


2026 Columbia Summer Family Fun Guide

Free and low-cost meals, activities, learning, water fun, and family outings for children and caregivers in Columbia, SC.

Family isn't always created by blood, but by LOVE.

 Eat free summer meals	 Cool Off splash pads + pools	 Learn library + reading
 Watch discount movies	 Play bowling + parks	 Create free workshops

How to Use This Guide

Designed for families, children, caregivers, schools, churches, DSS partners, and community organizations.

This guide is organized so children can quickly pick what they want to do: eat, splash, read, play, create, explore, or watch a movie. Most options are free; low-cost options are clearly marked. Always check the listed organization before going because weather, capacity, registration, and supplies can change.

🌟 Best Quick Picks

Pick	Activity	Best For	Cost / Notes
	Free Lunch + Library Time	All ages, especially weekdays	Free meals at select Richland Library locations, June 3-July 31
	Drew Wellness Center Splash Pad	Toddlers-elementary	Free; Mon-Sat 12 PM-8 PM
	Richland Library Summer Learning Challenge	Kids + teens	Free; May 30-August 8; prizes for completion
	Regal Summer Movie Express	Family movie day	Low-cost; \$1 tickets at participating locations
	Kids Bowl Free at Stars and Strikes	Active indoor play	Free bowling games; shoe rental extra
	Home Depot Kids Workshop	Hands-on makers	Free first Saturday monthly while supplies last

Free Summer Meals + Food Support

Richland Library Summer Break Cafe

Kids and teens ages 18 and under can receive a free meal from 11:30 AM-12:30 PM, Monday-Friday, June 3-July 31, 2026, while supplies last. No cost. Richland Library lists three participating locations: Edgewood, North Main, and St. Andrews.

Pick	Activity	Best For	Cost / Notes
	Richland Library Edgewood	2101 Oak St., Columbia 29204	June 3-July 31, Mon-Fri, 11:30-12:30
	Richland Library North Main	5306 North Main St., Columbia 29203	June 3-July 31, Mon-Fri, 11:30-12:30
	Richland Library St. Andrews	2916 Broad River Rd., Columbia 29210	June 3-July 31, Mon-Fri, 11:30-12:30

Find More Free Meal Sites

Families can use the official USDA Summer Meals tools for the most current meal locations and serving times. Text FOOD or COMIDA to 304-304, use the USDA Summer Meals Site Finder, or call 1-866-3-HUNGRY. Site hours can change, so check before going.

SUN Bucks / Summer EBT

Eligible families may qualify for SUN Bucks, a grocery benefit that helps cover food costs when school is out. Families should check South Carolina and USDA guidance for eligibility and application details.

Water Fun + Cool-Off Spots

Columbia Parks & Recreation lists the 2026 outdoor pool season as May 23-September 7, 2026. Recreation swim admission for city pools is \$3 for ages 12 and under and \$4 for ages 13 and over. Splash pad and spray pool hours vary by site type.




Pick	Activity	Best For	Cost / Notes
	Drew Wellness Center Splash Pad	Kids who love water play	Free; Mon-Sat, 12 PM-8 PM
	Community Center Splash Areas	Quick cool-off	Mon-Sat, 10 AM-12 PM and 2 PM-6 PM
	Neighborhood Park Spray Areas	Park + water play	Mon-Fri, 10 AM-12 PM and 2 PM-6 PM
	Greenview Pool	Swimming day	\$3 kids 12 & under; \$4 ages 13+
	Maxcy Gregg Pool	Swimming day	\$3 kids 12 & under; \$4 ages 13+

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Low-cost nearby options: Saluda Splash and Melvin Park Splash are ICRC spray grounds. For 2026, both list a \$4 per person fee; Saluda Shoals also has a \$5 daily parking fee. These are best for longer park days.




Reading, Learning + Library Fun

Richland Library's 2026 Summer Learning Challenge runs May 30-August 8, 2026. Children can track by reading/learning time or by activities. Finishers can return a tracker to any library location for a prize.

Pick	Activity	Best For	Cost / Notes
	Read 30 minutes	Readers + listeners	Track 30 circles to finish
	Complete activities	Kids who like checklists	Complete 10 activities to finish
	Completion prizes	Children + teens	Medal plus choice of physical prize
	Local reward tickets	Family outings	Includes select Columbia Fireflies ticket and other partner offers
	Library events	Babies-teens	Storytime, STEAM, crafts, games, performances

Examples of summer library activities listed for 2026 include family concerts, teen makers, tie-dye crafts, soil painting, bilingual storytime, telescope observing, storytimes, and hands-on STEAM programs. Some events require registration.

Indoor Fun for Hot or Rainy Days

Pick	Activity	Best For	Cost / Notes
	Regal Summer Movie Express	Family movies	June 1-August 13, 2026; \$1 PG movies, Mon-Thu at 11 AM at participating Regal theaters
	Kids Bowl Free - Stars and Strikes	Active indoor play	Ages 15 and under; 2 free games during listed summer hours; shoe rental extra
	Columbia Museum of Art	Art + imagination	Check current free-admission days and summer promotions before going
	South Carolina State Museum Accessibility Morning	Sensory-friendly families	Free general admission for participating accessibility morning guests; check museum calendar
	Home Depot Kids Workshop	Ages 5-12 with adult	Free first Saturday monthly at 9 AM while supplies last;

			register recommended
	Lowe's Kids Workshops	Ages 4+ with adult	Select kids workshops; some free, some paid; registration required

Parks, Playgrounds + Outdoor Adventures

Pick	Activity	Best For	Cost / Notes
	Leo's Landing at Saluda Shoals	Inclusive playground day	Free playground; park parking may apply
	Carraway Park at the Riverwalk	Playground + walking	Free; great younger-child playground
	Columbia Canal & Riverfront Park	Nature walk	Free; trails, river views, picnic spots
	Sesquicentennial State Park	Nature + lake day	Low-cost state park admission; trails and picnic space
	Neighborhood park picnic	Simple family outing	Bring snacks, bubbles, books, ball, and water

Pick-Your-Day Activity Menus

Free Weekday Plan

Pick	Activity	Best For	Cost / Notes
1	Start with free summer meal	Library meal site	11:30 AM-12:30 PM, while supplies last
2	Join a library program	Richland Library	Check events calendar first
3	Cool off at splash pad	Drew or city spray area	Bring towel, water shoes, sunscreen
4	End with reading reward	At home or library	30 minutes counts toward challenge

Hot Day / Indoor Plan

Pick	Activity	Best For	Cost / Notes
1	Morning movie	Regal SMX or AMC if participating	Low-cost; check showtimes
2	Library visit	Any Richland Library branch	Free books, AC, kids area
3	Kids workshop	Home Depot/Lowe's dates	Register early
4	At-home craft night	Use free take-home kits when available	Let kids decorate a summer memory page

Outdoor Adventure Plan

Pick	Activity	Best For	Cost / Notes
1	Pack picnic + water bottles	Home	Freeze water bottles overnight
2	Playground visit	Leo's Landing or Carraway Park	Pick a shaded morning time
3	Nature scavenger hunt	Riverfront Park or Sesqui	Find birds, leaves, rocks, clouds
4	Family reflection	Car ride home	Ask: what was your favorite part?

Kid-Friendly Summer Challenge

Let children check off activities as they complete them. This helps them choose what they want to do and gives families an easy summer memory tracker.

<input type="checkbox"/> Eat a free summer meal	<input type="checkbox"/> Visit a library	<input type="checkbox"/> Read for 30 minutes
<input type="checkbox"/> Attend storytime	<input type="checkbox"/> Try a splash pad	<input type="checkbox"/> Visit a new playground
<input type="checkbox"/> Take a nature walk	<input type="checkbox"/> Watch a summer movie	<input type="checkbox"/> Build something at a workshop
<input type="checkbox"/> Draw or paint a summer memory	<input type="checkbox"/> Have a picnic	<input type="checkbox"/> Help someone in the community



What to Pack

Pick	Activity	Best For	Cost / Notes
	Outdoor bag	Sunscreen, hats, towels	Add water shoes for splash pads
	Meal outing	Water bottle, wipes, small snack	Meals may be while supplies last
	Library day	Library card if available	Many events do not require a card
	Comfort items	Small toy, headphones, change of clothes	Helpful for sensory needs or long days

Community Sharing Page

FAM can share this guide with all families in the Columbia community while still supporting foster, kinship, adoptive, reunified, and biological families. It is welcoming, not singling anyone out, and it positions the organization as a trusted family resource hub.

Suggested Post Caption

Summer should be full of safe, joyful, affordable memories. Foster & Adoption Mission: The Caring Closet created this Columbia Summer Family Fun Guide to help families find free meals, splash pads, library programs, reading challenges, parks, low-cost movies, bowling, and creative activities for children. Share it with a parent, caregiver, church, school, or community partner who could use it. Family is not always created by blood, but by LOVE.

Suggested Distribution Spots

Website download page; Facebook and Instagram; DSS/community partners; churches; schools; food pantries; libraries; caregiver support groups; community events; QR code flyer at donation drives.

Sources + Verification Notes

Richland Library Summer Learning Challenge: May 30-August 8, 2026; challenge structure, prize details, and free meals June 3-July 31 at Edgewood, North Main, and St. Andrews. [Source](#)

Columbia Parks & Recreation Pools & Splash Pads: 2026 pool season, admission, city splash pad/spray pool hours, and Parks contact information. [Source](#)

ICRC Saluda Splash: 2026 season dates, hours, fees, parking note, and weather policy. [Source](#)

ICRC Melvin Park Splash: 2026 season dates, hours, fees, and weather policy. [Source](#)

Stars and Strikes Kids Bowl Free: 2026 registration, eligibility, free game details, hours, and shoe rental notes. [Source](#)

Regal Summer Movie Express 2026: June 1-August 13, \$1 PG movies, Monday-Thursday at 11 AM at participating theaters. [Source](#)

Home Depot Kids Workshops: Free first Saturday monthly in-store kids workshops at 9 AM while supplies last. [Source](#)

Lowe's Kids Workshops: 2026 kids workshop calendar, registration details, and project listings. [Source](#)

Accuracy note: This guide was prepared using sources available June 19, 2026. Families should confirm hours, registration, capacity, weather closures, and supplies before attending.