

A Healthy Way to Play

*At Funshine, it's all back to nature
for healthy child development*

Over the past year Funshine in Idaho Falls has been integrating a natural play space, which was inspired by Nature Explore, a collaborative project of the Arbor Day Foundation, into their existing early childhood care and education facility.

Play is a critical component in a child's development. A fear of child abduction, which is on many parents' minds today, can minimize our children's outdoor playtime. Because of diminished exposure to the natural world, children lack the free self-directed playtime needed to invent activities critical to their development.

The American Academy of Pediatrics confirms that free and unstructured play is healthy, and in fact essential, for helping children reach important social, emotional and cognitive developmental milestones. It helps them manage stress and gain resiliency, as well.

Factor in busy schedules and technology and it is apparent that children are becoming increasingly sedentary. They don't have time to enjoy and explore the outdoors, which is negatively impacting their health and development. Researchers have estab-

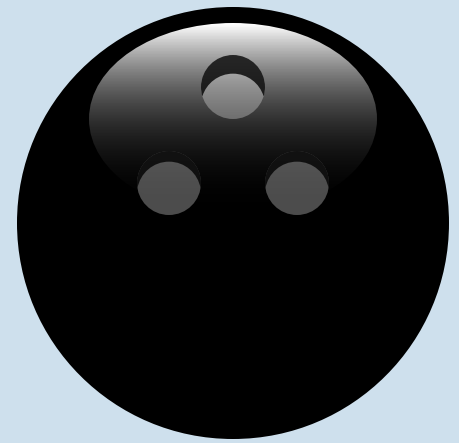
lished that the lack of outdoor contact contributes to obesity and diabetes, a dislike or fear of the outdoors and increased reliance on behavior and regulating medications.

With enthusiasm, determination and support from local community businesses, Funshine has created a play space that promotes exploration and exercise in a natural environment. Funshine's "naturescape" creates an outdoor learning environment which incorporates native plants, trees and edible landscaping, logs and boulders to climb on, a children's garden, real wood blocks, plenty of room to roam and run, tire swings, buckets, pails and pipes to make music and loose building materials that encourage creativity. This playground differs greatly from traditional playgrounds.

It is a space that introduces children to nature so they gain an appreciation for all its beautiful and interesting elements and one that offers a comfortable and inviting space suitable for families to unite.

Although much of the design has been implemented, there are still a few elements to be integrated. A wheeled pathway, an outdoor stage and various whimsical multi-cultural additions are anticipated this year. One endeavor in Funshine's vision is to build a living classroom. This addition will house plants and animals, an area for children to start seedlings for their garden and a recycling area. This addition will not be attainable without sponsorships, but Funshine is hopeful a business or developer will aid in the project's completion.

For additional information, a site tour or the facility's planned ribbon-cutting in June, contact Kathy Reynolds at Funshine Early Childhood Care and Education at 522-7277.



Wii Love to Bowl

Seniors staying active with friendly competition

Before the launch of the Wii system, most seniors probably never gave video games a second thought. But then came Wii Sports and, along with it, senior bowling leagues and the emergence of video games as a regular pastime for seniors nationwide.

At Fairwinds Sandcreek in Idaho Falls and 50-plus other facilities in the Erickson and Leisure Care family of senior communities, the Wii system has truly caught on. Locally, Wii bowling leagues have led to some serious but always friendly competition between "rival" communities, noted Fairwinds' spokesperson Kelly Palmer.

Nintendo has certainly taken notice. Late last year the company dispatched representatives to encourage residents and family members to sample the game. Because players can play through the game either cooperatively or competitively, participants can expect to see kids helping their grandparents overcome difficult obstacles—or depending on the game, perhaps throwing them down a bottomless pit.

"Nintendo has led the way in expanding the audience for video games," said Cammie Dunaway, Nintendo of America's executive vice president of Sales & Marketing. "By giving seniors and their family members a hands-on introduction... we're extending our commitment to making the best video game experiences accessible to every generation."