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Arkalon Park is now open for firewood cutting, which is free to anybody who wants to work for it. The program provide free firewood for citizens and help keep deadfill cleaned up in the park. Check with the park's camp host to be sent to the correct area for cutting. Courtesy photo

By GISEELLE ARREDONDO

- Leader & Times

Fall is officially here, and soon the time for mittens and scarfs, hot chocolate, caroling and family time around a fireplace will be here, too.

With winter preparations already underway, Arkalon Park has an area available for families to cut firewood.

“We opened that up last weekend, and from now until closing,” Arkalon board member Tracy Gutierrez said. “Anyone who’d like to get some firewood, can come down to the park and meet with the camp host. He’ll direct them where they need to get the firewood at, and they can take as much as they want”

People can take as much wood as they can carry, with only a few regulations in mind.

“They can’t cut down any trees that are standing, and they need to bring their safety equipment and gear,” Gutierrez said. “They can come and cut some firewood and chop it up and haul it off and have a great time at the park.”

Firewood cutting will continue as long as the park is open.

“The park closes on Oct. 15. It’s the last day the park’s open for the season,” Gutierrez said. “Last year, we had it open for one day, one morning and a lot of people really took advantage of that, but we had some people say that time didn’t work for them, so we decided to open it up through September and October so that everyone would have a chance to get their firewood for the winter.”

Arkalon also has more activities taking place throughout the season, such as a tree program to replace lost trees and programs to help with maintenance, available for volunteerism.

“What we are doing is we have a tree program, and we have different organizations donate trees and we planted trees down there. We try to plant 100 trees a year down there because we have lost some because of the drought. There hasn’t been a tree planting program, and we can plant more trees to help replace the ones that were lost in the drought.

“I think we are up to 50 or 60 trees this year, and we’ll do some more in the fall. We have done adopt a pond and adopt a trail. Black Hills has just set two benches at the end of their trail, and so when you adopt a trail your employees or whoever adopts it will go down there and kind of

clean it up, pick up any debris. We keep the trails mowed," he said.

Gutierrez said there are numerous activities planned for next year at Arkalon.

"Now next year, the park will turn 20 years old, so what we are going to do, is we are going to try to have 20 events down at the park all year throughout the opening of the season. We will probably start off with an Easter egg hunt and close with a haunted trail and trick or treating down there in the camp area," he said. "Campers will be invited down, but not this year. We'll have campers go down there and set up and they can decorate their motor homes, and then the kids can trick or treat with other campers."

The annual fishing tournament by the Liberal Recreation Center is coming up, too.

"I think it's next weekend that the Rec Center is holding its annual fishing tournament down there. People in the surrounding communities can come down there and cut their firewood and get ready for winter," Gutierrez said. "We are located about 17 miles east on 54, and there are signs on the north."

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