



Early Childhood Summer Outreach Ideas, part 1 of 2—

Life in the Sun

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A summer ideal for many young families is to spend time in the sun together: strengthening relationships, creating memories, and relaxing with one another. Limited time and money sometimes turn that ideal into a dream rather than reality. Churches can use the ideal of summer fun to create effective outreach strategies. This summer, how about planning ways to draw young families to Life in the Sun: "The true light [who] gives light to all" (John 1:9, ICV).

Tips for Planning Summer Outreach

Approach outreach like bridge building.

The goal of outreach is to connect the needs and wants of young families with the ministries, resources, and people of your church. Make it easy for young families to connect with your church so Bible teaching can occur. As families begin to attend, they will hear the good news of Jesus and the life-changing truth of the Bible.

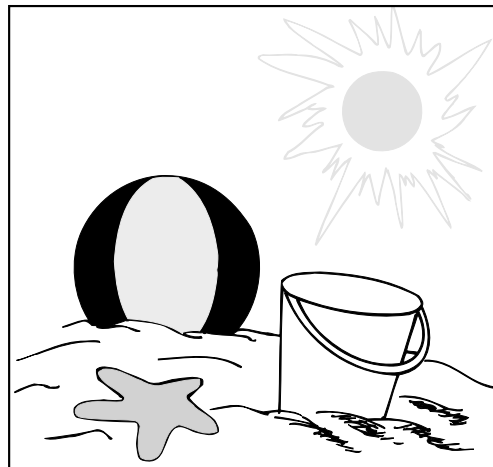
Treat outreach like a package deal.

Babies and preschool children do not come to church by themselves; adults bring them. For that reason, effective outreach to young children usually means reaching out to young families. As you plan outreach to young chil-

dren, you will need to think in terms of intergenerational strategies—ideas that both children and adults will appreciate.

Include your best outreach partners.

Young parents in your church will have much in common with young families outside of the church. As you develop outreach strategies, look for ideas that will appeal to all young families, whether they attend church or not. Also make it as easy as possible for young families who come to your church to participate in any outreach you plan.



Tailor outreach for your community and church.

As you consider how to reach out, think of what young families in your community need and what they value. Choose outreach strategies that parallel the needs and wants of young families. Also look at the ministries, resources,

and people of your church. If your church includes a great fisherman, your outreach may be very different than if it includes a race car driver or a number of nurses.

Nurture evangelism in children.

Young children can feel as comfortable talking about Jesus and church as they feel talking about ice cream and tricycles. An important key to nurturing natural witnesses is to plan Bible lessons that include play, crafts, and snacks that can be repeated at home during the week as well as in Sunday School. By helping young children talk about Jesus every day, you prepare them to be phenomenal witnesses as teens and adults.

Outreach Ideas

Holiday Events

Churches of every size can connect outreach with summer holidays. Decide how young families in your community enjoy celebrating the holiday. Determine what resources your church has that can connect with that style of celebration. Then move forward with your plans. You might sponsor a picnic in the park or a clam-bake at the beach. You could offer summer Olympics scaled to the abilities of young children or a free petting zoo at a community holiday celebration.

Promote your event in as many ways as possible. One fast-growing church in the Midwest spon-

sors an annual Fourth of July fireworks display that is coordinated with sacred and patriotic music. In the hours leading up to the fireworks, church members provide free food, free insect repellent, free games and rides, and free fun of all kinds that appeal to young families. The same principles can be used, no matter what your budget or location. Also consider celebrating a little-known holiday or creating a new “holiday” for your community. Reeds Spring Freshwater Day, for example, might feature all kinds of water play on one of the hot days of summer. Again, match inter-

ests and resources, promote widely, and have fun.

Random Acts of Kindness

In a culture that hears daily news of random acts of violence, a growing church in Missouri used kindness to reach their community. The church printed business-sized cards. One side read, “You have been the recipient of a random act of kindness.” The other side provided information about the location of the church and ministry times.

Brainstorm and publish an idea starter list of summertime acts of kindness. These could range from dispensing sunscreen at outdoor

events to leaving a watermelon at a friend’s door, to offering to pick up newspapers and mail while neighbors are on vacation.

Promote the idea to young families in your church. Create printed cards to leave at the scene of the act along with printed “Kindness Reports” to post on a bulletin board at the church. These reports can be anonymous, but they will keep the outreach concept visible and encourage more members to participate.

(More “Life in the Son” ideas are found in part two.)

Questions For Further Study—

1. What needs in your community can you address with an outreach from your children’s ministry?
2. What resources do you have in your congregation to meet some of those needs?
3. What holidays or community interests can you utilize to create an effective outreach to your community?