Neighbors create "bear hunts" for kids amid coronavirus

By The Advocate, adapted by Newsela staff on 03.30.20

Word Count 640
Level 1020L

Image 1. A bear sits on a bench outside of a home in Oaklawn Subdivision on March 23, 2020, in Lafayette, Louisiana. Residents of Oaklawn Subdivision and Saint Streets area are putting teddy bears in their windows so parents can take kids on bear hunts and take photos of some of the teddy bears. Photo: Brad Kemp/The Advocate

During the week of March 23, children in one neighborhood of Lafayette, Louisiana, went on a safari in search of teddy bears. They had maps and binoculars in hand.

It's an extension of something that's occurring in other places to keep children entertained while they're out of school and sticking close to home because of the coronavirus: Placing teddy bears in street-facing windows so children can hunt them out on walks and bicycle rides through their neighborhood. Some areas in London, England, are joining in, too.

Coronavirus is a flu-like illness. It began in China and has been spreading across the globe since December 2019. Health officials have been encouraging social distancing, which means staying home and staying away from other people to help slow the spread of the virus. Many schools have shut down. Many companies are telling employees to work from home. Major sporting and entertainment events have also been canceled or postponed.
The idea for the teddy bear hunt could be based on a book called "We're Going on a Bear Hunt" by Michael Rosen and Helen Oxenbury.

**Spreading The Word About Teddy Bears**

In Lafayette, parents and residents got together on a neighborhood Facebook page in the beginning of March to spread the word. Soon teddy bears starting appearing in windows.

Myrtle Place resident Jaci Russo, who has three bears in her windows, said she first observed it in mid-March.

"People were putting bears in windows, flower beds, along fence lines," she said. Then they were "posting their addresses [on the neighborhood Facebook page] so people can map a route and parents can take their kids walking on a bear hunt."

And the children are serious about it, Russo said, taking paper and pens and mapping routes. Some even bring binoculars to help them hunt out the cuddly creatures.

"I love it," Russo said. "It's a great way for neighbors to help out."

**Children Write Messages With Sidewalk Chalk**

In the late morning, when parents in her neighborhood walk their children to school to pick up lunch, they're hunting for teddy bears, Russo said. In the afternoons, children can be seen making chalk drawings of teddy bears and uplifting phrases on driveways and sidewalks, she said. Some parents are even hanging lines in their front yards to display their children's drawings of bears.

One Oaklawn resident posted on March 23 how proud she is to live in the neighborhood. Her daughter spotted 50 teddy bears on their walk that day.

If you don't live in the area you can start something similar in your neighborhood.

Teddy bears aren't the only thing adding cheer to homes and lives in Lafayette Parish, Louisiana.

In the Sawgrass Park neighborhood in south Lafayette Parish, rainbows are showing up all over the place, even when there hasn't been a rain shower.

**Rainbows Are Also Popping Up**

Mary LeBlanc, who has two young children and another on the way, learned about the rainbows from her sister-in-law, who lives in New Orleans. She posted it on the neighborhood Facebook page. Word spread and children took out their crayons and markers to create beautiful rainbows they put in street-facing windows for a giant neighborhood I Spy game.

Children also are spreading rainbows outside, drawing them in chalk on sidewalks and driveways. Some of the neighbors are posting their addresses on the Facebook page, inviting kids to stop by their street. Parents like LeBlanc and her husband, who are working from home during the...
coronavirus crisis, are taking family walks and bike rides searching out the rainbows. "It's cheerful," LeBlanc said. "It's something to look forward to."

And who doesn't need a little cheer during these times?
Quiz

1. Which section from the article BEST explains why people are staying away from each other?
   (A) Introduction [paragraphs 1-4]
   (B) "Spreading The Word About Teddy Bears"
   (C) "Children Write Messages With Sidewalk Chalk"
   (D) "Rainbows Are Also Popping Up"

2. Read the following statement.

   Communities find new ways to come together during a time of crisis.

   Which sentence from the article provides the BEST support for the above statement?
   (A) During the week of March 23, children in one neighborhood of Lafayette, Louisiana, went on a safari in search of teddy bears.
   (B) In Lafayette, parents and residents got together on a neighborhood Facebook page in the beginning of March to spread the word.
   (C) In the late morning, when parents in her neighborhood walk their children to school to pick up lunch, they're hunting for teddy bears, Russo said.
   (D) Parents like LeBlanc and her husband, who are working from home during the coronavirus crisis, are taking family walks and bike rides searching out the rainbows.

3. According to the article, WHY did people start to put teddy bears in windows in Lafayette?
   (A) They were inspired by a similar game that was played by children in London.
   (B) They hoped to spread cheer and keep neighborhood children entertained.
   (C) They wanted to encourage children to read a book about hunting for teddy bears.
   (D) They thought it would motivate children to draw rainbows with sidewalk chalk.

4. How did the teddy bear game affect residents of Oaklawn?
   (A) It made them proud to be a part of their local community.
   (B) It caused them to spend more time with people in their neighborhood.
   (C) It gave them a valid reason to stay inside during the coronavirus outbreak.
   (D) It provided them with a way to understand the importance of social distancing.