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McCray Park



By ROBERT PIERCE

- Leader & Times

Despite weather conditions to the contrary recently, it is spring, and one of the traditional favorites for people to do when warmer weather is in place is to take a walk in the park.

In modern times, much of the time spent outdoors has been sacrificed, mainly due to increasing distractions from the world of technology.

This year, though, through the rest of spring and through most of summer, Seward County's K-State Research and Extension office, along with Liberal Parks and Rec, is encouraging locals to get outside and take in what Liberal, and some of rural Seward County, has to offer in the great outdoors.

Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent Kathy Bloom said the goal of the Parks Round Up is to engage families and friends in outdoor activities throughout the spring and allow them to experience community parks throughout Liberal.

“It’s a program to help families get out, enjoy the parks and be physically active,” she said. “It’s for not only families, but you can make up your own little team of one or 10 people, however many. We just want everybody that would like to be involved to be involved.”

Mahuron Park



Bloom said she got the idea from a similar event in Riley County, and she later brought the idea back to officials with Parks and Rec, who she said liked the idea.

As part of the Parks Round Up, each participant is encouraged to get out and look at each park and completing a quest or challenge at that park. Instructions for the event will be listed on a passport for each participant.

“It varies from counting how many trees are in a certain area to Mahuron Park, where the former Liberal High School football field was,” Bloom said. “How many yards or links in a football field, and you step off that many. Each of the seven parks that we feature this year has a different quest, and there’s a bonus park. That’s Arkalon Park. If people get down to Arkalon, they have a little quest to do there as well.”

Parks do not need to be visited in the order they are on the passport. To be eligible for the finale of the Parks Round Up, a family or team must complete at least five of the seven quests on the passport for the event.

“They’ll have all summer long to do it,” Bloom said. “The final date when we’ll have the prizes awarded will be at Butterfly Count Day at Arkalon, which is Sept. 13. Participants will not need to be present to win the prizes.

The Extension agent added participants can complete the tasks in the passport book as quickly or slowly as they would like, but they have to be finished by Sept. 13.

“If they pick up a book tomorrow and complete it over the weekend and turn it back in, that’s great,” she said. “They do it as quickly or at their leisure as they like.”

Bloom said the round up started this week.

“We had to plan to roll it earlier, but we had some printing issues,” she said. “It’s funded by a project I’m doing with Kansas State University, and it’s an Adolescent Obesity Prevention grant that I have. That’s what’s funding the prizes and the printing of the books.”

To enter the Parks Round Up, stop by Liberal Parks and Rec, the Extension office or the Liberal Chamber of Commerce.

“You can stop any one of those three buildings during office hours and pick up your passport,” Bloom said. “You just sign in and get your numbered passport. It just helps keep an idea of how many are out there. Do the quests. In the book, there’s a place to write the answer to each of the park challenges or quests.”

Once completed, books can be returned to Parks and Rec or the Extension.

“We’ll look through it and make sure all the quests are completed,” she said. “We’ll sign it on the back. You get to keep your booklet. We will have you fill out a little form for the drawing.”

Teams are also invited to share their experiences on the Seward County Kansas 4-H & Extension Facebook page. All photos and entries may be used by Seward County Extension.

Bloom said all ages and activity levels can participate in the round up.

“It’s just real simple basic things to encourage people to get out and enjoy the parks and spend time together – unplugged and unhooked from the electronic devices,” she said.

For any reason, you have difficulty completing a task or quest or have any questions, call the Extension office at 620-624-5604 or the Liberal Recreation Department at 620-626-0133.

“So what are you waiting for?” Bloom said. “Slap on some sunscreen and get out and play.”

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