

This Economy Stinks!

A few weeks ago, we found out that one of our favorite summer activities will not be an option this year. [The Fun Spot Amusement Park](#) in Angola, Indiana will not be opening in 2009. This park was absolutely perfect for a family with kids the ages ours will be this summer: 9, 5, 2, and 1. They have (had) lots of rides for the little ones, as well as zoo animals like tigers, lions, parrots, and deer. They also had a few awesome coasters for Mom and Dad, and we were planning on bringing along a friend or a Manny (man who is a nanny; see some of my previous posts) so we could indulge in some coaster action together, a rarity for us. But alas – Fun Spot is a victim of this bad economy. The message on the home page of their website says it all: “Due to the Economy, Fun Spot Park and Zoo Will Not Be Open For The 2009 Season”.

Where is President Obama? I thought his campaign promises entailed the repairing of the economy? The Fun Spot in Angola was perfect for our family – it was only about 45 minutes away, the price was right – it was only \$56 for our entire family to see the zoo and ride the rides and even the waterslides all day. And that was before using any coupons that were always available (they would even offer good grade discounts that allowed our oldest FREE admission!) Compare these prices to Cedar Point, which is 2 hours away AND would cost our entire family \$128 for one day, not to mention that Cedar Point is much less targeted to young kids – plus Cedar Point has long lines in which to wait, something that wasn't a concern at Fun Spot. I can only hope Fun Spot will re-open in 2010 or at least before my kids grow up – we have some amazing family memories of Fun Spot, and I can only hope there will be more to come!

Adding to my angst about losing Fun Spot, I just found out yesterday that Ball Quest in Defiance, Ohio will not be open this season either. Ball Quest had a mini-golf course, a

driving range, and batting cages. We had lots of fun there last summer as well, and it was a place we visited often with friends. We even had some batting cage tokens left over! But the sign on the gate of Ball Quest says, "Not open due to increased taxes. Thank County Commissioner Kime". Ouch – a little bitterness, it seems? Ball Quest was a small family owned business. My friend once showed me the "tea room" they had decorated beautifully in a Victorian motif. I wonder what will happen to gorgeous room and its antique furniture, complete with an antique wooden high chair? I really loved min-golfing at Ball Quest – the course went up a small hill that overlooked beautiful NW Ohio farm fields... and I'm not sure if there are other batting cages nearby! Yet another source of family entertainment – GONE! If they keep going at this rate, we'll be left with nothing in no time! People complain all the time that families just don't do as much together as they used to and as they should, but if family entertainment keeps getting shut down, that trend will only continue and increase! Here is a picture of my girls having a blast at Fun Spot last year – their baby brother was to be born only two weeks later. It was over 85° that day, and I was physically miserable, but we all still had SO much fun!



Now I REALLY Hate Walmart

And my husband is on the bandwagon too. My husband is a clearance maniac – he loves finding good deals on stuff that's been marked down from its original price. He found he especially loved the clearance deals at the Defiance Ohio Walmart, which is not too far from us. But yesterday, that changed...

It turns out that the Defiance Walmart, which is only a few months old, by the way, changed their clearance prices overnight! They used to have some really good discounts, and it was fun to go there and try to find them. But now, they haven't just changed the way they mark stuff down; they've taken actual clearance items that were already marked down and marked them back up!

Case in point: My husband had a Plantronics Headset that he bought last week for \$5. It broke, so he was going to return it, but he forgot it at home. No problem, he thought, I'll just buy a new one for \$5 and return the old one another time. WRONG – unless he wanted to spend \$21 on the new one! That's right, they took a \$5 clearance item and marked it up to \$21 – more than **quadruple** the price!!! So he asked the lady in electronics if they raised their clearance prices, and she said, "I'm not going to lie to you. We did raise the prices. They took away our clearance budget." Whatever that means. Not something I, the consumer, should be concerned with... except that they took all the fun out of clearance shopping at Walmart! And of course the people at customer service couldn't help us return our headset since we didn't have the broken one with us... their suggestion? Buy a new one for \$21, then return the broken one later for \$5 – thanks but no thanks! Here are some other examples of clearance items that they re-inflated: ATI Video Card from \$50 to \$115, Panasonic Cordless Phone from \$30 to \$69, and a US Robotics SkypePhone from \$5 to \$16. Each of these items had at least a

100% increase in price. I understand that the economy sucks and inflation and blah, blah, but I think Walmart should have kept these items on the clearance where they had them; then started their new clearance policy with new clearance items. I mean, come on, is Walmart really that worried about going broke?

The bottom line is, Walmart keeps finding ways to take away whatever fun is left in shopping. First it was by playing their little pricing games that get us to spend more and close down their competition, and now they've taken away their good clearance deals. Well, maybe their policies will bite them in the you-know-what come Christmas time when they don't have any room on their shelves for the new Christmas products because no one wants to touch their crappy clearance items at their not-so-clearance prices!