

SUMMER

Blast-off Outings

Do your year-end outings signify “good-bye till fall” to your clubbers? The message to boys and girls is subtle, yet clear: “We leaders, like school teachers, need a vacation. This party is really for us because the club year is finally over.” If you truly care about your clubbers, you’ll want to change that impression. You need to convince your clubbers that they are important to you all year round.

Summer blast-offs change the focus. Instead of scheduling year-end camp-outs, picnics and slumber parties, plan “Summer Blast-off” outings. The preparation is exactly the same, but the name changes the emphasis to looking forward. Boys and girls begin to anticipate what else might be planned for them in the summer months to come.

Here are some ideas.

- Cubbies/Sparks picnic –complete with games, hot dogs, soft drinks and lots of open space.
- T&T girl clubbers slumber party – in a home or at the church, girls are always ready for a sleepover.
- T&T boy clubbers camp-out –roast marshmallows, sleep under the stars and go on hikes.

Summertime Extras of a Caring Leader

Leaders should look for ways to stay in touch with clubbers. On vacations, write postcards to everyone on your team- This says to a child, “I care and haven’t forgotten you!”

Or you could plan a family picnic and invite your team. Swimming, making cookies or going fishing with clubbers will make friends of clubbers and leaders. Next fall at club, there’ll be a difference. When you tell about Christ and His love, your words will rest upon much more receptive and warm hearts.

Summer Specials

- Church activities. Send clubbers a special flier about Vacation Bible School. Phone clubbers to remind them of Sunday school and other youth ministries your church conducts during the summer. Clubbers from unchurched families may especially need a push to get them involved in your youth summer activities.
- Leader’s open house. Set up a weekly or bimonthly schedule for clubbers to come to your home for a couple of hours. Activities can include completing last year’s handbook, having fun, and eating. Time and dates must be clearly specified at the beginning of summer. The home setting and low leader-clubber ratio provide many pluses. Such an arrangement works especially well with Sparks and third- and fourth-graders.
- Small group activities and outings. Frequently, it’s impossible to round up more than a few clubbers for a summer activity. But don’t let that deter you from planning fun times. Work with

the kids who are available. The results are gratifying. The extra attention builds relationships that may never be established in larger group settings.

- Overnight at county or state park, church or your home. If you have the room, invite clubbers to an overnight in your backyard. Play charades, selected Awana games or board games. Have a neighborhood scavenger hunt or make popcorn.

Scavenger hunt _Divide clubbers into teams. Give each team a list of items to find within a time limit and in a certain area. List items that will be available in the area of hunt. For example, if you're in a park, list:

Gum wrapper Sunglasses

Bottle cap Tissue

Maple leaf Bandanna

Grasshopper Piece of string

Paper plate Piece of bark lying on the ground

Acorn Nail file

4-leaf clover Hair clip

Penny Ribbon

Safety pin knife

Colored shoelace Dandelion

Cookout in church parking lot. Play relay games outside or have a treasure hunt.

A day at the cottage _Invite clubbers to a nearby vacation cottage for a day of swimming, boating and fun.

Activity camp overnight or all-day event _In addition to outdoor fun, spend time completing handbook activities.

Summer poster contest _Meet with clubbers during the summer to make posters announcing next season's Awana clubs. Information should include date, time, place, ages and club names.

Provide colored markers, cloth, poster board, magazine pictures, etc. As fall approaches, display the posters in prominent places at church, at the library, in grocery stores or on phone poles. (Be sure to secure permission to display posters in public locations.) At the first club meeting of the new season, announce poster contest winners and award prizes.

Bike hike _Pick a safe route ahead of time, possibly in a park or forest preserve. Have everyone bring a sack lunch or snacks, including plenty to drink, to enjoy at a halfway point.

Camp –Camp is a great way to provide an exciting and spiritually challenging time to any clubber’s summer. Encourage clubbers to attend your church camp or area Scholarship Camp. Distribute camp brochures and applications.

Are you still looking for more ideas? You can make your own list, but here are some possibilities:

- Water slide
- Skyscraper
- Rodeo
- Shuffleboard
- Cave touring
- Museum
- Fishing
- Dairy farm
- Alpine slide
- Swimming party
- Apple picking
- Theme park
- Bakery or candy factory tour
- Rafting, paddle boating, tubing or sailing
- Dune buggy ride
- Carnival
- Canoe or riverboat trip

My Summer Plans by an Awana Commander

I look at the summer as basically being June, July and August. The 10 days left in May after club is over are strictly gravy. That’s when I recuperate from the hectic, weekly club schedule.

Everyone, including me, takes a vacation during the summer. But in general, I look at June, July and August as time to prepare for next club year. My directors also work throughout the summer with their leaders. Together, they prepare club materials and plan for fall. Projects include contest boards complete with all details, preparing for different outings and parents’ nights, etc.

During the summer, I make needed repairs on game equipment and the Awana game floor. I contact the proper church board for needed supplies, like coat racks or cabinets. I invite directors, leaders and their families over to the house for an informal backyard barbecue. There, we share ideas, learn from one another, and plan for specific events in the fall. We’ve also tried an all-leaders’ family picnic in a park on a Saturday afternoon. The leaders’ kids had fun playing together, and the adults enjoyed an informal brainstorming session around the picnic tables.

Vacations can play havoc with any rigid summer planning schedule. General goals, however, make summer a productive planning time for an effective club ministry.

June is for early planning and recruiting directors. Pastor and I always visit the homes of all directors. We formally ask them to stay on for the upcoming club season. If there is a change, June is the time to recruit new directors.

July is when pastors, commanders and directors at our church recruit Awana leaders. We make phone calls and personal contacts throughout the month. I also train newly recruited directors.

August is the month to train Awana leaders and finalize the club schedule from early September through Christmas. Our Awana missionaries run an area-wide training seminar for all leaders. In addition, we conduct training sessions in our church.

Summer Neighborhood Evangelism Adventure

Summer is a great time for an adventure with kids in your neighborhood who think vacation time is boring and dull. Take advantage of the time they're free between visits to grandparents' homes, summer camps and other activities. Give them - as well as yourself - a fun, meaningful, spiritual adventure.

Many aspects of the Awana program lend themselves easily to a short summer outreach to kids. And Awana summer activities may help promote club attendance in the fall. If you're working with kids already involved in Awana, help them catch up in their handbooks. But remember, you cannot allow clubbers to begin a handbook beyond the school grade level they completed in the spring. If you're working with children new to Awana, summer is a great time to introduce them to the program and to the gospel.

Awana games can be played on an outdoor circle. But your time with the children should involve more than just games. You can include Bible memorization and Bible lessons.

Your summer ministry program can be a simple, short, personal ministry. It can become a church-sponsored program to dovetail with Vacation Bible School. It can be an extension of VBS, running as a Christian day camp for the whole summer. For churches without VBS, the program can be run as a weeklong club which meets on five consecutive days.

You don't have to devote your whole summer to these evangelistic activities. Seek help from people who may not be acquainted with Awana. This allows them to become familiar with the Awana program. If they show further interest, they may make a commitment to the regular club program in the fall. Some of your helpers may be teens, who can be discipled and trained as Leaders-in-Training.

Have your supplies on hand so you're well prepared, but let your summer outreach be flexible and spontaneous. The availability of kids and your own schedule should determine its

development. It may be an informal meeting on Saturday morning. Or take advantage of the long daylight hours and plan for an evening.

Summer activities

We want to stay in touch with our clubbers and their parents during the summer!

Invite them to VBS. Then, invite everyone at VBS to come back in the fall for Awana.

Conduct VBS once per week on club night during the summer, instead of every day for a week.

Continue meeting on regular club night, with a program of Bible stories, games and crafts (no handbooks). Play games outside if space is available.

Mail postcards to your clubbers and Sunday school kids. Have a night when you and the young people stuff envelopes to send to those who are not attending.

In August mail a flyer announcing your first night of club (make it special!).

Visit your clubbers during the summer, along with other Awana leaders and Sunday school teachers.

Call your clubbers on the phone, or email them.

Attend summer events that your clubbers are participating in; sports, camps.

Schedule special nights during the summer.

- Ice Cream social
- Get Wet night
- Awana Reunion
- Pizza party
- Barbeque picnic

Take part in summer parades or fairs. Set up a booth and pass out information about your church and your club.

Pass out flyers in the neighborhood around your church. Have clubbers help you, then take them out for a treat afterwards.

Schedule trips to the zoo, ball games, museums.

Schedule an Awana picnic for clubbers and parents.