors before the really cold weather arrives. A walk in the woods, fields, or even the county park gives children the opportunity to see the changing colors up close. It is also a great way to come together after a busy school and work week.

You do not need any special equipment for an afternoon hike. Just jackets, water and snacks. Kids may also enjoy bringing crayons to make leaf rubbings and small paper bags for collecting items they find on the ground, such as acorns or unusual leaves. Another unique storage container for outside treasures is empty egg cartons.

Making a wreath out of colorful leaves is another great outdoor activity. Collect leaves on your outdoor adventures, before they get dry, and glue them to a straw wreath. Hang the wreath at home where the whole family can enjoy.

For older children, and on days when you cannot go outside, a trip to a museum is a great way to spend the day. These visits give families a special opportunity to spend time with their children in an educational, yet fun environment. Museums also allow children to make connections between the things they see and already know to what they learn everyday at school or at home. Consider your child's interests, if they are excited by art or mummies try to find museums or exhibits that focus on those subjects.

While it may be more difficult to keep younger children engaged in museums, do not rule them out just yet. Follow these tips to keep even the tiniest tots entertained. Let them lead and enjoy exhibits at their own pace. Try not to be overly concerned with staying on task but be ready to go where they want to go. Try to relate information that your child already knows to an exhibit you are looking at. For example, a knight's armor serves the same purpose as a bicycle helmet or a catcher's mask – it protects the body. If all else fails, a good game of "I spy" works every time.

When making family plans don't forget about zoos, aquariums and nature centers. These are great, child friendly places to visit as well. Just because the weather is changing does not mean you cannot enjoy fun, family activities well into next spring.

For more information about the 4-H program or other youth development issues, contact the Oconee County Cooperative Extension Office at (706) 769-3946 or stop by our office located behind the Oconee County Courthouse.