

Family soccer makes fun abundant, accessible and renewable

Ten years ago, I read "The Heat Is On" by Ross Gelbspan. The author confirmed my suspicion: Global warming was a threat to human survival and the entire planet's well-being.

The problem seemed huge, and my awareness of it overwhelmed me. What could one person do in the face of a problem so large? I decided to take it personally and tried to do everything in my power to limit my consumption of fossil fuels.

Among many other changes I made — gardening and composting, freecycling and improving energy efficiency in my home — I also realized that fun is a renewable resource.

Everyone can generate his or her own, but when fun is shared it grows exponentially.

That's what my family and I discovered when we introduced family soccer to our community several years ago.

Having fun with my daughters when they were very young was easy. We sang songs in the car, played a lot of hide and seek and even turned a big jump rope in our living room when winter started getting to us.

Nowadays, fun for my teenage daughters has more to do with spending time with friends.

When May arrived this year, we began brainstorming about the coming summer and how to have local and easygoing fun with friendship and socializing and realized the neighborhood family soccer games we'd already been playing for years met all our criteria.

It's close by and relaxed, not overly structured. Everyone is welcome to play no matter age, gender or playing ability. Parents don't have to stand on the sidelines and cheer their children on — they join the fun and cheer their teammates on. So in late May we found an idle soccer field, spread the word and reserved our Wednesday evenings for the summer.

One of the most fun moments of family soccer time is when the parents play against the kids. Many



Anne Elise Burgevin



Photo provided

Anne Elise Burgevin and her family introduced family soccer to their community a few years ago. The group continues to play one evening a week, focusing on fun as a renewable resource.

children dream of beating a parent in a game, and family soccer is a perfect opportunity to realize that dream.

When enough adults show up and can muster a team, the younger generation jumps on the chance to call for a game of kids vs. adults.

Slight tension fills the air. Parents wonder how they can dribble around all these kids. Kids are excited about dribbling around all

these adults. The game begins.

The adults surprise themselves at their own field maneuvers, even occasionally stealing the ball away from a youngster.

And the kids revel in their rule of the field, taking absolute pleasure in thrashing the adult team. The score inevitably tips to the kids.

Aside from the laughter and the occasional thrill of victory, I appreciate our family soccer nights be-

cause they generate fun, a renewable resource, while using very few nonrenewable resources. Many players walk or bike to the field. Others have a short drive. The equipment is simple. The only fossil fuel required is a good lawn mowing every third week or so.

We get to know new people and offer friendly support to those around us. Families have fun together. Daughters pass to their fathers. Brothers team up to score a goal. Our community grows stronger while our dependency on nonrenewable resources diminishes.

So when I feel powerless in the face of global warming, I hum a few lines of the Sally Rogers song "What Can One Little Person Do" while I prepare a meal using locally grown food after our family soccer game.

"One can help another one and together we can get the job done."

Anne Elise Burgevin, of State College, is a home-schooling parent and lifelong advocate of our nation's environment. Readers may contact her at anneatpeace@yahoo.com.