

## Keeping it Cool in Durham

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Given the positive feedback I received regarding my previous article on family-friendly outdoor activities for Durhamites and the record temperatures we've already encountered this summer, I submit part two of this series: *Indoor Kid-Friendly Activities for Budget-Strapped Durhamites*.

First on my list is Durham's Museum of Life and Science, free to Durham residents Wednesday afternoons after 1 PM, where you can enjoy a multitude of hands-on, educational activities in air-conditioned comfort. Most know about the MLS, so suffice it to say that if you don't, then just GO.

The Durham County Libraries also have free events for kids of all ages. My third child has reintroduced me to the 'lapsitters' and other story- and craft- times conducted by children's librarians at every branch. Many libraries, including Warren, North, East, and Southwest, also host individually themed, hands-on, science-based workshops every week throughout the summer. Bragtown has 'Family Fun Fridays', where families play games, eat popcorn, watch movies, and/or share books. North Regional Library has cartooning classes on Friday afternoons and is hosting a special 'Tales and Foods of Native Americans' at 2:30 on July 27. Main library events include drawing lessons with artist Tom Czaplinski on Tuesday afternoons, movies (and associated crafts) on Friday afternoons, and even guitar lessons on Friday afternoons through July 15. Southwest Library hosts Miss Jamie's baby signs story-times on Tuesday mornings, comics workshops for elementary and middle school students on alternate Tuesday afternoons, and kids cooking classes on July 20 (at 2 and 4). And several times throughout the summer, a professional children's theater performs at several branches covering Durham County. The latest performance is 'Didgeridoo Down Under' (final show: 10:30 AM, this Thursday, Main Library), followed by Bright Star Children's Theater's performance of African Folk Tales at various branches from July 25-29. But Wait. There's More. For the full calendar, visit the library website at: <http://host4.evanced.info/durhamcounty/evanced/eventcalendar.asp?EventType=ALL&Lib=ALL>. To ensure ample supplies and space, parents are asked to pre-register for most events by calling the associated libraries beforehand. And don't forget to register for Durham's Summer Reading Program (for all ages) with prizes including gift certificates, passes, t-shirts and raffle tickets: [http://www.durhamcountylibrary.org/sr\\_faq.php](http://www.durhamcountylibrary.org/sr_faq.php)

The NC Museum of Art, just a short drive up I-40 (and well signed), is another air-conditioned, educational, cultural oasis, equipped with a kids' hands-on arts area. Thanks to corporate sponsors, it costs only \$3/ticket to attend the children's performances, including top-notch puppetry, music, and storytelling (kids 2 and under and museum members are free), all of which are preceded and followed by free, public walk-in crafts. The next performance is 'Sing Me a Story with Trish Miller' (Wed, July 13, 12-2), followed by Criss Cross Mangosauce (Latin American, July 20), Captain Rainbow Imagination (July 27), the Golden Rod Puppets (my favorite, August 3), and more. The museum also hosts Family Fun Saturdays at 10 and 1, where families learn about art and make their own. For a detailed calendar, visit [http://www.ncartmuseum.org/calendar/type/kids\\_families/](http://www.ncartmuseum.org/calendar/type/kids_families/).

Once in Raleigh, there are free, indoor, truly magical exhibits at the Raleigh Museums of Natural Sciences and History, where children can easily entertain themselves for days. The First Friday of every month, the Museum of Natural Sciences is open until 9 PM and hosts live music and refreshments (including wine), free movies, and educational presentations. Both museums also host special events and kids' contests. Get on their mail (and e-mail) lists via the following websites: <http://naturalsciences.org/> and <http://ncmuseumofhistory.org/edu/Family.html>. Also in Raleigh, the incredibly entertaining and interactive Marbles kids' museum costs only \$2/person on Target Tuesdays (every third Tuesday from 5-8 PM).

In addition to the entertaining planetarium shows for which it is most known, UNC's Morehead Planetarium ( Chapel Hill ) provides science workshops/classes for kids on Saturdays (and weekdays during summer holidays). Annual family membership costs \$60 for two adults and all children, is completely tax-deductible, and includes admission to all planetarium shows/events, guest passes, parking passes, admission benefits at 300 different museums, and 50% off admission to the NC zoo (daily admission is \$6/child and \$7.25/adult). Visit <http://www.moreheadplanetarium.org/> for more information.

My toddler kids also enjoy the Carousel, trains, and quarter-fed cars in Northgate Mall; most the time we don't even pay to ride. The fairly new, padded and gated toddler playground in Southpoint Mall is another favorite. Toy stores in both malls provide play space and toys for shoppers' kids. Southpoint's Barnes and Noble's kids section is also cozy, with a train table and nooks for playing and reading; the store hosts a free storytime on Fridays at 10:30, when life-size book characters sometimes appear. Be sure your kids complete the reading log (available at <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/summerreading/index.asp>) to earn one of many free books from Barnes and Noble this summer.

Of course, Durham has many recreation centers where Durham residents, young and old, can participate in sports and other activities for free (or for very low cost). These are listed at [http://www.ci.durham.nc.us/departments/parks/rec\\_centers.cfm](http://www.ci.durham.nc.us/departments/parks/rec_centers.cfm). Our favorite is Edison Johnson on Murray Avenue (next to the Museum of Life and Science), where my 4-year-old daughter took pottery classes for a few dollars/class. Consult the Playmore newsletter available at your library and other Durham venues or check it out online: <http://www.ci.durham.nc.us/departments/parks/pdf/playmore.pdf>

I've only scratched the surface, and I've already exceeded my word allotment. So I'll just refer you to my friend Katy Davis's 'Stir Crazy Mom's Guide to Durham ': <http://stircrazymomsofdurham.blogspot.com/>. You won't run out of things to do this summer (or next).