

Getting kids back into free play

Metro Creative

One of the endearing components of the Netflix series “Stranger Things,” which reached its conclusion at the close of 2025, is how the show harkened viewers back to the unencumbered days of being a kid in the 1980s - that is, until those kids had to fight for their survival against otherworldly foes.

Demogorgons and mind flayers aside, the Hawkins kids would hop on their bikes and traverse their town, or engage their imaginations during game play in a wood-paneled basement. Baby Boomers, Generation Xers and even Millennials can likely recall youthful days when they had plenty of free time on their hands to pursue various adventures.

Fast forward to 2026, and today’s children lead much more structured lives. With the rise of “helicopter parenting” and “tiger parenting,” children find themselves



continuously engaged with academics, structured sports teams, music lessons, and choreographed play dates, largely initiated by the adults in their lives.

“Free play,” defined as child-initiated, unstructured activity, has largely been phased out.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggest free play is not simply a break from learning but the “primary vehicle through which children develop the brain architecture necessary for

adult success.” Free play should be encouraged and not lambasted.

Here’s a look at how free play is imperative for healthy kids.

•Improves executive functioning: Research published in The Journal of Pediatrics says children who have more time

for unstructured play have better self-regulation and executive function. These elements can predict academic success better than IQ, say health experts.

•Greater brain development: Researchers at Baylor College of Medicine have found that

children who don’t play much develop brains 20 to 30 percent smaller than is normal for their age.

•Stress reduction: In their clinical report, “The Power of Play,” the AAP suggests that when play and safe, stable, nurturing relationships are missing in a child’s life, stress hormones can elevate to harmful levels. Play is so essential to kids that the AAP suggests pediatricians recommend more of it at each child well visit.

•Promotes conflict resolution: Children who engage in free play learn on their own how to keep the game going through compromise, rather than relying on a parent or referee.

Free play is an important component of a child’s well-being, and one that is not stressed nearly as much as it should be for good health and future success. Kids can enjoy self-directed play that is nature-based and unplugged from digital distractions.

Ford County Sheriff’s Office

POPLOG

- Bernadette M. Daniel**, 47, failure to appear; violate offender registration act.
- Melissa K. Beers**, 57, probation violation.
- Jared C. Baca**, 38, transporting an open container; operate a motor vehicle without a valid license; one-way glass or sun screen device; operate vehicle without registration or w/expired tag; vehicle liability insurance.
- Lawrence E. Zimmerman**, 39, possession of marijuana; use/possess w/intent to use drug paraphernalia into human body; vehicle liability insurance.
- Jairo M. Grajeda**, 19, driving while license cancelled/suspended/revoked; operate vehicle without registration or w/expired tag.
- Ryan L. Driggs**, 23, driving while license cancelled/suspended/revoked; maximum speed limits.
- Jose A. Goytia**, 38, theft of property or services; aggravated assault.
- Jacob S. Lehn**, 28, theft of property or services.
- Ronald A. Verdoot**, 37, failure to appear.

Salvation Army adding gym to facility

DODGE CITY - With the recent completion of the Thrift Store, Salvation Army Dodge City is gearing up for its next project: a new gym.

Using existing space in the current building, officials expect it will require minimal renovation to create a gym.

According to information provided to The Globe, the gymnasium will be able to provide activities and programs for all ages.

The Salvation Army will keep the community informed of the progress

of the project.

The Salvation Army Dodge City is led by Lieutenants Marcelo Marin and Solange Vera in Dodge City, as well as Major Judy Tekautz from Salvation Army headquarters.

In addition with their duties, the Salvation Army has an Advisory Board who meet monthly to discuss the needs in the community and who assist in accomplishing the solutions.

The Salvation Army Dodge City and their global Mission is dedicated to “Doing the Most Good.”

SUDOKU

9			8				6
		2	5		6		
			9		2		
6					5	3	
				1		6	
	2	5	9				
		1					
2					8		3
		9	4		2		

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you’ll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Here’s How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

8	3	9	4	7	2	2	6	1	5
2	5	7	6	1	9	8	4	4	3
4	6	1	8	3	5	9	2	7	
3	2	5	9	6	4	7	8	1	
7	9	8	3	5	1	4	6	2	
6	1	4	7	2	8	5	3	9	
5	8	6	1	9	3	2	7	4	
1	7	2	5	4	6	3	9	8	
9	4	3	2	8	7	1	5	6	

ANSWER:

Kansas Legislature allows counties to give no-bid contracts for projects up to \$100K

BY ANNA KAMINSKI
Kansas Reflector

TOPEKA — Kansas counties could award pricier construction contracts to select businesses under a bill that seeks to raise the ceiling for mandatory public bidding processes.

Under current law, any county construction project that exceeds \$25,000 must involve a public bidding process, allowing companies to compete for desirable contracts. The House on Monday passed House Bill 2571, which, if it becomes law, will raise the project cost threshold to \$100,000.

It would allow governments to privately award higher value construction contracts for county buildings, bridges, highways, dams, turnpikes and parking lots.

The cap, however, doesn’t preclude counties from soliciting public bids for contracts under \$100,000, said Jeff Blubaugh, chairman of the Sedgwick County Commission, wrote in February testimony. Increasing the cap would allow counties like his to more efficiently address facility repairs.

The cap had not been raised since



The Kansas Legislature passed a bill raising the ceiling for no-bid county construction projects and rejected a companion proposal repealing construction worker protections. A construction worker is shown in August 2023, demolishing the former Docking State Office Building in downtown Topeka. SAM BAILEY/KANSAS REFLECTOR

2008, failing to account for inflation and changes in the construction industry, he said.

Two national trade organizations opposed the proposal, indicating raising the public bidding threshold would also raise bond requirements, risking traditional performance guarantees and payment protections for

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