

## Outdoor Group Program Ideas

*For summer programs at outdoor locations*

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The summer is a time for outdoor fun! It is a perfect time for the children's ministry (CM) to hold outdoor ministry outreaches around the city. These outreaches may be incorporated into a Vacation Bible School (VBS) type program, or a summer-long day camp activity for local children and those children who attend your church. These programs can be held at city parks, trailer parks, apartment complexes, or any other location that will let you welcome parents and children onto their property.

Planning these outdoor programs requires that you pre-think (pre-pray) your plans to specifically deal with the safety of the children, the size and training of the CM team who will operate the program, food and water for those attending, restroom facilities, weather contingency plans, security personnel, parent permission and emergency release forms, two-way radio communications, acquiring the necessary supplies, preparation and clean-up of the location, city permits, advertisements, communication and contracts with the outside organizations or groups you may use, and a clear spiritual focus for the experience. Planning these critical aspects of the outreach will help you have a successful encounter with families who may never come to your church. Having a successful experience with the local families will be a great incentive for them to attend the next program you offer!

Here are some ideas for what you could do. Each of these ideas are excellent child-focused experiences that must be connected to a spiritual goal for your program. To have great experiences without a spiritual connection is just a "good time," but it may not further the Kingdom of God.

- **Drones** - Children are fascinated with drones! If you could find someone who could bring a drone or drones to the program, the children would love it! The children could experience drone acrobatics, races, or a big screen that lets them see what the drone sees. Check with local restrictions.
- **Animals** - Children love animals of any kind! Horses, dogs, birds (raptors), lizards, snakes, sheep, cows, etc. If you could find an animal trainer who could bring trained animals, that would be great. A "petting zoo" would be great. Children who live in trailer parks or apartment complexes are probably very isolated from animals. You might have an animal parade/show with the people's own animals. Contact local farmers and see if they could bring farm animals to show. Cleanup would be required afterward. Pig races are also very fun! Check with local restrictions.
- **Talent** - Children love to show off their talent or to watch others' talents. You could incorporate the talent that exists in the families, parents, kids, or employees of the trailer park or apartment complex itself or bring in talent from the outside. You might contact a professional talent team (skateboard or BMX bike performers. There is a potential cost involved that might prevent you from using professional outside talent, though. What talent exists at your church? Musical talent, sports talent (archery, shooting, fishing, etc.), painting talent, gymnasts, log chopping, chainsaw ice sculpting, balloon art, etc.
- **Science** – Children love science experiments! Smoke, smells, explosions, chemical reactions, etc. Can you use someone from a local college? You might consider an outside organization that comes to your event and presents a science show. Consider the organization called "Mad Science." They will come to you and present the experience. All you have to do is to organize the children and add the spiritual connection. Visit them at <https://www.madscience.org/> Check with local restrictions.



- **Hot air balloon** – Hot air balloons are thrilling for every age! Local hot air balloon enthusiasts may come to your location to inflate the balloon and let families take tethered rides up and down for a small fee. The local restrictions may not permit this idea, but if you are able to offer this experience, it will be a memorable pleasure for your families! Check with local restrictions.
- **Helicopter** – A helicopter flying overhead low is always an experience that kids and adults love! If you could drop something out of the helicopter, or if someone could repel down on a rope, that’s even better. A medical helicopter company may be willing to land and let the families get a tour of the helicopter before they take off again. Contact your local police, Sherriff, or medical emergency agency to inquire about the possibilities. Check with local restrictions.
- **Race car / dragster** - Find someone with a race car or dragster to come and let the kids hear it run or watch it do a burn-out on the street! Use the “Things I Can Do” form found on this website. Check with local restrictions.
- **Weather balloon launch** – A helium-filled large balloon being launched is very visual and exciting. What the balloon does (camera onboard? or note?) doesn’t really matter. Check with local restrictions.
- **Food** – Food is always an attractant! Jesus used food very often! A barbecue cookout, a cooking show, letting the kids cook, a free spaghetti meal with a talent show would always be a winner!
- **Crafts** – If you are using a VBS type program with a curriculum, the craft idea that comes with the curriculum is usually very low-budget. Designing something that the kids would really want afterward is a great challenge. Everyone loves working with crafts! Making something that can be eaten is a cross-over idea between food and crafts!
- **"Where Am I?" Experience** – Put up a portable large projection screen and have someone with a camera (on the phone or a “Go-Pro”) be inside the trailer park or apartment complex. Ask the children where they think the person is. You can also have a person do an “on-location” visit via Facetime, Zoom, etc. The person can be at a strange, dangerous, or restricted area to add interest.

