

At School of Rock Katy, budding musicians learn both technique and stage presence



Ryan Kobermann of ESN Health offers customized personal fitness training



Katy Youth Soccer Club programs are available for children ages 4 and up

Tara participates on her little league softball team, the Rangers



Photo by Eye Candy by Candace

A Parent's Guide to Katy's Extracurricular Activities

Finding the right activities to keep your kids focused, motivated, and having fun

Written by Cherri Northcutt



The Katy Family YMCA Turkey Dash is a yearly tradition for many Katy families



Tiger-Rock Martial Arts of Katy equips athletes to compete for champion titles

With the kids in school again, families are getting back into a regular routine. While you're planning extracurricular activities for your children, remember to build in some time for sports or exercise. Physical activity is important at every age for good health and is often lacking in our modern, sedentary lifestyles. Starting an activity at an early age is key to fostering a life-long habit of fitness and well-being. So, let's get active.

"Physical activity is important because the more kids move, the more endorphins they release, and the better they will feel," says Ryan Kobermann, owner of ESN Health. ESN Health offers personal training, either one-on-one or in small groups, for children as young as age 9. "Exercise reduces anxiety and relieves stress," Kobermann adds. "It will also increase hormone creation, which aids in brain function and overall development."

Finding the Right Activity

There's no shortage of choices in Katy for extracurricular activities for children of all ages. With martial arts, dance, team sports, horseback riding, and even playing in a rock band as available activities, there's something for everyone. Talk with your child about what interests them to find the right niche. Owner and general manager of School of Rock Katy Mark Bowerman says, "Encourage your children to follow their passion. Don't decide for them."

Kathleen Connolly of Connolly Dance Arts agrees, reminding parents to "look and listen; you should be able to see the excitement in their eyes." Girls and boys interested in dance have several options in Katy. At Connolly Dance Arts, there are classes in tap, ballet, hip-hop, jazz, and lyrical, as well as leaps and turns and modern dance.

Jack Barry, a trainer at Koko FitClub of Katy says, "We offer custom training for strength, cardio, and nutrition." The Katy Family YMCA also has a large variety of programs available. Beth Strand, community liaison at the YMCA says, "Our classes include jump rope team, toddler fitness, stroller fitness, swimming, youth and teen sports, homeschool physical education, taekwondo, dance, and cheerleading, as well as fitness classes."

Hwarang Tigers Taekwondo offers white belt training for beginners all the way up to black belt training. Instructor Song Lee says, "We teach Olympic style taekwondo, and we have a demonstration team and a sparring team." Tiger-Rock Martial Arts of Katy teaches traditional taekwondo as well as grappling, extreme martial arts, and weapons training.

Something Different

Perhaps your child is not as athletically inclined and marches to the beat of a different drum or wants to be a drummer. School of Rock Katy can help make that happen. "We are a performance-based music school with rookie programs for younger kids and Rock 101, where students ages 8 to 18 form rock bands and perform at local music venues," explains Bowerman.

If your child is crazy about horses, Circle Lake Ranch is the place to be. "I'm always surprised at how far students can come with just one lesson a week," says Layne Spitzenberger of Circle Lake. "Equestrians thrive on the one-on-one bonding we have with our horses."

LaCenterra offers a variety of events that will get the family moving while spending time together. "Starting in September, we have Mondays with Mommy, a program for mothers and toddlers with music and movement and a themed craft," says Lindsay Kaye, marketing director at

LaCenterra at Cinco Ranch. There's also a weekly baby boot camp, a stroller fitness program that emphasizes strength training and cardio drills. Another fun outing for the whole family is movie nights on Central Green. "It's important for kids and families to be active," Kaye says. "Doing something fun with their family members, like playing in the courtyard, is a good way to bond."

Tilt Studio at Katy Mills Mall also offers a wide range of games and activities. General manager Vicky Peek says, "We have laser tag, racing games, mini bowling, black light mini golf, and a bobsled ride." There are plenty of video games, ticket games, and prizes. Peek adds, "Taking time to play with friends and family builds social interaction and hand-eye coordination."

When to Start

Depending on the program, children can start activities at a very young age. Check with the facility you are considering joining. At School of Rock, there are programs designed for students as young as 6 years old. Martial arts academies usually begin at age 4. For fitness training, wait until the age of 9 to 11 years old. Children as young as 2 years old can start dance classes. For equestrian programs, lessons begin at age 7. The Katy Family YMCA has classes for children as young as age 3. Whatever your child's age, there is a place for them to join the fun.

Plan ahead if your child is considering sports in high school. Kobermann says, "Start preparing in the sixth grade with

a smart fitness program to help you ramp up and perform at a higher level." Connolly advises, "Katy area schools are very competitive. It's a smart decision to have ballet and jazz technique as a base for any high school dance team." She also suggests a drill team prep class.

You're never too young to appreciate musical style at Rockology Music Academy. Their Wee Rock program includes newborns and children up to 7 years of age. Make it a family endeavor by enrolling yourself in the Adult Rockers class, ages 19 years and up.

Because schools do not offer martial arts as a high school sport, Angus Pollard, chief instructor of Tiger-Rock Martial Arts of Katy has an alternative. "We have a partnership with Katy ISD allowing junior high and high school students to earn their physical education credits by training in taekwondo," Pollard explains. "It's very popular with our teen group."

Sticking with It

It's not uncommon for students to lose interest in a sport or activity after the initial excitement wears off. To encourage your child to stick with the program, Jack Barry at Koko FitClub suggests, "Make it fun, stay positive, stay interested, and be encouraging." Pollard reminds parents that their attentiveness during lessons can be a great encouragement to their children. "During a lesson, 90% of parents have their head buried in a cell phone," he says. "Stop and take the time to watch your children, give them a smile, and a thumbs up."

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Pollard also suggests that parents make positive statements about their child's progress in the class. "Celebrate every victory no matter how small," he says.

Being a Good Sport

Team sports and group activities help build social skills and good sportsmanship. Strand stresses the YMCA's commitment to sportsmanship. "We are a noncompetitive league where every child participates in every game," she explains. "Both players and parents are encouraged to cheer not only for their own team, but for the other team as well."

Peek says, "Team activities require social interaction and teach children how to work together." Spitzenberger feels that equestrians share a special camaraderie. "A horse barn has a sense of belonging to those of us who are passionate about horses," she says. "We have something in common whether we are 8 or 80." Parents play a part in that feeling of belonging and responsibility as well. "At Tiger-Rock Martial Arts of Katy, respect and honor are our core values," says Pollard. "We ask that every parent lead by example. Our motto is, 'No matter if you win or lose, you always act like a champion.'" **KM**



CHERRI NORTHCUTT is the mother of two active teens. She and her family have lived in Katy for 14 years.

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