

# Text to Kids: We're Going Outside!

By Bronwyn Worthington

How did you spend your free time as child? Perhaps your parents kept a loose eye on your whereabouts, even while you roamed around the neighborhood or explored a nearby creek. For me, growing up on nine acres allowed for a refuge of creative exploration that helped soften the hard realities of homesteading. In between chores, I recall my mother insisting that I take full advantage of my natural surroundings. This led my sister and me to spending many of our summer days building forts on the outskirts of our wooded property.

For those of us who spent much of our childhood outdoors, requiring kids to play outside can seem like a no-brainer. Yet, reconciling our growing-up years with those of the upcoming generation often proves challenging. As families exchange rural property for urban settings, free exploration of the land often ceases to exist as a viable option for children. Thankfully, even urban dwellings can potentially invoke fresh experiences in city parks, community gardens and walking trails. We can be grateful for green pastures, albeit in differing forms.

Fast forward thirty years from my days of fort-building to my current season of raising

two school-age children. Although I'm still a country girl at heart, my kiddos have little concept of my free-range childhood. As a girl, I walked nearly a mile down steep terrain, entirely independent of my parents, to catch a school bus that took me down many winding roads before I finally walked into school. Now, during the best of days, my kiddos walk with my husband or me to their nearby city schools.

In all honesty, most days find us driving our two back and forth to school along the same straight paved roads. Let's face it, times have changed greatly for our post-millennial kids. Increased academic rigor along with a culture promoting extracurricular activities makes unstructured playtime close to impossible.

And then there is the great defining phenomenon of our generation: technology. According to the Children and Nature Network, a worldwide movement seeking to reconnect children with nature, young people now spend an average of 50 hours a week on digital devices and 90% of their time indoors.

Most of us recognize the obvious disadvantages to keeping kids cooped up inside. Clearly, the decrease in physical activity among children

has contributed to our current child obesity epidemic. However, cognitive and emotional health may be a more frequently overlooked factor.

Did you know attention issues, aggressive behaviors and depression within children may be masked indicators of a nature deficiency? Richard Louv speaks to this phenomenon in his bestselling book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*. The good news, Louv shares, is that nature itself can provide the restorative healing necessary for many of the ailments our children face. Generally speaking, while kids enjoy virtual play, they seem to intuitively understand that limited screen time offers a healthier way of living.

In addition to raising good digital citizens, we need to show children the enduring value of the local land upon which we live. Truth be told, helping our kids develop a passion for playing outside may require us to put down our phones, pull up our sleeves and get a little dirty alongside them. Digging in together, we can create the balance needed to help our kids thrive as healthy young people.



While it can be difficult to make the move from the couch to actually seeing the difference between a spruce and a fir, a little planning makes a big difference. We can put outdoors activities on the weekly schedule.

Involving our children in planting a garden or starting a nature scrapbook are ways we can play along in the process. Active families may prefer recreational pursuits such as a hike in a state park. For those of us concerned about teen buy-in, a geocache hunt could be just the thing to coax a resistant youth to head toward the hills with us for a few hours.

I'm still working to reconcile the 21<sup>st</sup> century childhood my kids are now experiencing with that of my own. For some time, I've dared myself to take my children on a trip into the wilderness. Realizing that my years of full-time parenting are quickly dwindling, I have finally decided this will be the summer!

Now, there has been some whining about living without wi-fi for a week, but I remain optimistic that this natural immersion will do wonders for all of us. We'll discuss a few things we want to do – fishing, rafting and photography will probably make the list – but



ultimately I hope to minimize the agenda. In my view, this adventure is all about letting the kids find their place in nature. With summer on the horizon, let's join in unplugging for the sake of living life!

Bronwyn Worthington is a teacher and freelance writer in Spokane where she is currently pursuing her M.Ed in Teaching & Learning with an emphasis on Social Emotional Learning. Explore more at [bronwynworthington.com](http://bronwynworthington.com).

## STONEROSE INTERPRETIVE CENTER AND EOCENE FOSSIL SITE



### Become a Paleontologist for a Day!

*Your adventure awaits...*

Hunt through ancient shale layers to discover 50 million year old leaves, cones, insects, and maybe a rare fish or bird feather!

Keep 3 fossils per day per person\*



\*significant finds may be retained by Stonerose for research

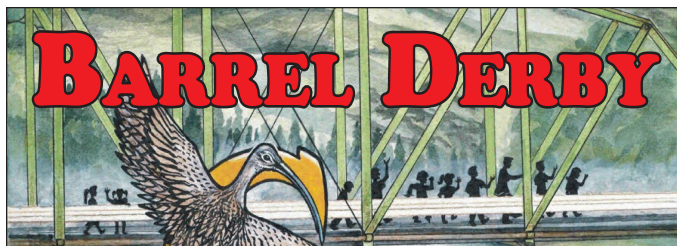
Adults: \$10 Students with ID/Seniors: \$5 4 and under: Free  
Tool Rental: \$5 per set

Interpretive Museum and Gift Store Open All Year  
"Boot Hill" Fossil Site open May 3—October 29  
Check our hours before coming!

509-775-2295 15-1 N. Kean, Republic, WA  
[www.stonerosefossil.org](http://www.stonerosefossil.org)  
[stonerose@frontier.com](mailto:stonerose@frontier.com)



## BARREL DERBY



**Sunday June 4th**  
**Barrel drops in the river at Midway at 10am!**  
**Barrel arrives in Curlew at ???**

Fireman's Breakfast	7:00 to 10:00 AM
Fun Run	Start Time 9:30 AM
CYA Hoop Jam, Ice Cream	10:00 AM
Famous BBQ Beef Dinner	11:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Parade	1:00 PM
Curlew Library Book Sale	9:30 AM to 3:00 PM

Get your Barrel Derby tickets at the Curlew Store, Tugboat's, Smokin' Joe's Smoke Shop, or other sponsoring businesses.

Take your best guess for when the barrel will pass below the Curlew Bridge. If your guess is the closest to the actual time you could win BIG.

Call Heather 509-779-4958 for more information and ticket locations.

Call Lorna 509-779-4445 for parade registration and Karen 509-779-4945 for Fun Run information.