Family summer plans can still be fun on a budget

Who says having summer fun means spending all your cash and going into debt?

Not local cities and communities!

With school coming to a close, you may think that a fun summer means opening your wallet ad watching dollars fly away but think again.

Cities across the Salt Lake Valley and the U.S. as a whole have created free or low-cost summer activities for residents of all ages, helping parents, grandparents, guardians and singles enjoy the warm weather while having fun.

Check out these ideas below and start planning for a summer your family will remember!

**Go camping … in the backyard**

Given the warmer weather, and the cabin fever caused by long winters, folks tend to head to campgrounds to enjoy the fresh air. In the past, you could just show up to a site with your family, pitch a tent and stay for the weekend. But with the crowds came reservations and fees and frustrations.

So, forget the crowds this summer and pitch the tent in the yard. Depending on where you live, the stars in the night sky may be hard to see, but don’t worry. Use the time to tell ghost stories or tall tales, unplugging all phones and tablets for a night or two.

**Create an obstacle course**

Head over to your local park and create an obstacle that is less ToughMudder and more running and jumping and hula-hooping. The goal is not to do something crazy that can get a child hurt, but to compete against each other for fun! Create teams or participate individually and see how many jumping jacks can be done in a minute or how many sit-ups can be completed after a sprint to one side of the park. Grab a rope and do a tug of war. Roll down a hill, getting grass stains all over your clothes. The point is to enjoy the summer air and move. For free.

**Take a hike!**

Those of us who live in the Salt Lake Valley are lucky to have so many hiking trails near us, but for those who aren’t as fortunate to have mountains and canyons at their back door, hiking is still an option! Urban hikes can be a great way to learn about your hometown, and maybe a trip to a local trail can be a special adventure for the family. Take a look online for hiking trails nearby and get the family together for an outdoor journey.

**An in-house film festival**

Whether you have family members who really don’t like being outside or a couple of summer rain storms are keeping you and the kids inside, a indoor film festival can be a great way to enjoy the summer on the cheap. Make a list of your family’s and friend’s favorite movies and watch til your heart’s delight. Watching movies has become a lot cheaper with the use of the Redbox (DVDs for 24hrs for less than $2) and local libraries allowing rentals for between three to seven days. Pop some popcorn or maybe buy some already popped at the local grocery story and spend hours enjoying your favorite characters and their shenanigans on the tv or computer screen.

**Listen to some new tunes outdoors**

Communities across the country often host free concerts outdoors in a local park or near their city halls. Check out what concerts are available in your community and check them out! They are usually free and can introduce you to local musicians you never heard of before the concert. Make a commitment out of it and attend every one of the concerts to get a sense of different music styles.

These local summer activities can make a stay-cation worth considering for families of all backgrounds.

Whether you and your family enjoy sports, the arts, music or just spending time outdoors, there are free or low-cost summer activities that provide something for everyone.

This can also be to the time to try something new!