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Let me admit right off that I am not, repeat NOT, the person to come to for sympathy. Oh sure, I have lots of empathy for people living in conditions they have little control over, but if you go much beyond those conditions, you’re barking up the wrong tree.

It’s a common complaint, now and even in the past, for those afflicted with boredom to never look past the one tree in their life while forgetting the many and varied trees in the entire forest or jungle. Thus, the headline of today’s column.

Perhaps my unsympathetic response to this subject is rooted in my occupation. In my experience as a sports writer, I have covered a multitude of activities. Quite a few of them I had no connection with, but a story demand required me to involve myself whether I liked it or not. Do I need to make a list?

Archery, Bowling, Canoeing, Darts, Exercise, Futbol, and etc. A game for almost every letter of the alphabet, multiplied by an X factor, taking into consideration just how many activities there are starting with the most popular character. In short, those who complain about the lack of things to do have not looked beyond that tree in front of them. Instead they use it as an excuse to sit idly and complain.

It only takes a quick glance at Summer Activities available in Gallup to open one’s eyes, mind,

and imagination to the possibilities. The City of Gallup Recreation Department has a complete free booklet on the events they sponsor, the Rio West Mall is also allowed the use of their space for many more, and other organization like the Octavia Fellin Public Library, several churches, and youth groups like Girl Scouts, Civil Air Patrol, and Broken Arrow Bible Ranch also contribute to the very long list of things for kids, up to and including high school in some cases, to do during the lazy summer months.

There are so many summertime activities, in fact, just printing a complete list would require two or more pages of this publication. Some do require a small fee, but many are freeexcept for the tine and effort required to transport your children to and from the ones holding the most interest for them.

A case in point is the one connected to the accompanying picture, the Junior Reporters. Some of these kids are quite young, but have all expressed an interest in learning the qualities needed to prepare them for a career. It’s not like any of them will win a Pulitzer Prize in the next couple of years, but the experiences they have may well feed other curiousities that will come up in the future.

Keeping children’s minds and bodies occupied in this and other ways feeds their need to learn, and might even keep them from becoming bored adults. No guarantee there, as 250-channels on the TV, the Internet and other electronic toys, and other distractions are always present to shorten attention spans, but it is at least a start.

My advice, for whatever it’s worth, involve your children into one of these activities, or more. Keep their minds sharp, let them make new friends, and allow them to see different sides of our community. The payoff may not be immediately forthcoming, but your children are for the rest of your life, so it is worth doing, NOW.

If absolutely none of the activities appeal to your children, explain forcefully how weeds always need to be pulled, dishes washed and dried, vacuuming and house cleaning are always constants, and a whole other list of alternatives that make their involvement in these programs seem much more enjoyable.

Well, that about exhausts my thoughts for today, and uses up all the words I’m allowed. But in

closing, since this is supposed to be a sports column, let me revert to my favorite line with a small add-on..

See you in the bleachers, and we’ll talk!

See Kid’s Event calendar on pages 21 (Rio West Mall) and 22.