

FUN WITH FIELD TRIP FRIENDS

Educational adventures encourage children to spend time outdoors

BY ZENAIDA SERRANO
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Emi Takatsuka may be just 2½ years old, but she's already been on some awesome outdoor adventures.

Feeding elephants and giraffes. Riding ponies. Caring for caterpillars until they transformed into but-

terflies. Sampling freshly pounded poi at a taro patch.

"I'm just really happy that she had the opportunity to have these new experiences," said Emi's mom, Tara Takatsuka, 37, of Hawai'i Kai. "As a parent, it's just so neat to see the reactions of your child in different settings and environments."

The Takatsukas' excursions were among

those offered by Field Trip Friends, a local outdoor education program that encourages parents and children to spend time outdoors to learn about the environment, Hawaiian culture and history. Registration is now open for fall classes, which begin next month.

Parents: What do you do to expose your kids to the wide outer world? Share your ideas at

HAWAII.MOMSLIKEME.COM

"A lot of kids don't get out and get into nature enough," said Cindy Macfarlane-Flores, Field Trip Friends creator, owner and teacher. "If children are raised with an appreciation for the environment, then when they get older, they will want to actually care for our environment."

The Field Trip Friends program is for children ages 1 through 4, but older children are welcome to participate. Programs are tailored toward entertaining and teaching children

SEE TRIP, D5



Field Trip Friends takes parents and young children on educational adventures.

FIELD TRIP FRIENDS OUTINGS

10-11:30 a.m., various locations.

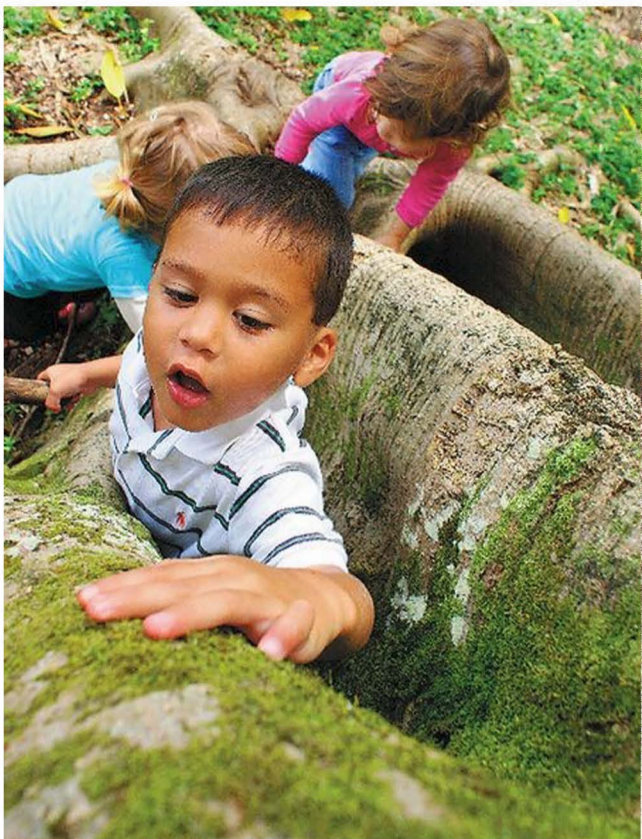
Four weekly sessions for one child and one adult, \$110; eight sessions, \$220; additional siblings 15 months or older, \$55; siblings younger than 15 months, free.

The program is geared toward children ages 1 to 4, but older children are welcome. New sessions, on Mondays, Fridays or Saturdays, begin in September and October.

Register: www.fieldtripfriends.com

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Photos by ANNE STONE | Kaleialu Photography

Top to bottom: Keoni Gomes pats moss on a Field Trip Friends outing; Kiara Kanizic pets the pony El Dorado; Tara Takatsuka and daughter Emi enjoy a moment; Cindy Macfarlane-Flores shows her son, Shore Flores, grapes on the vine.

See more Field Trip Friends photos at



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Trip

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about the environment — including the ocean, land and animals — while also providing educational, cultural and historical information for parents.

“I wanted to design a program not just for the children, but also for the parents,” said Macfarlane-Flores, a former teacher of 16 years.

During a field trip to a taro patch, for example, children keep busy touching taro leaves, getting into the mud or learning about poi, while parents learn about Hawaiian words associated with taro patches or what is made from the plant, such as laulau.

Macfarlane-Flores, 38, of Kāneʻohe, combined her love for the environment, teaching and being a mother when she started Field Trip Friends three years ago. Macfarlane-Flores is a “stay-outside mom” of two — Shore, 4, and Summer, 2 weeks.

Other educational adventures — or “ed-ventures,” as Macfarlane-Flores calls them — have included visiting a horse ranch, fire station and shrimp farm. Excursions vary each seasonal session.

“I love the fact that we get to be out in nature and visit places in Hawaiʻi I never knew existed,” said Christine Parker, a Pearl City resident who has lived in Hawaiʻi for 15 years. Parker and her 2½-year-old son, Matthew, have been on nearly two dozen excursions through Field Trip Friends.

Parker’s son “loves to be outside,” she said, and his favorite field trips have included riding in a boat and fishing for crabs with a pole

OUT AND ABOUT

Cindy Macfarlane-Flores, owner of Field Trip Friends and a former school-teacher, offers parents tips to help their little ones appreciate the environment and become nature lovers:

- Be a role model. Pick up litter and throw it away; don’t just wait to participate in a “pick up litter day.” Make it part of your lifestyle. Point it out while driving. Talk about the effects that piece of litter could have if you just left it there. For example: At the beach, you see a plastic bag flying along the sand. Run to pick it up, throw it away, then talk to your child about how that bag could end up in the ocean.
- Lie down and watch the clouds. Talk about shapes you see in the clouds, how fast they are moving, which direction they’re going and what colors they are. Point out clouds that are higher or lower than others, and clouds that are covering the tops of the mountains or raining out on the ocean. These could be fun learning moments for your children.
- Stop and smell the flow-

made out of bamboo and string.

“This is what makes a well-rounded child,” said Parker, a stay-at-home mom and pharmacist. “You want them to appreciate the land, love the land and love the outdoors.”

Also unique to the program are DVDs and professional photographs of field trips that are available to participants.

“They’re really nice keepsakes,” Macfarlane-Flores said. “They’re a great way to



ANNE STONE | Kalaieau Photography

Hannah Schnupp, Shore Flores and Kawika Stone run through flowers on a Field Trip Friends outing.

ers. Take the time to actually smell flowers or “pet” moss on a tree or rock. It only takes 15 seconds, yet the learning can last a lifetime.

- Play in the rain. Catch raindrops on your tongue, watch rain collect in a leaf and stomp in puddles.
- Ask questions while you’re outdoors. Think of questions that will stimulate kids’ thinking about the senses they’re using to explore something in nature: How does it feel — smooth or bumpy? What colors do you see? What does it smell like? What does it sound like?

go over with your children where they’ve been and what they learned.”

But nothing beats the actual excursions, said Takatsuka, a stay-at-home mom who’s expecting another little one in November.

“It’s just a wonderful opportunity to spend quality time with your child and share new experiences together,” Takatsuka said.

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