



# TAKE CONTROL

*for Your Future*

## Fun and free entertainment

**W**hen money is tight, the first thing families cut is anything considered extra or unnecessary. For many families this often includes luxuries such as vacations, more expensive foods, or nights out. Tight times may put a crimp in the convenience of arranging leisure, but with a little creativity and planning, lots of free fun is right at your fingertips. Below you will find ways to trade work for fun or spice up free activities in your community.

### **The community swap**

In the past when families did not move as far from home, extended families often were nearby to lend a hand or missing ingredient. Today, these family-like communities may need to be created. With a little planning, you may be able to make arrangements with your friends or neighbors to take turns or share resources for which you usually pay. Ideas for trading, taking turns or sharing:

- Babysitting — Having a friend's child spend the afternoon is worth the effort; especially if you know free babysitting is the reward.
- Cooking — What about doubling a favorite recipe of soup or a lunch entrée to share with friends? Have friends bring containers for individual portions to take home and freeze.
- Books, videos, games or other sources of entertainment — Many of us have some games, books or movies that others haven't played. You could host a game night and then share the games with others to try at home.

There are many ways to share resources with friends and neighbors that can create community connections, save money and put limited resources to good use.

### **Making a game of it**

Our communities have countless opportunities for play and recreation. If you have tired

of the local, free recreation, new excitement can come from making a game of familiar activities. With spring in the air, neighborhood parks are in full bloom. One idea is to use a map to search out all the community parks. You can develop criteria for rating the parks, then travel to each and create a "best park to..." list for your entire community. Using this mapping idea, you also can create a community map of all the places you go, play and work as a family. Where is the library? Where does your best friend live?

You could also investigate opportunities for free activities and make a schedule of one free activity a week you want to try as a family. A great starting point to learn about parks and activities (e.g., free concerts, movies in the park, pig pickings) in your area is [www.parkgeek.com](http://www.parkgeek.com). This free Web site is full of information about fun activities in North Carolina and will even send you an e-newsletter to let you know about exciting things happening in and around your community.

Want to take out time for some strange museums and attractions, checkout <http://www.roadsideamerica.com>. If you are looking to connect with others who have common interests for recreation, education and events checkout [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com). The network houses information on various groups ranging from new moms to sports to hiking.

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## Summer fun

With limited vacation dollars, this might be the year to stay close to home. You don't need to go far to have tons of family fun.

Some places to check out:

- Local historic sites
- Local parks and gardens
- Local library: Free book readings, children activities, adult book signings

- Local museums: Do they have a free community day?
- Petting zoos or a local conservation animal hospital may allow tours
- Community festivals and events: These vary in cost, but often have free or inexpensive ways to attend.

Times are tight, but together, families can become “fun and free” detectives in their communities. When you make a great discovery, be sure to share your ideas with others.

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*For more information on the Web, go to:*

**[www.nctakecontrol.com](http://www.nctakecontrol.com)**

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