

Y on Wheels Rollin' into Summer
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By Anneka Preston

With the beginning of summer and the end of the most recent monsoon season in Idaho, the youth of the Wood River Valley are back outside playing in the sun. For about 30 kids, the hottest spot to play is in their backyard thanks to the Y on Wheels program.

Twice a week, children ages 5 through 15 are encouraged to set aside the T.V. and get distracted by the outdoors. On an average Tuesday or Thursday, there can be whole neighborhoods of kids running around, playing games, and enjoying an afternoon off with friends. The Y on Wheels program has succeeded in bringing kids out of the house and into a safe and fun environment, where even the adults are reminded of the how to have fun.

Every Tuesday and Thursday from 3:30 to 5:30 kids within a two-mile radius of the Balmarol apartment complex come running to meet the Y on Wheels SUV. Snacks are provided and eagerly accepted and then it is off to the playing. A basketball court, jungle gym (complete with a sandbox floor) and a green space that is maintained by the City of Hailey is all that is needed to have an awesome time. Kids congregate and can participate in organized activities or they can play on their own.

Wide smiles always greet the two advisors of the Y on Wheels, Jason Fry and Kasey Hochmuht. Jason and Kasey have both triumphed in keeping kids happy and excited enough to return every week. Kathy, a first grader, "likes to play games with Kasey" and thinks that the Y on Wheels is the "best thing in the whole world". Kids that do not normally hang out together at school come to the Y on Wheels and have a ball together. Alexandria, a fourth and soon to be fifth grader, loved it when the Company of Fools came to play with them. Alexandria states, "They were so cool!" Everyone leaves happy when they play at with the Y.

The Y on Wheels is funded through fundraising from the YMCA's Annual Celebrity Classic. Through generous donations, children are provided free snacks and participate in supervised activities that allow kids to get out of the house for a few hours. Students that might come home everyday to an empty house and do not have the financial means to participate in community activities, now have a fun place to be.

On Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 3:30 to 5:30, all summer long, volunteers are needed to have fun with the youth of the valley. The only requirement is that you work well with kids and are able to have fun. If you are interested please contact the YMCA at 727-YMCA or Angenie McCleary of YAK! (Youth Adult Konnections) at 727-8735. For more information about how you can get involved with the Y on Wheels or the YMCA

call or visit their website www.woodriverymca.org. The best way to give back to your community is by volunteering!

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