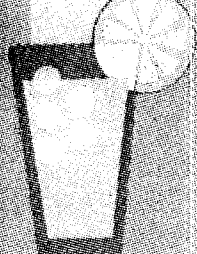


# Beyond Bubbles

## Activities for the Young and Restless



**P**laying golf in the summer is a no-brainer and a new way of playing golf makes it easier for parents to include children without the expense and frustration generally associated with the sport... **disc golf.** (That's disc as in Frisbee, not the Olympic sport!)

All you need to get started are two discs—a driver and a putter. Discs start around \$7 and many local sporting goods stores carry them. There are three courses in the Richmond area, in the West End at Castle Point Park and in the East End at Gillies Creek Park and Dorey Park. The course layouts resemble traditional golf courses but on a smaller scale, with a basket instead of a cup and a few surprises, like a tree in the middle of the fairway. Have fun playing golf for a change! For more information about courses and rules, check out [www.pdga.com](http://www.pdga.com). —M.F.

**N**ow and then, a free or cheap movie is just the ticket. Regal Cinemas' Free Family Film Festival is a great weekly treat during the summer. From June 28 through August 24, Short Pump and Virginia Center theaters offer a free G or PG movie each week. The movies start at 10 a.m. on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Lines begin forming around 9 a.m. for the first-come, first-served seating which is limited to theater capacity! The large refillable popcorn is a great deal. Take paper bags to divide among your family. For schedule and location information, go to [www.regalcinemas.com](http://www.regalcinemas.com) and click on "REG Free Family Film Festival" in the green box.

Consolidated Theatre's Commonwealth 20 in Midlothian offers Summer Movie Magic with all shows \$1, or buy advance ticketing for all 8 weeks for \$6. Parents are free! "Kiddie" drinks and popcorn are offered for \$1. Films begin at 10 a.m. and are also on a first come, first-served basis. Visit [www.consolidatedmovies.com/SMMList/RichmondVA.doc](http://www.consolidatedmovies.com/SMMList/RichmondVA.doc) for a schedule. —K.R.V.

**T**ake time to get outside and enjoy the sunny weather for which we waited this cool spring. It's a perfect time to introduce your infant to the sights and sounds of Richmond. It will also do you both some good to get out of the house! Get outside and stroll, stroll and stroll some more, even if it is just around your neighborhood! One neat place well worth exploring is Maymont with its children's farm, nature center, arboretum, and Japanese and Italian gardens. This locale will provide lots of stimulation for your baby as well as some rolling hills to give moms a great post-delivery workout.

Another outdoor idea is Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden with a myriad of blooming flowers, a visual treat. Although the new Children's Garden doesn't open until fall, you can still check out the carriage house garden filled with fanciful scarecrows and bushes covered with butterflies. Stop for a picnic in a shaded area so your little one can have some "tummy time" and you can rest and re-hydrate.

Local mom Katy Haskell encourages young mothers to "make it a priority to meet other new mothers who are also adjusting to major life changes." Your public library may offer a "Book Babies" class consisting of a half-hour reading group for babies and parents. In addition, your hospital may offer a mothers' support group worth checking out. The other moms whom you meet today may become your future playgroup members and fast friends of tomorrow!

For those blazing hot days, think climate control. Explore Stony Point and Short Pump Malls, ducking in for some air-conditioned shopping when the heat gets to be too much. Or you could get a head start on checking out what the Children's Museum of Richmond has to offer once your child gets a bit older.

Once your baby has established himself as a "good sleeper," you could catch a matinee of your choice. Better yet, take the baby along on a date with your loved one—dinner, a movie, a family-friendly Braves game at the Diamond or an outdoor concert at Dogwood Dell. —L.C.M.

**S**ummer vacation is a time for fun but it can also be a time for personal growth when kids contribute to the community. Volunteering is one way to encourage this kind of growth.

The Richmond SPCA has volunteer programs for all ages. Although children under 16 need parental supervision to participate, that should not discourage parents because many of the programs involve a minimal time commitment. There are opportunities to volunteer for 30 minutes a week or more, for a minimum of a four-month commitment.

One of the fun things to do for the animals at the SPCA is to join the Treat Team, whose members reward dogs for good cage behavior. The Dog Squad is more hands-on; these volunteers walk, play with and bathe the dogs. If you are not dog people, you might want to join the Cat-tillion Company to socialize with and comfort the cats waiting for adoption. For more information, check the Richmond SPCA website, [www.richmondspca.org](http://www.richmondspca.org) or call 521-1327.

Kids can also raise money for charities by selling lemonade. If it doesn't suit you to participate in LemonAid (see the "Events" section), consider

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Alex's Lemonade ([www.alexlemonade.com](http://www.alexlemonade.com)) and raise money for cancer research. Or, children can choose any charity they would like to benefit through the Sunkist® Take A Stand program. Kids get the tools they need to set up their own lemonade stand, including recipes, signs, even sales tracking sheets. For more information, visit [www.sunkist.com/takeastand](http://www.sunkist.com/takeastand).

Other opportunities for volunteering may exist within your own neighborhood. Kids can lend a hand to neighbors by offering to take out the trash, helping with yard work or washing cars. If your children are outgoing, they could organize a neighborhood or creek cleanup with other children. Civic service is a good habit to get into and it is never too early to develop it. —M.F.

**A**s summer heats up, crafts entertain as well as take our minds off the heat. And if possible, they sneak in some education. This edible beach has the benefit of being tasty, as well.

At the grocery store, I give picture cards to my five-year-old sons and a list to my nine-year-old daughter. Our list includes graham crackers, gummy bears, animal crackers, pretzel sticks, goldfish crackers, and blue gelatin cups.

After the scavenger hunt, we take our goodies home or to the pool. A shoebox lid for each child wrapped with plastic wrap makes the perfect mess-containing tray. Crunch graham crackers for sand and add blue gelatin for the ocean. Kids can decorate their beach with pretzel fences and assorted creatures.

Sneak in mini-lessons by discussing which creatures you see at the beach. Categorize creatures by number of legs, breathes under water, and so on. You now have a piece of art, a snack, entertainment, and have taught your children a few new things. —K.R.V.

**I**t's hot. Sweat-the-second-you-set-foot-outside-the-shower hot. Humiture-in-the-triple-digits-hot. Deodorant-overtaxing hot. Toddler-whine-inducing hot. The last thing you want to do is to leave the air-conditioned comfort of your own home; but equally unappealing is the thought of propping your children before a mind-numbing, energy-squelching, parentally-unpre-viewed program-blaring television.

Relax, perspiring parents: "Here Come the ABCs" ... by They Might Be Giants. This newly released DVD is one the whole family will enjoy, repeatedly! The infectious alphabet-centric songs paired with visually diverse and oh-so-hip animations educate while they entertain.

Prefer the "classics"? Consider investing in the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary DVD compilation of "Schoolhouse Rock," possibly the most effective learning tool of our youth. Who among us doesn't define a conjunction's function by "hooking up words and phrases and clauses"?

Don't feel like even leaving the house to purchase the DVDs? Order both online. Stay cool while preparing for school. —C.L.

**S**ince my husband and I love to travel, our three sons have logged more miles than most grown-ups we know. One year we camped for six months along Europe's coastlines. As part of our home schooling routine, my older boys—Scott, then 11, and Jasper, then 7—kept a journey journal.

Because neither is particularly fond of writing, I designed lined journal pages with fill-in-the-blank sections, including space to draw a picture. After noting the date, the city and the weather, the boys jotted down:

- The Best Thing We Did Today
- A Topic I Want To Learn About
- Something I Learned Today
- A Funny/Special Thing That Happened

The results were amazing. Now I have a notebook full of memories of that special trip. Here's one from Jasper, March 8, Venice, Italy: "Feeding the pigeons was fun. It was funny when they were on Ross's head." On April 17, in Delphi, Greece, Scott wrote: "A fun thing that happened was when we ran down from the stadium. We took all the shortcuts." The pictures they drew still make me smile, especially one Scott called "A Snowball Up Close." He was feeling a bit lazy that day.

Taking an extended trip isn't a prerequisite for keeping a Journey Journal. In fact, you can have one that records multiple vacations. Make it a family affair by keeping your own journal of vacation memories. Jazz up your journals by including postcards and pictures cut out of tourist literature. You'll treasure these keepsakes for years to come. —P.S. **RPM**



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