



Two children take a hand-led horse ride at the Outdoor Kansas for Kids event held Sept. 8 and 9 at John Redmond Reservoir in southern Kansas. National and local sponsors were encouraged to offer outdoor activities at this annual event to help children learn to appreciate that type of recreation. (Photo by Tulsa District)

Corps partners in free event to help kids appreciate outdoor activities

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Hundreds of children and their families were treated to a weekend's worth of free outdoor activities at the Outdoor Kansas for Kids event Sept. 8 and 9 at Tulsa District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' John Redmond Reservoir, near Burlington, Kansas.

The annual event is presented by the Kansas Wildscape Foundation and a group of national and local sponsors to offer fun and entertaining activities to help give children a better appreciation of the outdoors.

"It's all about the kids," said organizer Tasha Rogers, communications supervisor for the Coffey County Sheriff's Office. "It just seems that too much of the time the kids are

indoors not doing any physical activity. This event gets their interest up, and I've seen how involved in outdoor activities they become after this event when they've been shown what to do."

The Tulsa District provided the facilities at John Redmond Reservoir, including free camping Friday and Saturday at the Riverside West Campground. Other sponsors provided free food and supplies for the activities and entertainment. Free breakfast was provided Saturday and Sunday, and free lunch and supper were provided Saturday.

"The Corps of Engineers partnership is just amazing," said Rogers. "Just having the weekend be free is just amaz-

ing because many of these kids would not be able to attend if it wasn't free."

John Redmond Reservoir staff work to make sure the facility is in good condition for the event.

"The park rangers and the camp host are great to work with," said Rogers. "If we come up with something new, they see that it gets done. One year it was muddy down at the point where the canoeing was set up, and the rangers brought in a truck load of gravel to help keep people from falling."

Volunteers were at each activity to instruct the children on how to do it properly. Activities included a catch-and-release fishing tournament, a rope bridge, an interactive Jet Ski simulator, hand-led horse rides, a milk crate climb, canoeing, archery, pellet shooting, a paint ball trail shoot, and trap shooting.

Other activities included inflatable bouncy castle, joust, and obstacle course, visits from Smokey Bear, live music, evening haystack rides, live music and a magic show, a Boy and Girl Scout desert contest, ice cream, and a movie and popcorn to finish up the day.

"This event really makes a difference in the lives of these kids," said Rogers. "I see the kids around town or at the event the following year, and they tell me how much better they have gotten at that activity. One little boy now has his own bow, and he can practice shooting in his backyard. These are activities that kids can do with their families that don't cost a lot."

Outdoor Kansas for Kids is an annual statewide event. It has been held in Coffey County at John Redmond Reservoir for 11 years.