

Ask the Agent

Q—Where can I find quality licensed child care?

A—Although that is a simple question, the answer is not so easy.

The Geary County Health Dept. is responsible for doing the licensing visits, but cannot provide you with a list of licensed child care providers. They are a great resource if you have someone in mind and want to know if they are licensed. Contact Juanita Garcia at the health department: 785-762-5788

You can call Child Care Aware of Eastern Kansas to get a list of licensed providers that meet your needs. They keep a current list of all licensed providers for the entire state. Their toll free number is 1-877-678-2548. When you call, have the following information available:

- Ages and birthdates of children
- Any special needs your child(ren) have
- The schedule you will need for child care
- The location you desire (even the section of county or town you need)
- If the children are receiving a state subsidy for child care you will need to disclose this as some providers do not accept state subsidy.

See the inside article about what to look for as you determine where to take your children for day care.

What is Family & Consumer Sciences?

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As an FCS Extension Agent, I often get asked “What is Family & Consumer Sciences?” Some may associate my professional title with Home Economics – which is an accurate connection. However, it really is so much more.

Just as all areas of daily living have changed, Home Economics has evolved. What began in the 1800s as “Domestic Science” – a loosely defined discipline that focused on the health and well-being of the family, evolved into Home Economics by the late 1800s. The function of Home Economics at that time was, in part, to educate farm women in domestic practices while their husbands learned more about agriculture processes and methodology. The focus of the classes were on clothing preparation and care, good nutrition, safe food and water handling, child rearing, and other topics related to being a homemaker. At the same time, in the early 1900s, pioneers in the field were involved in testing water supplies to ensure they were safe for drinking and other home and industry uses.



The field of Home Economics was birthed from the work of Catherine Beecher (sister of Harriet Beecher Stowe) and Helen Swallow Richards. Catherine wrote 33 books on topics of domestic science. Many of these publications were used in the early higher education programs for Home Economics as textbooks. Helen was an instructor, chemist and researcher at MIT. She focused her work on research related to safe water supplies, as well as good nutrition, physical activity, general health and wellness, and other topics related to home and family.

Fast forward 100+ years to 1993 – A group of modern-day home economists met in Scottsdale, Arizona. They were concerned that the name Home Economics no longer represented the full breadth of the field that had evolved and changed so much over the previous 100 years. After much deliberation, they arrived at a new title to the discipline – Family and Consumer Sciences.

Family and Consumer Sciences provides programs and training to “assist individuals, families, and communities in making informed decisions about their well being, relationships, and resources to achieve optimal quality of life. They provide research-based knowledge about the topics of everyday life, including human development, personal and family finance, housing and interior design, food science, nutrition and wellness, textiles and apparel, and consumer issues.” *Source: www.AAFCS.org*

As an FCS Extension Agent, I focus on providing programming for families and individuals across the lifespan. I extend the research and training from K-State and other land grant universities across the U.S. to the public I work with. I provide programs on a wide range of topics and serve as a resource to the public regarding the needs of individuals and families as they maintain a home, raise children, and work to provide for their family.

Five First Steps to Childcare Selection

1) **Start Early**—Oftentimes, childcare is difficult to find. You want to get a head start by starting the process as early as possible (months before you need childcare.)

2) **Call Childcare Aware of Kansas**—This organization provide free and confidential child care selection services. They provide customized lists of licensed child care providers in your area. You can save time by with their access to a state-wide data base with child care provider profiles rather than doing all your own research. They have information on the licensing requirements in your area and if any complaints or grievances that have been filed against providers on your customized list.

3) **Visit Potential Providers and Ask Questions**—This is a critical step. You want to make sure your child is in a safe, clean, and healthy environment. Any space that your child will be using needs to be previewed by you. Asking questions while on your tour is important, as well. Here are some good questions to start with:

- How many children are cared for and how are they supervised?
- What is a typical day like?
- Do all the staff members have completed background checks?
- What age-appropriate activities do you do?

- How often is your facility inspected?
- Are meals and snacks provided and, if so, can I see a copy of your menus?
- What training and experience have you and your staff had in caring for children?

Don't hesitate to take notes as they respond so that you can refer back to them if needed. For those child care centers you are seriously considering, make a follow-up visit to clarify any questions you may have.

4) **Make Your Choice**—In addition to the facts you gathered during your visit(s), consider the tone and ambience of the child care facility—i.e. the mood or feeling of the environment. Choose the one that best meets your needs, has the best reputation, and one that you feel your children will enjoy.

5) **Remain Active and Engaged**—Your work isn't over once you select the child care provider. In fact, it should be just another beginning. Being involved with your children even while at child care is important. Make arrangements to join them for snack once a month. Volunteer your time or skills, if needed. Ask for regular consultation meetings with the child care provider. This will help you know what activities may be coming up or simply the progress of your child. Be there for your child's birthday party or other planned celebrations. You are in partnership with the child care provider so invest time to make that partnership work!

According to Shopatron's Retailer eCommerce Study, 86% of shoppers use their smartphones when out shopping. Although over half of them are looking to compare prices, they also use some of the extra features on the apps, like product reviews.

Smartphones are influencing our behaviors and habits more and more every day. Why not use this influence to save time and save money? A recent PCMagazine online article shared a top 10 list of shopping apps made for electronic devices. Here is a snapshot of their list:

RedLaser—is available for iOS, Android, and Windows Phone. It will scan a QR code (like the one at the right) and share all the information you might want to know about the product including where to get the item for the best price in your zip code area.



ShopSavvy—is also available for iOS, Android, and Windows Phone. When you tell the app what you are looking for, it will search out the retail or online outlet where you can purchase it at the best price. For example, with this app you can scan the bar code of a name brand coffee maker and within seconds it will tell you where you can buy it at the lowest price.

BuyVia—is available for iOS and Android. Not only does it tell you where the hot deals are, it will provide product reviews on such items as electronics and technology. It will share the source as well as the percentage you can save in buying it there.

Source: <http://www.pcmag.com/slideshow/story/290959/the-10-best-shopping-apps-to-compare-prices/3>

Another way to save money is with online coupon websites. Some of these are free while others charge a small fee for their service. Accessing these coupons is a multi-step process, but don't be discouraged. The websites typically provide a step-by-step set of directions to help you. You can then scroll through the coupons and click on the ones that you want. When you have accumulated all your coupons, you can simply print them off and cut them apart to use during check out. You will need to download a free driver for your printer to use for printing the coupons.

Here are two websites to get you started:

CoolSavings: <http://www.coolsavings.com/coupons>
This site allows you to enter the city and state you want to find deals in. The coupon section is set up in categories so that you don't have to wade through ALL the coupons to find what you are looking for. There are other cost-saving features to this website that can help your household budget!

Pricematcherz: This website is a tool you can use for both printing coupons as well as learning price matching practices used by some of the large discount department stores. You can customize your information for the city in your area to match prices between stores. It also has an excellent Tips and Tricks section on using price matching to help you save on your household expenses. The coupon section is extensive and easy to use. In just 5 minutes I clipped coupons totaling over \$15!

Using technology to save money is a big industry, and it is growing every day. Get online and \$ave!

Healthy Habits

Skip the Guilt

At least once a month, I receive a nutrition tip sheet from Nutrition Matters. This month's information seemed particularly important in light of the types of resolutions people often make regarding their health and eating habits.

It is important for your health and wellness that you don't feel guilty when eating! Eating is one of life's great pleasures—one that many of us take for granted. However, we do need to be mindful about what we are eating.



Don't eat out of a box or package. For example, put your pretzels in a small bowl to eat from rather than the large bag they came in. Pouring out food into a dish before eating will help you to be mindful of how much you have munched on.

Enjoy TV without food. It's so easy to overeat while watching television. This impacts old and young alike. Researchers, Lori Francis and Leann Birch from Penn State have found that TV interferes with the natural cue the body shares in regards to feeling full and satisfied. Avoid developing this habit in your children and try to break this habit if you have it.

Keep unhealthy foods out of sight. It will give you time to think... "Am I really hungry?" "Do I really want to eat this?" Often times, we leave our unhealthy snacks out in the open for easy access while some of our healthier snack choices are in the pantry or refrigerator. Leave your bag of dried fruit on the counter and stash the chips in a less-accessible location. A bowl of fruit on the table is always a great approach!

When eating at a restaurant..., order a smaller amount or decide how much you will eat before starting a meal. Cut your portion in half and ask for the leftover container at the beginning of the meal rather than after you have eaten. This way you can extend the food for two meals and save money, too! Order your salad dressing on the side so that you can control how much you are consuming. Even "fat free" salad dressings are typically very high in sugars, so they still need to be limited.

Source: Nutrition Matters No. 221: www.numatters.com

Connecting with Kids

I am working with several agencies who work with families to provide parenting classes. The classes are designed for parents who want to polish their skills, learn more about the development of their children, understand their children better and learn how to advocate for their children in the midst of guiding their behavior. They are also for parents in crisis. Parenting today has many challenges—stresses of work, financial challenges, relationship issues, career ladders, stress on our kids, mixed families due to divorce, separation, and remarriage. The list of challenges facing parents today grows more and more every day.

We often feel like we are losing connection with those we hold dearest, our partners and our children. Every parent can sense if they are close to their son and/or daughter. In modern day terms, this is called **attunement**. "Attunement means that you are attempting to respond to your child's emotional needs, resulting in the child's sense of being understood and valued."

It is important to be intentional about staying attuned with your children to promote their emotional health as well as help them develop secure relation-

ships with those they love. Here are five simple (but not necessarily easy) concepts that you can use to build a stronger relationship with your children:

- 1) Foster uniqueness: Your children can be just as much different as they are alike. Each child requires their own unique relationship with each parent.
- 2) Be careful with rigidity when it comes to enforcing household rules. Too many rules can undermine the positive relationships that form from being trusting that children will do the right thing.
- 3) Create and provide family rituals. These help foster togetherness. Rituals can be simple things like eating together at the dinner table or special outings with individual children
- 4) Help them develop their legacy. Help them remember their extended family, the family history, and your own childhood experiences.
- 5) Be a role model to show effective relationships skills. Use appropriate communication to express care and concern. Show appreciation and model forgiveness.

Source: 10 Tips to Connect with Your Child: This Emotional Life: www.pbs.org; Janie Lacy

Upcoming Geary County Extension Programs

****Requires pre-registration. Call 238-4161 to pre-register****

January

6— MPI Parenting Class**—Devin Educational Resource Center, 123 Eisenhower is 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 consecutive sessions held from 6-8 p.m. held 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 through February 10.

February

3— 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.

5— Knowledge at Noon**—”Sharing Your Legacy”, Valley View Estates, 1440 Pearl Drive, Junction City, KS. Program is free to the public. Please call the Extension Office by February 6 to reserve your seat.

7— Geary County 4-H Club Days— First Presbyterian Church in Junction City. Entries due January 26 by 5:00 p.m. Activities begin at 8 a.m. on Saturday, February 7. Call the Geary County Extension office for more information.

10— Communities for Kids**— This public meeting hosted by KDHE in order to discuss with families, consumers, community partners, and providers, school professionals, and anyone interested in the health needs of Kansas children, adolescents and families. The meeting will be held at the 4-H/Senior Citizens Bldg., 1025 S. Spring Valley Road. RSVP at www.surveymonkey.com/s/JunctionCity_Feb10. More information can be found at ksresourceguide@kdheks.gov

16— President’s Day—Geary County K-State Research and Extension Office is closed.

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

www.facebook.com/gearycountyextension

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

