

Extension Update

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Kids Home Alone in the Summer

Each summer working parents face decisions about where their kids should spend their time. Some kids will think it's time for them to stay home alone. But are they ready?

Unless they have built up to it gradually, leaving preteens or early teens alone full time is not a good idea. Starting with just an hour or two and increasing the time kids spend on their own allows parents an opportunity to determine the child's level of maturity.

Even youngsters who are responsible enough to be on their own will need some guidance and structure. Parents need to help them schedule enjoyable activities, some of which should be educational.

It's better to err on the side of structure; doing so gives the parents more peace of mind and the kids aren't as easily bored. What a child does in the summer ought to be challenging and interesting, not all fun but not all work either.

Youngsters can do some chores at home. They can do big chores like cleaning the garage or painting a shed for pay or as service for the family.

Trips to the local pool might require some planning with a neighbor or friends to provide transportation.

There are many 4-H camping opportunities available to youth to add spice to their summer. Youth enrolled in 4-H, as well as youth not enrolled in 4-H, can attend any of the 53

overnight 4-H camps located at the Eastern Nebraska 4-H Center near Gretna or the Nebraska State 4-H Camp near Halsey.

Parents might enroll their youth in 4-H for a variety of summer experiences. Local 4-H workshops are offered during the summer to provide youth an opportunity to “learn by doing” in a fun, structured atmosphere.

Parents should be open to adapting to whatever summer arrangements are made, finding a new alternative if the first plan doesn’t satisfy everyone involved.

Children may not always speak up when they’re unhappy with summer arrangements. Parents should take time every day to establish open communication, so children are more likely to discuss important matters with them.

For more information on joining Otoe County 4-H or registering for a 4-H camp, please contact Nebraska Extension in Otoe County by phone at 402-268-2301 or via email at otoe-county@unl.edu.

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