

Spring into Action

March, 2015

"Those who can, do. Those who can do more, volunteer." Unknown

Ask the Agent

Q: Do homemade cleaning products work as good as those I can buy in the store? Do you have any ideas for recipes to try?

A: Depending on what you want the cleaning product to do, generally – they are just as good. There are many additional options for general household cleaners. Some of them are formulated to be more environmentally friendly, while others are formulated to reduce cost. In many cases, they can do both! Check out the Resource Management section inside this edition for a couple of options to try.

I recently met a friend at the local hospital cafeteria for lunch. As I walked through the sliding front doors, I was greeted with a warm smile and friendly hello from the service desk volunteer. What a great service that person provides to the patients, families, and visitors that come to the hospital.

A volunteer is one who voluntarily undertakes or expresses a willingness to undertake a service. Communities depend on volunteers to make programs and services accessible and successful. It is a way to help increase connectivity while reducing potential costs. People can also gain from being a volunteer.

Historically, the American spirit exemplifies volunteerism through such examples as farmers pulling together to help get crops harvested when a neighbor has fallen ill, or when a woman has given birth to a child and friends and family help with meal preparation for her family. Volunteerism builds a strong sense of community. It affords people the opportunity to feel part of a larger group or purpose.

Here are other benefits of volunteerism:

- Self-satisfaction
- Altruism
- Potential learning or acquisition of new skills
- Specific benefits for the receivers of volunteer efforts
- Relaxation
- Socialization
- Status or reward
- Career opportunities
- Community improvement

(Fischer & Schaffer, 1993)

There are many places and ways you can volunteer. In fact, the avenues for volunteerism can be overwhelming if you start to look for opportunities. Begin by thinking of the things you like to do. If you are interested or passionate about the service you can provide, you will be much more effective as a volunteer. Here are some different areas of service that often need volunteers and specific ideas of how you can volunteer in that area:

Working with children: Contact the local Head Start to volunteer in the classroom or for their program in general.

Carpentry work: Sign up with the area Habitat for Humanity or with your church's men's group to build handicap accessible ramps for disabled residents.

Cooking: Form a neighborhood Care Package group and meet monthly to prepare meals for a neighbor in need.

Meeting new people: Sign up with the Hospital Auxiliary group to volunteer at the hospital as a greeter, visitor, or gift shop worker.

Shopping: Create a new group at your neighborhood or church that will do weekly shopping trips for shut-ins or those who are ill.

Yard work/gardening: Mow a neighbor's yard. I think about the single parents who have young children who need some measures of help.

Look back in this article at the many benefits of volunteerism. When you volunteer in your neighborhood or community it's truly a "win-win" situation.

Spring is here...so volunteer!



Having Fun with Family



With Spring Break behind us, many of us find that we are in the final stretch of the school year and with that comes the flurry of summer opportunities that our children ask about. Can I take swimming lessons? Can

I go to camp? Can I sign up for the traveling team?

The activities available to children all have valid benefits—my own children are involved in several of these. However, how can you balance your time, energy, and benefits while balancing your checkbook?

First, be selective. Identify those activities that give you the most “bang for the buck.” These are often activities associated with the Community Parks and Recreation programs that many towns offer. Not only do they utilize community resources such as baseball and soccer fields, they also provide volunteers who help with coaching.

Second, prioritize the activities. My children want to “do it all”. However, if I let them “do it all”, my husband and I run ourselves weary trying to keep everything manageable. Determine what your family’s priorities are by taking into account the time, money, and abilities needed to be successfully involved. For example, we have two boys who are

very interested in baseball, so we try to make sure they are assigned to the same team.

Third, pool your resources with other parents. Coordinating car-pooling is another way you can manage activities more easily. You can offer to take the neighborhood kids to the evening baseball practice sessions while trading that service with someone who can take your kids to swimming lessons during the day.

Finally, make sure you are making time for activities that include your entire family. Spending time together as a family unit is important and activities often distract from that essential part of being a strong family. Taking vacation(s) together is one way to do that, but often an expensive way, at that.

Some economical alternatives might include:

- Visiting the Nature Center at Milford Lake
 - Taking walks or riding bikes along the Riverwalk Trail or one of many other area walking paths.
 - Plant a container garden this spring and let each person in the family choose what type of plant they want to contribute
 - Go camping at the lake or simply in your backyard
 - Plan and prepare meals together
- Finding fun ways to spend time together as a family is important and the spring and summer seasons can help us do that even more!

Savings Money While Keeping it Clean

To help prevent illness, keep your kitchen counters and sink clean and sanitized. But many commercial cleansers are toxic to the environment and decrease the quality of the air inside your home. Use “greener” cleaning products to reduce your exposure to toxic products, pad your bank account and improve your overall quality of life.

Cleaning Safety Tips

- Store all cleaning solutions out of the reach of children.
- Never use chlorine bleach with other cleaning agents.
- When using harsh products, use rubber gloves to protect your skin and wear a mask to protect your lungs, so that you don’t absorb the chemicals.
- Rinse surfaces after using toxic substances.

Homemade Cleaning Products

You can easily make homemade cleansers that are less expensive and less harsh than commercial products. Follow these tips when making a homemade cleaning solution:

- Put it into a clean spray bottle or another clean container with a tight seal. To help prevent accidents, avoid using recycled food or beverage containers.
- Clearly label all containers with the date and the name of the product, such as “Baking Soda and Water Cleanser.”

- Mix cleaning solutions in a well-ventilated area
- Mix a small amount and use it before making a new batch.

Three Easy-to-Make General Purpose Cleansers:

- 1) Mix 1/2 cup white vinegar with 1 cup water.
- 2) Mix 1 tablespoon washing soda or Borax with 2 cups warm water.
- 3) Mix 1 tablespoon ammonia, 1 tablespoon liquid detergent and 2 cups water.



A Disinfectant to Kill Germs:

- Mix one capful (or almost 1 teaspoon) each of chlorine bleach and vinegar with 4 cups water.

Green Ways to Help Prevent Major Cleaning Problems and Odors:

- Wipe up spills immediately.
- Keep a jar of baking soda in odor-producing areas, such as the refrigerator or freezer, and sprinkle some in the trash compactor and garbage cans.
- Pour pickle juice or vinegar down drains.
- Grind lemon or orange rinds in a food disposal. Then flush with hot water.

Sources (Accessed 8/24/09): 1. [Make Economical, Healthy and Green Household Cleansers](http://www.extension.org/pages/1000000/make-economical-healthy-and-green-household-cleansers), eXtension News, www.extension.org/pages/

Originally published in “Dining on a Dime,” September 2009, by Erin Henry and Mary Meck Higgins.

Healthy Habits

Walk Kansas for Everyone!

I know that not everyone reading this newsletter is signed up for a Walk Kansas team, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't focus on the program's two health and wellness initiatives:

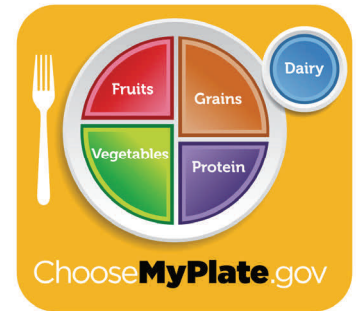
- 1) Increase physical activity
- 2) Increase daily fruit and vegetable consumption

Physical Activity:

Regular physical activity has been proven to reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke. Heart disease is the #1 killer in America and strokes fall in at #5. At a bare minimum, the American Heart Association recommends 30 minutes of moderate exercise at least 5 days a week. You can break that down to 10 or 15 minutes 3 times per day to make it more manageable in your schedule. Aerobic exercises benefit your heart the most including brisk walking, jogging, swimming or biking. If you add a stretching regimen to your daily activities, you can further increase your stamina and flexibility. Walk Kansas encourages participants to establish a walking program and follow it through for 8 weeks. Ideally, the participants continue their walking program long after the end of Walk Kansas. Walking can be relaxing and satisfying while improving the overall health of the individual. If you can't get your 30 minutes in, you can still strive to get some amount of extra walking in—something is better than nothing!

Fruits and Vegetables:

Not only are they good tasting, fruits and vegetables are good for you! They both provide a wide variety of nutrients that help with your body's absorption at a higher level than taking dietary supplements. They both provide your body with fiber which contributes to meal satisfaction, reduction of blood cholesterol, and increased intestinal comfort. Fruits can give you quick energy to help sustain you between meals. Vegetables provide you with superior nutrition at typically low calorie levels. Make 1/2 of your daily intake of food vegetables and fruits for a healthier diet. For great information, recipes, and activities that support a healthy lifestyle and diet, go to <http://www.choosemyplate.gov>.



Connecting with Kids

I recently attended an excellent 8-hour training called **Youth Mental Health First Aid**. This interactive training is delivered by certified instructors who guide participants in learning how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance abuse disorders. The goal is to equip participants with knowledge and skills that will help calm a distressed person and de-escalate a situation before it becomes a crisis. There is a training program for working with adults as well as one for working with children. If you interact with children or are simply an invested community member, learning more about mental health issues in children will help you understand youth mental health better.

The National Institute of Mental Health provides the following overview on Child Mental Health:

“It's important to recognize and treat mental illnesses in children early on. Once mental illness develops, it becomes a regular part of your child's behavior and is more difficult to treat. But it's not always easy to know when your child has a serious problem. Everyday stresses can cause changes in your child's behavior. For example, getting a new brother or sister or going to a new school may cause a child to temporarily act out. Warning signs that it might be a more serious problem include:

- Problems in more than one setting (at school, at home, with peers)
- Changes in appetite or sleep

- Social withdrawal or fear of things he or she did not used to be not afraid of
- Returning to behaviors more common in younger children, such as bedwetting
- Signs of being upset, such as sadness or tearfulness
- Signs of self-destructive behavior, such as head-banging or suddenly getting hurt often
- Repeated thoughts of death

To diagnose mental health problems, the doctor or mental health specialist looks at your child's signs and symptoms, medical history, and family history. Treatments include medicines and talk therapy.”

As a person trained in Youth Mental Health, a I am NOT a mental health specialist. Rather, I am better equipped to see early warning signs in young people and can advocate for their needs based on my observations. As a parent, I am better equipped to distinguish between the normal developmental emotional challenges my children are faces and when they are under extreme emotional distress and need help from a qualified mental health provider. The Junction City Pawnee Mental Health office provides regularly scheduled Mental Health First Aid Trainings. If you are interested in getting trained in Mental Health First Aid, you can find the training dates listed on their web site: www.pawnee.org. Click on “Events & Trainings” tab.

Upcoming Geary County Extension Programs

**Requires pre-registration.

March

- 24— MPI Parenting Class**—Devin Educational Resource Center, 123 Eisenhower is a 6-session class open to any parents with children ages toddler to teens to help support and equip parents with the challenging task of raising children. Please call the Geary County Extension office to register for the program. The class consists of 6 sessions held from 6-8 p.m. on Tuesday nights. A \$10/session registration fee is required before the class begins. The total cost for the class is \$60.00 per individual or \$90.00 for the parent and a support person. The class continues each Tuesday through April 14. A new 6-session class will begin on April 28, 2015

- 25— Geary County Food Pantry Commodity Distribution

April

- 2— Knowledge at Noon**— ”Living Wills”, Valley View Estates, 1440 Pearl Drive, Junction City, KS. Program is free to the public. Please call the Extension Office by April 1 to reserve your seat.
- 7— Eat Smart, Move More**—12th Street Community Center Nutrition and Wellness program is free and open to the general public. Please call the 12th Street Community Center (238-1678) to reserve your seat.
- 11— Geary County 4-H/Sr. Citizens Center Building Fund Raiser, 1025 S. Spring Valley Rd., Junction City, KS. Doors open at 5:00 PM, Silent Auction and Raffle, Dinner served 6:00—7:00 PM with Live Auction following dinner. Contact the Geary County Extension Office to purchase tickets in advance or purchase that night at the door.
- 28— MPI Parenting Class—see information above; Meets every Tuesday thru June 2.

May

- 4— May Day, May Day! Emergency Preparedness for all ages! This informational program is sponsored by Geary County EEU Council and is open to the public. Gary Burgess will be the highlighted presenter. Program begins at 1:30. Light refreshments will be served

‘Like’ us on Facebook for the latest news from **Geary County**

K-State Research and Extension, including health, wellness, and financial tips.

www.facebook.com/gearycountyextension

Geary County Office information: <http://www.geary.ksu.edu/>

K-State, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and US Department of Agriculture Cooperating.

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

