

From the Heart. . .

. . . Life Skills for Today

By Sharon L. Benedict MS, ACC



Having Fun in our Fragile Economy

With one of our nation's largest one-day drop of 777 points on the Dow, who says that's a lucky number!? And who's trying to have some fun anyway with all the dire predictions? It always seems that when we see a season of prosperity (real or just perceived) we find ourselves planning all kinds of fun recreation and entertainment.

Having some fun often is definitely a good thing any time. Yet, with such doom and gloom shrouding our nation and communities with everything from the prospects of slower business, layoffs, hundreds of failed banks, and a national collapse predicted in the year ahead, who has the motivation to laugh and have a good time?

Since this month's life skill is Recreation/Entertainment, I'm determined to stay on course. So, here goes. Maybe, just maybe, this is actually the best time to have some fun to raise your spirits for putting things in perspective with our currently fragile economy. I don't mean we put our ostrich heads in quick-sand. We all know we need to clearly assess the impact these times will have on each of us, both personally and professionally. We each must make appropriate and wise decisions about our own finances, investments, and potential retirement risks ahead. This also means we will undoubtedly each need to tighten our discretionary spending—meaning in areas of recreation and entertainment.

But let's not go overboard. The ship hasn't sunk yet! And the crew hasn't jumped ship yet, either. They are madly trying to repair the huge Wall Street to Main Street fracture of our financial ferry so we all can get across this tsunami abyss. So, I'm going to spend the time, if not money, offering some less expensive options for fun throughout this month. My hope is that each article will help soften the up-hill climb and encourage you to find simple ways to ease up your budget, and have a good time doing it.

Let's start with right at home. I bet you are already thinking of ways to stay home and help the kids and you enjoy just being together. If not, now's the time! What specific shared activities at home can you and your family engage in without an additional cent being spent? No matter what you come up with, be sure to give yourself ample opportunity for soul-soothing laughter to be in the mix. In addition, I know there's always the TV or a home movie, which is fine. Yet, remember, each month you do get a bill for cable TV service. So, it really doesn't count right now.

Look around your home to see what you already have—such as on your book shelf, games in the closet, crafts stored in the drawers, food in the refrigerator for making a special meal together. The list will grow and grow as you take some quiet moments to look around. Ask your spouse, your kids, your friends what they see is possible. You will be amazed at how creative you all become together.

Another option for homespun fun is visit with your neighbor. Get out your lawn chairs, a little food and drink already in the frig, and just enjoy each others' company. This is a great way to get to know each other and find out ways to help each other through any tough times. You just might find another friend as your neighbor.

Next issue, some options within your local community is next. In the meantime, here's something to put on your bathroom mirror to read each day from Peter Thomas:

“Keep your thoughts positive, because your thoughts become your words. Keep your words positive, because your words become your actions. Keep your actions positive, because your actions become your values. Keep your values positive, because your values become your destiny.”

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Having Fun in our Fragile Economy Part 2

Is the nerve raking news getting to you yet? Politics and the Economy are the siren sounds all around us. Maybe this is just Halloween's trick or treat way of giving us all a trick. I'm still looking for the treat that is supposed to come; and I don't consider the Wall Street bailout even close to a treat for the average person on Main Street!

Yet, since this is the month to talk about the life skill, Recreation & Entertainment, I still going to focus on having fun. In the last issue, the fun was right at home. This time, let's look around our neighborhood and local communities.

Part of having fun is also giving out to those in need. In fact, one of the greatest joys in life comes to those whose hearts help the hurting. This list of fun around town ideas will then also include ways to contribute to your community and ease the life challenges of others. Let's start to have fun and support our community at the same time.

- Walk, bicycle, share a ride to your local community playhouse or arts events, outdoor activities, trail walking, bird watching, kite flying.
- Specific Kendall County & related events— (these are just a sample; see Boerne Star online Calendar, <http://www.boernestar.com/calendar> and the

Boerne Convention/Visitors, <http://visitboerne.org> for more details & other events)

- Leadership Boerne & Hill Country Daily Bread Ministries—Diaper Drive
- 2008 Fall Festival of Arts & Music
- Rotary Clubs—District 5840 SA Haven for Hope Center [210-222-8242 X100]
- Pumpkin Patch
- Rockbox Theater
- Hill Country Hikers
- Grey Forest Open Studios Art Tour, October 11, 2008
- Second Saturday Art & Wine
- Open Mic at the Scenic Loop
- Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation, Inc. Volunteer Orientation
- 4th Annual Wild West Day
- Kendall Lodge Sausage Fundraiser
- The Junior League of San Antonio Inc.'s 15th Annual Olé Marketplace
- Third Annual STAR Open Alpaca Fleece Show
- Celebrate the Cibolo Annual Fundraising Gala, Oct 11
- Guided Tour—Honey Creek State National Area
- Texas Non Fiction Writers Retreat
- Dickens on Main
- Weihnachts Fest Parade
- Boerne Christmas Walk
- Volunteer your whole family for any number of helping organizations

throughout your community. Visit the Chamber of Commerce or the network of nonprofits.

These are just a few examples out of so many that are right in your own community backyard. No matter how tough things may get, I am confident things will get better. This is not a Pollyanna dream world I am talking about here. As difficulties, challenges, and crises hit us, it will be our Faith, Family, and Friendship that get us through every time. We will also gain a heartfelt gratitude for those near and dear to us who willingly share in on the joys and difficulties of life together.

So, when you reach out into your neighborhood and local community, keep the Faith. Take as much time as you need to find comfort, hope, and shared faith that you, your family, and your friends will be just fine. Smile each day, speak a kind word. You will be amazed at how much simple, fulfilling fun you can actually experience.

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Having Fun in Hill Country this Weekend 2008 Fall Festival of Arts & Music

Want to see and buy some great art, hear some grooving music, enjoy lots of food and fun? And all this high-level stuff you normally have to fly across the nation to see? Well, it's here right in our beautiful Texas Hill Country this weekend.

No need to travel across country and spend thousands of dollars. Come to the ***2008 Fall Festival of Arts & Music*** right here in Boerne, sponsored by the Cibolo Arts Council. See nationally known art and visit with the artists. Hear some great music from well-known performing artists and applaud our own fantastic homegrown entertainment too!

Want to know what's happening from Friday night through Sunday? Here it is. Be sure to buy your tickets online (www.ciboloarts.org) at their CAC Store and learn more details about all the free fun things going on too. You can email the CAC at info@ciboloarts.org for any questions you may have. Come join us for one of the best times ever for you, your family and friends!

2008 Fall Festival of Arts & Music Schedule of Events

Friday night, Oct 17

Hill Country Invitational Art Show Pre-View Party

Ye Kendall Inn Courtyard & Halle, 6:30-10pm

For only \$45 (online ticket price) enjoy songs, dancing, food, and drink. Music by Boerne Theatre Singers, dancing with Lil Bit and the Customatics.

Saturday, Oct 18

Activities & Performances for Children

Main Plaza, beginning at 10am

For free, have fun participating in a Chalk Art contest, enjoy Dance Dominion, Boerne community Theatre Teen Troupe, Face Painting, World Karate, Cookie Decoration, Literary Corner, and Clowning around with Clowns

Culinary Arts Competition & Tasting

Main Plaza, 2-4pm

Restaurants vie for your vote as the best taste treat for the Fall Festival.

Limited participation event with wrist band purchase required. Sign up early.

Film Screening – Palo Pinto Gold

On the West Side of the square at dusk

Music & Events on the Plaza

Main Plaza, 12 noon-10pm

Bands featuring—Redd Volkardt, Joy Davis, Rafiki Project, Elijah Zane Trio, Mystic Sister, Patrice Pike, and music between features by Mike Vanderberg

Sunday, Oct 19

Jazz Brunch

Kendall Halle Courtyard 11am-1pm

Enjoy a great morning brunch with delightful light jazz. And don't forget the Ice Carving demonstration. It will WOW you!

Hill Country Invitational Art Show & Art on the Lawn (con't)

Ye Kendall Hall & Kendall Inn Lawn 10am-6pm

Original Fine Art Show and Sale by nationally recognized artists. Enjoy additional arts at leisure on the lawn. Check out the Grand Finale Judging, 5pm People's Choice Award announcement & the 2009 FFAM Poster Award. Don't miss this, for sure!

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What's Your "Having Fun" Routine?

Most of the time, we really don't reflect on how we have fun. We just do; and, sometimes, that the best way to have fun—no big planning or long-term commitments to make. We may just take a day off from work and do nothing at all. We may go see a friend, grab your kids and go to the park. What are your spontaneous fun things you do?

Here's a chance to reflect on your own routine for having fun. Get out a piece of paper and pen and write down the answers to these questions and responses to statements below. Do you see anywhere in your response gaps in having fun? If so, talk with your family or close friend about closing up that gap in your recreation/entertainment fun choices.

What routine recreation & entertainment do you do in the home?

What R/E do you do in your neighborhood and community?

What R/E do you do around your state?

What R/E do you do in the nation and around the world?

Rate your personal life satisfaction score (1=lowest, 10=highest) with each statement—

- The recreation and entertainment I choose relaxes and refreshes me. (Note: really examine your choice of activity and media viewing—are you tired afterwards or irritable the next day?)
- Our family takes at least three short vacations and one long vacation per year.
- TV is not our primary source of recreation and entertainment. (Note: if you watch TV more than four days/week @ two hours per day, consider it your primary source)
- We have family and friends over routinely.
- Refreshing, relaxing and fun music is a part of my routine.
- I consider just being alone part of my recreation, fun time (i.e. I enjoy just being with “me”).
- I do not consider heavy social drinking and gambling appropriate recreation and entertainment.
- I attend community activities for fun (i.e. concerts, museums, parks)
- I plan to travel to some interesting places in the U.S. and world at least one time in my life.
- I have a digital camera and/or video camera handy ALL THE TIME to catch precious moments within the family, in the neighborhood, and when I go out, and on trips.

Once you identify your “having fun” gap and talked with your family or close friend, choose one thing you want to change. Make sure it is something you can commit to experiencing within the next 30 days. Through the remaining months of this year, reflect on how you believe this change will impact your life in the coming year and years to come.

In what way will this change not only offer you time for fun, but also enhance your closest relationships at home and work? Then early this coming year, ask your family, friend, and/or co-workers what they have observed about you that is different. You may be pleasantly surprised at what they tell you about you. They just

might say you smile more; you may even complain less; or you handle stress at work or home much better; or you are just more fun to be with than before. Be courageous. Give it a try and see what happens. Life might just be sweeter all around.

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Let's play Grandpa!

In today's world, families may be scattered across the country and have a jam-packed school and work schedule that doesn't include regular time with grandparents. I hope this article helps both grandparents and grandkids change that routine for some playtime together.

Whether your grandchildren living right around the corner or across the nation, I can guarantee they would love to play with you, grandpa or grandma! So, how can you have fun with your precious little ones? According to KidsHealth.org, let's first give a few tips on how to stay in touch. Despite physical distance or busy schedules, you can encourage your child to develop a closer bond with you by trying these tips:

- **Visit often.** If your child's grandparents live nearby, make an effort to carve time out of your busy schedule for regular visits. Encourage grandparents to drop by your home, too. Plan regular trips to see out-of-town grandmas and grandpas. Even if visits are infrequent, anticipating and planning the next trip can help your child regard that time as special.
- **Stay in touch with technology.** Use the telephone and email to talk, write, and send pictures and sound files of your growing child to grandparents. If they don't own a computer, send videos of your child in action, like taking a bath or playing

with a pet. Or have a grandparent record a reading of a favorite story and play it for your child before at bedtime.

- **Say cheese.** Post snapshots of grandparents in a prominent spot in your home, and point them out to your child often. Or place family pictures in a special photo album and page through it frequently while naming the family members.
- **Sound mail call.** Does your child love receiving mail? Send grandparents a box of stationery and postcards and some stamps and ask them to send your child regular letters. Another way to encourage communication is to have your child write letters every week on the same day — both kids and grandparents will anticipate the regular communication.
- **Pass it on.** Many grandparents have hobbies or special skills — such as knitting, woodworking, or cooking — that they'd love to pass on to their grandchildren. Provide kids with the time and tools needed to learn these skills from their grandparents.
- **Chart a family tree.** Both younger and older kids enjoy learning about their ancestors and relatives. Encourage grandparents to share stories of their families. You can even provide paper and drawing supplies so they can chart the family tree!

For those grandparents that are also caregivers, these tips are a snap. In fact, I was amazed at the Census 2000 stats that reported 5.8 million were co-resident grandparents with their children, and living with grandchildren younger than 18. These co-resident grandparents, 2.4 million (42 percent) were also “grandparent caregivers,” defined in this report as people who had primary responsibility for their co-resident

grandchildren younger than 18. Among grandparent caregivers, 39 percent had cared for their grandchildren for 5 or more years. So, for those of you who are grandparent caregivers, you should be writing this article since I am confident you have all kinds of tips to offer my readers.

Now, let's list out some basic examples for playing together:

- Coloring/Crayon/Crafts Fun
- Watching Favorite Kid TV show
- Walking, Biking (with or without training wheels)
- Kids Fairs, Petting Zoos
- Museums, art galleries, theatre performances, music concerts
- Fun with cartoon characters (e.g. Curious George, Thomas Trains, Sesame Street, SuperHeroes—Incredibles, Spiderman)
- Cooking/baking together
- Holiday and Birthday surprises
- Going to the movies (e.g. High School Musical 3: Senior Year; The Longshots) or Movie night at home

These are just a few, as you can imagine. You can actually get some great ideas from Grandparents.com. Here is a sample of the list from 100 Things To Do With Your Grandchild This Fall by Rich Thomaselli. Check out , www.grandparents.com, for all one hundred. And, be sure, to send in your very own ideas for other grandparents to try out.

1. Go to a football game. Support the local high school team; go to a game with your grandkids; and definitely if they are playing in the game.

2. Do the leaf thing. Rake 'em, put 'em in a big pile, and join the kids by jumping in. Let the little ones bury you, and then emerge as a leaf tickle-monster.
3. Take some of the fresher leaves and press them in books for art projects with them.
4. Go for a drive and take in all the foliage and the dramatic changing of the leaves. Make it academic by getting a guide to the local trees and learn the definition of deciduous. Take a camera on your adventures and snap some pretty fall landscapes with your grandkids in picture.
5. Go to an apple orchard that offers apple-picking. Take home the ripest and make apple pie or, if you have a press, make homemade cider.
6. Crochet a blanket together. Cuddle up with your grandchild and that blanket in a hammock.
7. Go clothes shopping. Fall colors, like burnt orange, and fabrics, like corduroy, make everything all warm and fuzzy.
8. Play Chutes and Ladders or Scrabble in a coffee shop. Trust us, the others there for the free Wi-Fi will be jealous.
9. Cook with fall produce. Make pumpkin pie and pumpkin bread, butternut squash soup, pot roast with turnips, or baked cinnamon apples.
10. Make a bonfire, then eat beside it (don't forget the s'mores), play a guitar, and sing some songs.
11. Remember that spring cleaning you did? That was six months ago. Time for you and the grandchildren to do a fall tune-up inside and outside the house, including the gutters after all the leaves have fallen off the trees.

12. It's planting season for grass, trees, shrubs, bulbs, perennials, even some vegetables. Get your green thumb on.
13. Now is a good time to start making your holiday gift lists. Sit down with the grandkids and get their wish list, then have them make a list of presents they will buy or make themselves for their family members.
14. Show your grandchildren the importance of helping others by volunteering. Collect cans of food from the pantry; buy a few new toys to donate to a food/toy drive.
15. Pick some wild flowers, gather some gourds, and make a beautiful cornucopia for the table. The more pungent finds can become a potpourri.
16. Grab a few flashlights and play flashlight tag outside.
17. Take some construction paper, trace your hand, and cut out and decorate a Thanksgiving turkey for the front door. Have your grandchildren trace their hands to make a family of tiny turkeys. Make a holiday centerpiece and decorations together.
18. Become a grandparent who attends every school activity—sports games, plays, and recitals.
19. Do a challenging jigsaw puzzle together. Make a goal of finishing it before winter.
20. Host an Election Night party and teach your grandchildren about the electoral process. Vote.
21. Make it a point to visit some indoor exhibits at an art gallery or museum.
22. Have your grandchildren interview you. They'll get to know you far better than they already do.

23. Gather items, make up a list, and have a scavenger hunt both inside and outside.
24. Fall offers the ideal weather for backyard sports.
25. Have a yard sale. Not only will you de-clutter the garage and attic, you'll make a few bucks in the process to spend on your grandchildren anyway.
26. Cut up a paper bag and show your grandchildren how you used to make your own book covers—complete with your own decorations.
27. Watch an early sunset together.
28. Catch a meteor shower or eclipse. Use www.stardate.org to see when it might happen in your area.
29. Play card games, such as Go Fish for the little ones, or Hearts for older kids.
30. You can play and enjoy music at any age. Help your grandchild pick an instrument. Better yet, if you play, teach him yourself.
31. Surprise your grandchild by meeting him at the bus stop after school and going out for hot chocolate.
32. Simpatico with the changing leaves, work on a family tree together. This will give your grandchildren a new perspective on ancestral history. If your grandchild is adopted, make sure to do a special version that honors his or her biological roots.
33. Go to a fashion show and see what's going to be hot next spring. If you can't get to one, thumb through a fashion magazine with your grandchildren and talk about what looks they like and dislike.

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