

What to do with kids in the days following Christmas

We get ready for Christmas with such anticipation and extensive preparations; it is easy to overlook the benefits of some simple planning for the days after Christmas. Yet the second week of Christmas vacation can seem pretty long for parents who may be low on both energy and finances, and for kids who may have watched too much television and eaten too much sugar.

After days spent indoors, our energy receives a boost from getting some fresh air. When we are blessed with snow and reasonable winter temperatures, our countryside becomes a wonderful destination for outdoor activities.

There are many low-cost alternatives, particularly if you already own (or can borrow) the necessary equipment. Check out the three free outdoor rinks in Orangeville and the free afternoon skate sessions at Shelburne's Centre Dufferin Recreation Complex. Hills for sledding can be found in town, such as Murray's Mountain or Westside Secondary School. Cross-country skiing can be done anywhere there is enough snow cover.

Hiking or snow-shoeing can be enjoyed, at no cost, on the many paths and trails in town, or close to our borders at Mono Cliffs, the new trails at Island

Lake, or the Trailways in Caledon and Elora-Cataract. The Dufferin Hi-Lands Bruce Trail Club has guided hikes on Dec. 27 and Jan. 1.

If walking sounds more appealing than hiking, consider the interesting opportunities right in Orangeville. Encourage older kids to learn more about our local history, with the Walking Tour of Orangeville, available from the library, or www.orangeville.org. For six- to 12-year-olds, turn the Tree Sculpture Art Walk into a scavenger hunt, with children searching out specific sculptures and documenting their finds with a digital camera. Try to find the eight sculptures pictured on the town website or use the Art Walk brochure and find more obscure creations.

Younger children always enjoy the lights and hot chocolate at Kay Cee Gardens, open from 6:30 to 10 p.m. through New Year's Eve. It's a great way to tire them out before bedtime.

The arrival of the Olympic torch on Dec. 28 is a once-in-a-lifetime event. If you plan to attend, maximize your kids' experience by checking out the times for the program and arrangements for road



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ASK A PARENT

closures and special parking.

You can add to your kids' involvement in the Olympics by planning your own crazy Olympiad. Create challenges geared to the ages and abilities of the kids. How long can you stand on one foot?

How fast can one team complete a relay race or a 20-foot dash? How far or high can you jump? Use a stopwatch and measuring tape and keep track of the results. Encourage kids to achieve their own best performance, rather than to "beat" the other kids. Celebrate the results with gold medals and photos, while playing the music from O Canada.

The start of the new year is a catalyst for clearing out the old and planning for the new.

Spend an afternoon getting the kids to sort out their old toys, DVDs, clothes and possessions they no longer use. Pack them neatly into boxes or bags that can be donated to the Salvation Army or the SPCA store. If things are in nearly new condition, they might be acceptable for a local consignment store.

Think about what you want to do in

the new year. Have the children make up a family "bucket list" of places they would like to go, experiences they would like to have, new skills they might like to learn. Encourage the inclusion of activities that benefit others, such as helping a neighbour, cleaning up a nearby park, or befriending a new schoolmate.

And finally, celebrate the arrival of the new year with your own countdown to midnight at home, or bring kids to the free First Night Celebration at the Orangeville Fairgrounds. The full program culminates with fireworks at 9:30 p.m.

New Year's weekend can be filled with all the activities that couldn't be fitted into the previous week. Plus, there are lots of additional ideas, especially on websites, such as www.dpsn.ca or www.parent.com. And then, before you know it, it's time to assemble school supplies, backpacks and lunches. Happy holidays!!

Ask a Parent is a monthly column provided by Dufferin Parent Support Network (www.dpsn.ca). Send questions or comments to info@dpsn.ca or leave a message at 519-940-8678. Submitted by Barbara Horvath, parent, consultant and member of DPSN.



HOLIDAY CLOSURES FOR TOWN FACILITIES

TOWN HALL: closed December 25-January 1, 2010.

ONTARIO COURT OF JUSTICE: closed December 25-28 and January 1, 2010.

ARENAS: December 24, closed at 12 noon. Closed December 25-26. December 31, closed at 4 p.m. Closed January 1, 2010.

ALBION BOLTON COMMUNITY CENTRE: December 24, closed at 12 noon. Closed December 25-26. December 31, closed at 4 p.m. Closed January 1, 2010

CALEDON PARENT CHILD CENTRE (in the ABUCC): closed December 24-January 3, 2010.

CALEDON COMMUNITY COMPLEX: closed December 25, December 28 and January 1, 2010.

CALEDON CENTRE FOR RECREATION & WELLNESS: December 24, closed at 12 noon. Closed December 25-26. December 31, closed at 4 p.m. Closed January 1, 2010

MAYFIELD AND CALEDON POOLS: December 24, closed at 12 noon. Closed December 25-26. December 31, closed at 4 p.m. Closed January 1, 2010

MARGARET DUNN COMMUNITY ROOM: closed December 25 and December 28 and January 1, 2010.

VICTORIA PARKS COMMUNITY CENTRE AND CALEDON VILLAGE PLACE: closed December 25 and December 28 and January 1, 2010.

INGLEWOOD, BELFOUNTAIN, CHELTENHAM COMMUNITY HALLS: closed December 25 and December 28 and January 1, 2010.

ALTON COMMUNITY HALL: closed December 25 and December 31 and January 1, 2010.

CALEDON PUBLIC LIBRARY BRANCHES: closed December 24-26 and December 31-January 1, 2010.

CALEDON ANIMAL SHELTER: closed December 25, 27, 28 and January 1, 2010. December 26, 29, 30, 31, closed at 12 noon

TOWN HALL
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