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Geary County

K-State Research and Extension News

*Knowledge
for Life*

Ask the Agent

Q: Can I reuse the metal flats used on my canning jars.

A: You most certainly CANNOT use them again for canning. They are not sure to seal properly and will not hold a seal, either. In fact, when I hear of someone who thinks this is an acceptable practice, I not only cringe, but am quick to explain that they are putting themselves and anyone who eats the contents from one of the jars that used old flats at risk of deadly infections. Did you catch that? People can DIE from this practice.

Now—Admittedly, I reuse these flats at home. My primary use is for storage. Once I open the jar, I use what I need, replace the flat, screw down the ring, and put it in the refrigerator. I can salsa, among other things, and we won't use an entire jar at one meal, so I store the leftovers in their jar with the flat and ring to cover the opening.

Another way I have used these flat is for making Christmas ornaments or various other craft-type projects. I never reuse them in the canning process.

For more information call the Geary County K-State Research & Extension office at: 785-238-4161

Retirement Age vs. Medicare Benefits Age August 2017

It's hard to believe that Open Enrollment for Medicare Prescription plans is just around the corner. Perhaps October 15th seems like a far off date, but on my calendar, I am already determining which days each week I will set aside for the SHICK counseling I do each open enrollment season.



I recently visited with a client that will turn 65 at the end of September. She asked about what she needs to do to get her Medicare benefits started. The first step is to contact the local Social Security office to tell them what benefits you want and/or need. When you turn 65, you can sign up for the hospital care side of Medicare—Part A. Even if you are still employed and have health insurance through your employer, this step is typically a good move. If you are no longer going to be covered by an employer health insurance, you will need to sign up for the medical care side of Medicare—Part B. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of signing up for a prescription plan at the same time. If you don't do it when you first qualify for a Medicare prescription plan—called Part D, you will be charged a monthly penalty when you decide to enroll at a later age. That penalty gets bigger the longer you are not enrolled in a prescription plan and will stay with you each month you are on a Medicare prescription plan until you drop enrollment or die. Taking out a supplemental Medicare insurance policy is another important decision. Without going into great detail and generally speaking, original Medicare is an 80/20 plan that is intended to give you very basic insurance coverage, but most certainly will NOT pay for everything you need to take care of your medical needs. Medicare was never intended to pay 100% of medical bills. It simply forms the foundation for your protection against heavy medical expenses. The supplemental Medicare policies, also called Medigap, help fill some, if not all, the gaps left by the original Medicare bill.

Age 65 still serves as the Medicare Benefits eligibility age, but collecting your Social Security benefits is no longer that same age. It depends on when you were born. If you were born from 1943-1954 you must be 66 or after 1960 you will need to be 67 to get full Social Security benefits without a reduction, unless unusual circumstances warrant earlier benefit qualification. Check out the chart on the Social Security website to find out when you qualify: <https://www.ssa.gov/planners/retire/agereduction.html>

Save the Date — October 7 Freezer Meal Class

Look for more information in the September Newsletter!

Morris, Riley, Pottawatomie, Wabaunsee, and Geary County FCS agents are offering this multi-county program for people who want to save time and money. Preparing a month of meals in a single day seems like a daunting task, but it can be done. This class will teach individuals the basics of this method of preparing meals, providing them with the tools they need to provide healthy, home-cooked meals for their families. Once people learn this method of cooking, they will begin to see the many benefits it can provide. This regional program is being offered in Council Grove on Saturday, October 7. Registration cost and detailed information will be in next month's newsletter. Hope you can join us!



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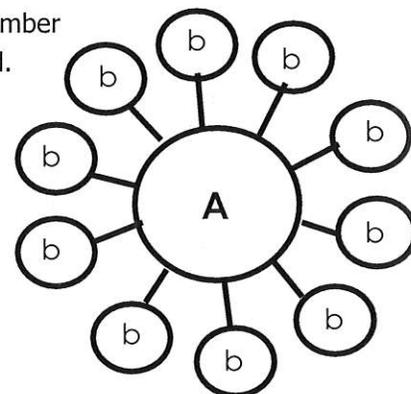
What Is Family, Exactly? *Family* is a term that has had an evolving definition over the generations. Families today come in many different shapes, forms, and sizes. What do the people in your household consider their family to include? Here is a great rainy-day activity you can do at home to help you better understand what each of your family members considers to be their family.

Using the diagram below as a reference, ask each member of your family to draw a similar diagram on a blank piece of paper and follow these steps:

- ◆ Each person writes their own name in the center circle of the diagram they drew. (**A**)
- ◆ In the smaller circles connected to the larger one, have members write down people they consider to be in their family (**b**). They may be people who are members of their immediate family or perhaps extended family members, as well. They may include people that they are not related to but with whom they feel a special connection. There are no “wrong answers” so be careful not to make corrections to what you perceive their diagrams should look like.
- ◆ Under each person’s name listed on their personal diagram, ask your family member identify one thing they appreciate about their relationship with the person listed.

Use these questions to talk about what each person’s family wheel looks like:

- ? What kind of people did you include in your family wheel?
- ? How are you related to these people?
- ? How did you decide who to put on your family wheel?
- ? Does everyone’s family wheel look the same? Why or Why not?



Now that you have done this activity with your family, think about how each of the people they listed on their wheel contribute to the family unit as a whole and how they support the individual’s life. Activities such as this can help you know where the strengths of your family lie and who contributes to the strength of your family. It may also uncover some areas that you need to be more intentional with in order to make your family stronger than it currently is. *Source: Together We Can: Creating a Healthy Future for our Family, Michigan State University Extension*

Simple Steps Can Reduce Financial Stress

Family Resource Management

Whether retirement is far off in the future, just around the corner, or just a routine part of your life right now, being in control of your financial matters is critical. All of us struggle at various points in our life with handling this limited resource – money. Here is a quick and easy tool to use to help with the daily task of managing your money.

Organize: Sort through and put in order your important papers. Often times, this is a daily task as bills come through the mail. Taking 5 minutes each day to make sure your papers are sorted will help reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed when it comes time to pay your bills. Use a calendar to write down when bills are due or appointments have been set. Get rid of papers you don’t need – they only add to the clutter and can cause future frustration and confusion.

Track: Know how you spend, owe, and earn. You may need to start by keeping a spending journal. This is separate from a check register because we often spend cash from our wallet or fail to record our debit card transactions as we move through the day. Accounting for every penny spent is a way to see if there is one or more areas where you are financially “bleeding” your money away.

Pay Your Bills: Make payments in a timely manner and work with your creditors if you are unable to pay your bills.

Note: If you have outstanding debt that is in danger of being sent to a collection agency, make sure you record the name and address of the company you owe, your account number with the company, their phone number, the amount past due, the customer account service phone number and keep a record of the names of the people as well as the date you talked to them. These conversations are tough to have but you need to be assertive without being confrontational or defensive. You will need to ask them to work with you on getting the bill paid. An important thing you want to consider is to have these conversations as early as possible. The more you delay contact with the company, the more likely they will be to push toward resolving the outstanding debt by using a collection agency.

The Numbers Speak For Themselves

I have been teaching an Extension series at the 4-H/Senior Citizens facility for the past 7 months. The series, called Embracing Aging, is a 12 session program designed to help combat the negative and reinforce the positive aspects and images of aging. In August, I taught about what your health numbers say about you and your health status. The numbers really do speak for themselves. There are six health numbers emphasized in the program: cholesterol, triglycerides, blood pressure, body mass index, and waist circumference. Here is a brief snapshot about each of the first two of these health-related numbers:

Cholesterol: Cholesterol is needed in our body to build and maintain healthy cells and essential hormones. Although cholesterol is needed in our bodies, it IS NOT needed in excess. Our body produces cholesterol and we add to the body's cholesterol through the food we eat. The maximum recommended amount of blood cholesterol is 200 mg/dl (milligrams per deciliter) regardless of gender. There are two types of cholesterol: 1) LDL (low-density lipoprotein and 2) HDL (high-density lipoprotein.) LDL has been tagged as the "bad" cholesterol while HDL has been tagged as "good" cholesterol. When our body carries too much LDL through the blood, this cholesterol creates a plaque that clogs arteries and leads to heart disease and strokes. Although there are no symptoms of high cholesterol, you can get checked through a simple blood test – meaning you don't eat for 9 – 12 hours before the blood is drawn.

Triglycerides: The American Heart Association recommends that triglyceride levels in the blood should not exceed 150 ml/dl. Like cholesterol, triglycerides are a form of fat that circulates in our bloodstream. These fats are needed in the body to provide energy tissues needed to function properly. Also like cholesterol, high levels of triglycerides in the bloodstream are linked to a significant risk of heart disease. Keeping your cholesterol in check will help you also keep your triglyceride count down.

Steps you can take to manage your cholesterol and triglyceride levels.

Maintain a healthy body weight.

Eat fruits and vegetables and increase consumption of soluble fiber.

Exercise regularly.

Check out this heart healthy recipe offered by the American Heart Association:

Balsamic Steak Skewers with Mixed Vegetables and Grilled Sweet Potatoes

Ingredients:

12, (12") skewers	2 Tbsp. canola oil
¾ lb. beef sirloin (trimmed, cut into 1" pieces)	1 Tbsp. water
5 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar	1 tsp. mustard
1 tsp. dried rosemary	1 pint grape tomatoes
1 tsp. minced garlic	1 (10 oz.) container white mushrooms -whole, ends trimmed, halved
½ tsp. salt (divided)	1 bell pepper (seeded and cut into 1" pieces)
½ tsp. pepper (divided)	1 medium zucchini (sliced into 1-inch rounds)
½ c. packed basil leaves	

Grilled Sweet Potatoes

1 lb. sweet potatoes, cut into ¼" rounds	2 tsp. sodium-free chile powder
1 Tbsp. canola oil	1/8 tsp. ground black pepper
1 Tbsp. sweet paprika	

Directions:

If using bamboo skewers, soak in water for 20-30 minutes. Trim and discard fat from the sirloin. Cut the lean sirloin into 1-inch pieces and add into a large Ziploc bag, along with 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, rosemary, garlic, ¼ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper. Let marinate for 30 minutes while preparing remaining ingredients. Prepare the grill for medium-high heat. Coat the grates with nonstick cooking spray. Make a vinaigrette: in the bowl of a food processor, add remaining 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar, ¼ teaspoon salt, ¼ teaspoon pepper, basil, oil, water, and mustard. Process until smooth, about 30 seconds to 1 minute. Transfer to a small bowl and reserve. To make the vegetable skewers, thread the vegetables in an order like, for example, tomato, mushroom half, bell pepper piece, and zucchini (threaded horizontally through the zucchini round). Repeat, dividing the ingredients evenly between 8 skewers. Thread the steak pieces onto the remaining 4 skewers, dividing evenly between the skewers. To cook, prepare the grill to medium-high heat. Coat the grates with nonstick cooking spray. Add all the skewers to the grill. Cook, turning occasionally, until meat is desired temperature and vegetables are softened, 8 to 12 minutes. Transfer to a platter, cover with foil, and reserve. To serve, drizzle the reserved vinaigrette over the vegetable skewers. **For the sweet potatoes:** Prepare the grill for medium-high heat. Coat the grates with nonstick cooking spray. Cut the sweet potatoes into ¼-inch rounds. Add to a bowl along with oil, paprika, chile powder, and pepper. Mix to combine. Spread out the sweet potato rounds onto the grill. Cover the grill and cook until sweet potatoes are tender, turning once, about 10 to 12 minutes depending on thickness. Serve sweet potatoes with skewers.





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Upcoming Geary County Extension Programs

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

September

- 12** Knowledge at Noon— Keys to Embracing Aging: Session 9 - Stress Management, Expanding to a second location at the 4-H/Senior Citizen's Building 1025 S. Spring Valley Road, Junction City, this program is part of a series of 12 lessons about how to approach retirement with positive optimism. For a nominal cost, feel free to stay for the senior meal. Meal reservations can be made by calling the Senior Citizen's office at 785-238-5545.
- 21** Health Pathways for Kansas BCBS Community Kickoff Party from 3:30—6:30 —hosted at the Geary Community Hospital Farmers Market at 1102 St. Mary's Road, Junction City. Join us for fresh fruits and vegetables and a basketful of free family fun and kids games. Sponsored by the community partners of Live Well Geary County.



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