As I sit on my comfy couch enjoying this sunny, yet nippy, spring day, my mind wanders off to the even warmer days which are ahead. Of course that thought leads me to visions of summertime fun - freedom from school schedules and homework and freedom to wake up at Noon and take an impromptu road trip.

In the middle of my pleasant daydreaming session, I suddenly apply the brakes to my warm thoughts, and a nagging question fills my head: What in the world will I do with my three children when I run out of road-trip gas money and
they get bored with their summer vacation and new-found freedom?
Before pulling my hair out, I've decided to figure out some low-cost options for keeping my kids' minds and bodies occupied.
If you are faced with that same challenge, let's explore some options together.

Park and Recreation Activities

Whether you live in the city or the suburbs, your local Park and Recreation Department is a great place to find summer activities for children of all ages. Have you always wanted to take up golfing? A variety of classes are
offered for preschoolers, youth, and adults all year long and the costs vary, but are usually reasonable. You'll find
tennis classes, swimming lessons, fitness classes, group sport teams, kayaking, climbing, dancing classes, and dozens of other activities.
Keep your little ones (and yourself) moving and grooving this summer and learn a new skill.
Check it out at
www.minneapolisparks.org
and
www.threeriversparkdistrict.org.

Twin Cities Youth Jazz Camp

Think your child might be the next Grover Washington or Wynton Marsalis? If he/she is between 13- and 17-years-old and plays an instrument, this is a great opportunity!
From June 15 - 19 or 22 - 26, your son or daughter can have a full day of music instruction.
My friends have raved about this camp last year and I am excited that my eldest daughter is old enough to participate this year.
Lunch is provided and the cost is $160 per person and full scholarships are available for those in need.
Hurry, spaces are limited.
Visit
www.twincitiesyouthjazzcamp.org
or call (763) 542-8880.

YMCA Camps

Something is always happening at the YMCA and they love old-fashion outdoor play! Try swimming, canoeing, archery, or hiking - a wide variety of week-long camps are going on, from June through August, for your children from four-years-old years to 9th grade.
Fees begin at $130/wk.
www.ymcatwincities.org/daycamps/kids.htm

University of St. Thomas

Students from 9-12 grades who are interested in writing and news reporting can apply for a free two-week summer workshop at the

University of St. Thomas from June 17-29. Students of color are encouraged to apply.
Applications must be postmarked by April 15.
www.threesixtyjournalism.org
or call 651-962-5282.

Vacation Bible School

During the summer many local churches hold week-long services geared toward addressing the spiritual needs of young people in ways that are fun and engaging. These programs are usually free, although most accept donations.
The best way to locate ones in your area is by checking with your local church and watching for advertisements at other churches in your community.

Volunteering

One sure-fire way to fight summer boredom while helping to reinforce qualities like compassion and kindness is through volunteering to help others. It could be something as simple as washing dishes or mowing for an elderly neighbor.
Many organizations throughout the twin cities, like the public library and Goodwill Stores, have opportunities for young people to help-even if they are not yet 16-years-old.
For more ideas, check out options at the Red Cross.
www.redcrosstc.org/volunteer.cfm

Longing for the lazy days of summer? I know I am. While I do not believe that every waking

second of your child's life should be filled with
activity, trust me when I say that your summer will be more enjoyable when your children are not in your ears singing that old classic, "I'm bored and there is nothing to do!"
Take some time in advance to plan low-cost and free activities to keep your children stimulated (and out of trouble) and then everyone will be happier.
Remember that the early bird gets the worm.
Enjoy!

Marcia Humphrey is an interior decorator and home stager who specializes in achieving high style at a low cost. A native of Michigan, she and her husband, Lonnie, have three children.