

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!



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:

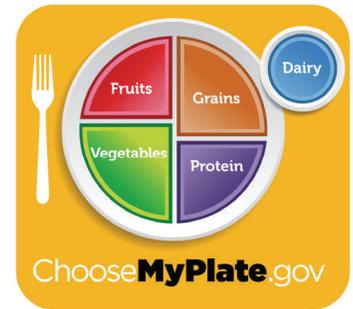
- 1) Increase physical activity
- 2) Increase daily fruit and vegetable consumption

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

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