



Barb's Home Notes & Quotes

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March/April 2011

Dear Homemaker,

Can you believe it's March? Spring is right around the corner! Get busy finishing those winter projects. It'll soon be time to work outdoors.

This newsletter has lots of information to get ready for spring. Topics include spring foods, cleaning, and spring activities.

You may be aware that state and county government departments are awaiting the presentation of Governor Kasich's state budget for Ohio around March 15. Most departments are expecting cuts of 10-20% or more, which will bring many changes to Ohio residents. Ohio State University Extension is a part of this. Watch for probable changes in how Extension operates in the future. Our state administration is looking at many options for making our information easily accessible to all residents and to keep continuity in programming.

Do enjoy the warmer weather that will be here soon. May your family enjoy a blessed Easter season! Happy Spring!

Barbara A. Brahm
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 Hancock County, Maumee Valley EERA



To You!

This morning I was toasted by a two year old who raised her orange juice glass to mine and said: "To You!"

She brought the morning: she moved the mountain:

She brought flowers out of barren land and sunlight from darkness.

What a way to start the day – affirmed and celebrated.

Remember to celebrate those across the breakfast table.

When did you last tell them they are precious?

You told them to take out the trash, to make their beds,

But did you tell them they are cherished?

You told them they were wrong: you told them to hurry up:

But did you tell them they are beautiful?

We celebrate events or days or heroes, but take for granted the joy of the familiar.

Excerpted from Reaching for Rainbows by Ann Weems

Step Up to Spring Cleaning

Strategies for Cleaning Success

Did you ever think about how the spring-cleaning ritual developed? Before the advent of electricity and a host of other modern conveniences, homes were heated with coal, oil and/or wood, and lit by gas or candlelight. Soot and grime were the natural companions of winter. Once spring arrived, the doors were thrown open, and everything – rugs, furniture, cupboards, curtains and more – was aired out, cleaned out, swept out and scrubbed out.



Although today's centrally heated homes don't collect that intensity of dirt, somehow the winter "dingies" seem to creep inside. And this year, with challenging weather conditions keeping us indoors all too long, our instincts are to make everything look fresh and bright come that first whiff of spring. Nancy Bock, Vice President of Consumer Education at the American Cleaning Institute® has some recommendations to get you started.

Strategy #1: Clear It Out

Start by getting rid of the things that are needlessly filling up your home.

- Recycle it. Even with the availability of reading online, some people still prefer the paper versions. Gather up any newspapers and those magazines no one has ever quite gotten around to reading. If your community also recycles mixed papers, check the regulations and then start a bin where you can toss those papers as you clean.
- Sell it. Garage sales, tag sales or consignment shops are a great way to get rid of items that are in excellent condition but that you no longer need. Collect them in one spot, and then, once spring cleaning is done, decide how to dispose of them.
- Donate it. Items that are in good condition but no longer fit your lifestyle can be donated to a charity or "freecycled" away. Freecycle is a grassroots, web-based, nonprofit movement of people who are giving and getting stuff for free in their own towns. Each local group is moderated by a volunteer, and membership is free. Visit www.freecycle.org for more information.
- Consumer convenience: Smaller, lighter containers are easier to carry and store at home.

Strategy #2: Inventory Your Supplies

Before you start cleaning, make sure you have all the necessary supplies on hand.

The basics should include an all-purpose spray cleaner (for small, washable areas), an all-purpose powder or liquid cleaner (for large washable surfaces like floors and walls), an abrasive cleanser (to remove heavy amounts of soil in small areas), a nonabrasive cleanser (for gentle cleaning on easily scratched surfaces, including porcelain sinks and ceramic tile), chlorine bleach (an effective disinfectant, particularly where mold and mildew are present), glass cleaner, furniture-dusting product (such as a spray and a clean cloth, or a microfiber cloth, mitt or duster) and toilet bowl cleaner.

You may also need to add cleaners specific to your surfaces, such as metal polishes and granite cleaners, or your personal preferences, such as wipes and special-purpose sprays. And don't forget to check your supply of vacuum cleaner bags and trash bags.

Strategy #3: Make a Plan

- Decide on your cleaning style. Some people find it more effective to clean one room at a time. Others prefer to group tasks – such as cleaning windows in several rooms at once or leaving all the vacuuming until the end.
- Prioritize. If one room at a time is your style, decide on the order. Generally, it's best to do the rooms that need the most work or get the most traffic first. That way, if your cleaning plans get derailed, you can still be proud of what you've accomplished.
- Consider the big stuff. Do the curtains need to be laundered? What about comforters, blankets, bed skirts, slipcovers and shower curtains? Are your area rugs and draperies due for professional cleaning? Once these items are removed from the room and on their way to getting cleaned, it will be easier to tackle the rest of the space.

Strategy #4: Recruit Help

It's not necessary to do everything yourself



- Enlist family members. Establish a "Spring Cleaning Day". Start early. Assign tasks according to age and ability. Have lunch preplanned – maybe even delivered – so your helpers don't lose momentum. And make it fun. Hide some favorite treats in places that need to be cleaned. Play lively music that keeps everyone's energy up.
- Pair up with a friend. If you live alone or family members can't help, find a like-minded friend and clean together – your house in the morning, his/hers in the afternoon. If needed, schedule a second day.
- Call in the professionals. If your budget allows, you don't have to do every bit of cleaning yourself. Someone else can come in and wash the windows ... or buff the floors ... or shampoo the carpets ... or clean the upholstery ... or even do the majority of the cleaning after you've removed the clutter.

Source: Cleaning Matters March/April 2011. Retrieved Feb. 22, 2011 from http://www.cleaninginstitute.org/clean_living/cleaning_matters_current_issue.aspx

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Putting Poisons in Their Place

Tips to Minimize Poison Emergencies in Your Home

National Poison Prevention Week, March 20-26, was created to build public awareness of the dangers posed by common toxins.

According to the 2008 Annual Report of the American Association of Poison Control Centers' National Poison Data System, approximately 2.5 million people were exposed to poisons. Children younger than 6 years accounted for half of all human exposures and ingestion was the route of exposure in nearly 80% of all cases. Many of the poisoning substances are found in the home, making diligence on the homefront an important line of defense against accidental poisonings.

Here are some ways to safeguard family members and pets from accidental poisoning:

Install Child-Safety Locks on cabinets that contain house cleaning supplies, medicines, cosmetics, chemicals and other poisons. Never assume a cabinet is too high for a curious, climbing toddler.

Read and Follow the Product-Label Directions.

Pay particular attention to products whose labels include the words "Caution," "Warning," "Danger" or "Poison."

Discard Medications that are no longer needed or that have outlived their expiration date. Do not flush them down the sink or toilet. Doing so can contaminate our water supplies. One option is to take pills out of their containers and discard them in the trash. However, this still creates a potential environmental problem and can be a potential danger to curious children and pets. A better option is to participate in local programs that collect old and unwanted medications. To find a program in your area, or contact your state or local waste management authority visit the Take-Back Network website at <http://www.takebacknetwork.com>

Keep All Household Products in Their Original Packages. Packaging includes useful first-aid information in the event of accidental exposure or ingestion. If you purchase these products in bulk quantities, buy a smaller size of the same product and refill this container, as needed.

Discard Empty Cleaning Supply Containers, Including Detergent Containers. Do not use them for storage of any other materials, particularly those intended for human consumption.

Thoroughly Wash any utensils used in dispensing or measuring medicines.

Wash Your Hands after cleaning-product usage.

Use Child-Resistant Packing Properly by Closing the Container Securely after each use. Remember, however, that this type of packaging is "child-resistant" not "child-proof." It is not a substitute for keeping products securely out of reach of young children. Be aware that poisons can be inhaled, as well as ingested.

Don't Mix Household Cleaning Products.

This could release harmful vapors or cause other chemical reactions that can have dangerous results.

Install Carbon Monoxide Detectors in your home.

The best places for a CO detector are near bedrooms and close to furnaces. Since carbon monoxide is a deadly, but odorless, substance, working CO detectors should be essential equipment in your home.

Post the Poison Control Center Phone Number

(1-800-222-1222) by every phone in your home and enter it into your cell phone's contact list.

Source: Cleaning Matters March/April 2011. Retrieved Feb. 22, 2011 from http://www.cleaninginstitute.org/clean_living/cleaning_matters_current_issue.aspx

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Get the Jump on Spring Stains

As the weather warms, activities move outdoors. There are garages to clean, fences to paint, gardens to weed, and sports to be rediscovered. A whole new group of stains seem to appear! When these stains come out of hibernation, here is how to send them packing.

Bicycle grease: Pretreat using a prewash stain remover, then launder using the hottest water that is safe for the fabric. If the stain remains, apply a concentrated heavy-duty cleaner directly on the grease spot. Scrub gently, using a small brush or old toothbrush, and then launder again.

Grass: Pretreat using a prewash stain remover. Launder, using the hottest water safe for that given fabric. If the stain remains, launder again with detergent, and chlorine bleach (if safe for the fabric) or oxygen bleach.

Mud: Let the mud dry, then brush off any excess. Pretreat using a prewash stain remover. Launder, using the hottest water safe for the fabric. If the stain remains, launder again with detergent, and chlorine bleach (if safe for the fabric) or oxygen bleach.

Perspiration: Check to see if the stain has changed the color of the fabric. If so, apply ammonia to fresh stains and white vinegar to old ones. Then, treat with a prewash stain remover and rub the stain with a bar of soap. Launder using the hottest water possible that is safe for the fabric. If the stain remains, launder again with detergent and oxygen bleach.

Rust: Use a commercial rust remover; available in most supermarkets & hardware stores. These products contain toxic acids, so be sure to read and follow the label directions carefully. Never use a product containing bleach on a rust stain, as it will permanently set the stain.

Excerpted from "Get the Jump on Spring Stains" in Cleaning Matters March/April 2010.



Need a Taste Lift

- Grill or roast your veggies in a very hot oven or grill for a sweet, smoky flavor. Brush or spray them lightly with oil so they don't dry out. Sprinkle with herbs.
- Caramelize sliced onions to bring out their natural sugar flavor. Just cook them slowly over low heat in a small amount of oil. Use them to make a rich, dark sauce for meat or poultry.
- Spark up sauces, soups, and salads with a splash of flavored, balsamic, or rice vinegar.
- Add a tangy taste with citrus juice or grated citrus peel: lemon, lime, or orange. Acidic ingredients help balance flavor.
- Pep it up with peppers! Use red, green, and yellow peppers of all varieties – sweet, hot, and dried. Or add a dash of hot pepper sauce.
- Give a flavor burst with good quality condiments such as horseradish, flavored mustard, chutney, wasabi, and salsas of all kinds!
- Simmer to make reduction sauces. Concentrate the flavors of meat, poultry, and fish stocks. Reduce the juices by heating them – don't boil! Then use them as a flavorful glaze or gravy.

Source: American Dietetic Association Complete Food and Nutrition Guide

Encourage Your Kids in Spring Sports

Every year there are too many instances when spectators become out of control when children are involved in sports. The beginning of the spring sports season is a good time to stop and remember what is important about these activities.

Young athletes face pressure to win from their parents, coaches, and peers. In reality, it is not possible for everyone to win every event. Young people need to be taught the skills to cope with losing. According to research, when adults are positive there is a higher level of enjoyment by youth.

Here are some ways to keep kids interested in sports or other programs:

Encourage them. Keeping children active keeps them healthy and helps them develop healthy habits to last a lifetime.

Be a good role model. Children learn by example. Show them how to practice good sportsmanship, such as shaking the hands of their opponents.

Keep it fun! Asking “Did you have fun?” versus “Did you win?” says a lot to a young person. Get their input about what sport to sign up for. Don't force them to play the sport you lettered in or the sport you always wanted to play.

Teach personal responsibility. Young people can take personal responsibility for their actions if it's modeled and expected. If a child made a bad play, so what? Don't point fingers or pass blame.

Get involved. Sports teams need adult volunteers as well as encouraging parents. Adults are essential for getting young people involved in programs outside of school hours. According to research, significant adult support can have a positive impact on the youth staying involved in the sport or other activity.

Youth sports provide a wonderful way for children to have fun, develop skills and establish a healthy lifestyle. However, if the experience is to be the best it can be for all participants, it is necessary for adults to learn what young people want, and what is appropriate for them.

Source: Brian McNeill, University of Minnesota Extension

Handling Easter Eggs Safely



Dyeing and hunting eggs can be an entertaining activity, but don't let the holiday excitement take precedence over handling food safely. According to Dr. Melissa Mixon, Extension Human Nutrition Specialist at Mississippi State University, eating eggs is not safe unless they have been handled with the best possible care.

Here are some helpful tips for you to take into consideration:

- Select eggs with a good expiration date, and from a refrigerated display case at the grocery store. Inspect them to make sure they are clean and not cracked.
- Bring a cooler to place eggs and other perishable items in if the trip home from the store will take longer than 30 minutes, or if the temperature outside is hot. Refrigerate eggs as soon as possible after arriving home.
- Cook eggs using a slow boiling method to help prevent the eggs from cracking during the cooking process.
- Eggs that are intended to be eaten should not stay unrefrigerated for more than a total of two hours. Eat hard-cooked eggs within one week after cooking, whether they have been in the shell or peeled.
- Two hours is not a long time to dye, hide and hunt eggs. To avoid the risk of food-borne illness, such as salmonella, keep eggs in a refrigerator.
- Hide eggs away from bacteria sources if you are planning to use them later.
- Hide eggs in places away from dirt and pets, and don't forget to refrigerate them as soon as they are found.
- If you ever have any doubt about the length of time an egg – peeled or not – has been unrefrigerated, or the overall safety of an egg, do not eat it.

Handling Easter Eggs Safely continued . . .

- ⦿ A good alternative to hunting hard-cooked eggs that are intended to be eaten later is hiding plastic eggs instead.
- ⦿ Plastic eggs are fun for children to find because you can put candy or money inside them.
- ⦿ A lot of people like to blow out eggs and dye the shells, but this is not a good idea. The person who blows out the egg runs the risk of getting a food-borne illness when their mouth comes in contact with the raw egg. The USDA also recommends against using eggs from blown out shells because they are likely to be contaminated with germs.
- ⦿ Avoid using egg shells as gelatin molds. There is no way to sterilize the inside. Gelatin is not safe when it has been exposed to the bacteria inside the eggshell. Use a plastic egg mold instead.

It is probably best to dye eggs you don't plan to eat because they are likely to stay at room temperature too long and possibly become contaminated with bacteria.

Excerpted from "Handle Easter Eggs Safely for Happy Holidays" Mississippi State University Cares - Family, Youth and Consumer News 1997. by Allison Powe, <http://msucare.com/news/print/fcenews/fce97/970317mm.htm>

Talk About Money Matters

Here is the last set of statements for discussion. For each pair of statements, choose the one you feel is more important. Then take time to discuss your values with your "co-spender".

For each pair of statements, choose the one you feel is more important.

Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

<input type="checkbox"/> Place child in day care so each spouse can have a paid job. <input type="checkbox"/> Keep children at home and one parent without a paid job.
<input type="checkbox"/> Borrowing money from family so you won't pay interest <input type="checkbox"/> Borrowing money from a bank because you do not want your family to think you are in trouble.
<input type="checkbox"/> Discussing any purchases over \$50 before they are made. <input type="checkbox"/> Assuming you know if your partner would approve.
<input type="checkbox"/> Use the higher wage earner's income for family needs, & the lower wage earner keeps the money earned for spending. <input type="checkbox"/> Combining both incomes for the household budget.
<input type="checkbox"/> Putting your money in a high risk, high return investment. <input type="checkbox"/> Putting your money in a low risk, moderate return investment.

Source: Hudson, Nancy. "Getting to Know You, Your Co-spender, & Money" http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/ha_2.html



Better Gelatin Salads

Always use canned or cooked pineapple in gelatin salads. Fresh pineapple and kiwi fruit will prevent the salad from setting.

For easy removal of gelatin salads from the mold, moisten the interior of the mold with cold water, rub vegetable oil inside or coat with nonstick cooking spray before filling.

When unmolding a large gelatin salad, rinse the serving platter with cold water before turning the gelatin out. The moisture will allow the salad to be easily centered on the platter.

If your gelatin mixture sets too fast and you've passed the partially set step, place the bowl of gelatin in a pan of warm water and stir until the gelatin has softened. Chill again until the mixture is the consistency of unbeaten raw egg whites.

Source unknown

Pleasing Picky Eaters

Making healthful foods appeal to picky eaters can be a real challenge. Child development experts suggest the secret may lie in taking into consideration children's special needs and preferences. One of the keys to making vegetables, grains, and other complex carbohydrates fun to eat.

Making healthful food fun food

Be creative.

Cut sandwiches or pancakes with a cookie cutter. Top a green salad with nuts and carrots to make a face. Let kids create their own.

Let kids help with the grocery shopping.

Children take pride in helping, and if they choose the shape of pasta, or pick the finest fish or broccoli, they will be more willing to try it.

Youngsters like bright colors.

Add cherry red apple chunks and bright green peas to a child's plate or salad. Serve on colorful plates and place mats.

Sauce on the side.

Children often prefer foods plain, so serve them without sauce, and try serving foods separately rather than mixed up in a casserole or salad.

Appeal to their taste buds.

Youngsters may find vegetables sprinkled with a small amount of sugar before they're cooked more enjoyable to eat.

Mom, don't worry

Picky eaters' food choices often cause parents to worry that their child isn't getting enough to eat or is not getting the proper nutrients. Recent studies indicate such worries are misplaced. When provided with a variety of healthful food choices and left on their own, children not only ate enough but ate well.

Tips to help

- ❑ Children eat small portions. Cut food into small child-size pieces and serve on a small plate. Children are also less likely to choke on small pieces.
- ❑ Make sure foods are not too hot or too cold. Foods that are warm or just at room temperature are preferred.
- ❑ Encourage children to exercise and stay active. Inactive youngsters may not feel hungry.
- ❑ Offer new foods at the beginning of the meal when the child is most hungry. If the youngster rejects the food, take the food away and offer it again on another day. As children become more familiar with a new food they are more likely to try it.

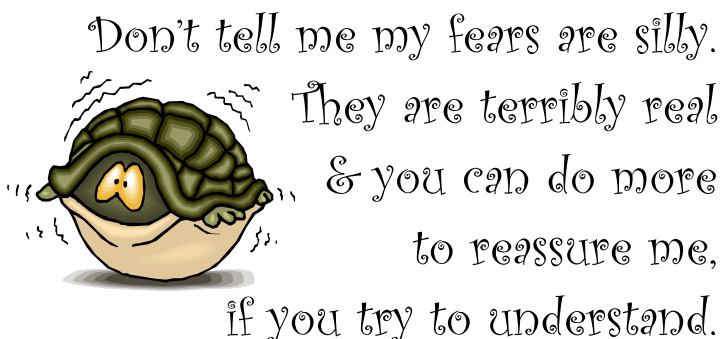
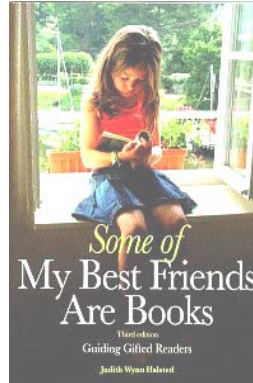
Getting Kids to Eat Their Fruits and Vegetables

- ❑ Offer raw vegetables to children over three. Many children don't like cooked, soft vegetables, but do like crunchy vegetables—especially those they can eat as finger foods. Offer raw broccoli, cauliflower, or spinach.
- ❑ Try some variations on the traditional peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Add shredded carrots, sliced apple, banana, pear, peach, kiwi, nectarine, berries, or celery sticks. Sprinkling lightly with white sugar or brown sugar can add taste satisfaction and help prevent browning of some fruits.
- ❑ In a food processor add fruit or vegetables to cream cheese or ricotta cheese and blend until thoroughly whipped. The mixture makes a great spread for bagels, English muffins, toast, celery or apple slices.
- ❑ Just as fruits and vegetables can be fun, desserts can be healthful, too. Serve youngsters fruit yogurts and sorbets, fruit & grain cookies and muffins, or angel food cake topped with fresh fruit.

Kids pick up good habits from their parents.

Set an example by eating healthful foods yourself, including plenty of vegetables. If you eat and enjoy your vegetables, children will learn they taste good.

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Memo From Your Child**Use Books to Guide Your Child's Development**

Reading to children...reading with children... and helping children select books are important for many different reasons. Two of the reasons that educator Judith Wynn Halsted identifies in the latest edition *Some of My Best Friends are Books* (Great Potential Press) are emotional and intellectual development.

These are significant considerations for those of us who are part of, or work with, families where children read at an advanced level, are intellectually gifted, or are intensely interested in a subject. These children may have needs not being met through school and the usual children's activities. Halsted's comments, however, have value for the parents of all children.

Feelings, values and decision-making can all be discussed in a non-threatening way by adults and children when the focus is characters in a book, she notes.

"Parents tell me that they find books to be wonderful bridges for communicating with their children."

This might be about bullying, loneliness, sexually suggestive behavior or other issues that neither parent or child wants to address directly.

Both professionals and parents must be aware that even bright and avid readers are not always emotionally ready to understand the symbolism or the human relationships, despite being able to read and define the words. Halsted's suggestion: guide children to fiction at their emotional level and to nonfiction at their reading level.

Bibliotherapy, which can be defined as "guidance in the solution of personal problems through directed reading," can be valuable in helping children of all kinds through the developmental tasks that everyone must meet.

For children and teenagers, these tasks are:

- Middle childhood: achieving a sense of initiative
- Late childhood: achieving a sense of industry
- Adolescence: developing a sense of identity

Guided reading can help all children anticipate difficulties and resist peer pressure.

Biography is the form of nonfiction most often used in bibliotherapy. Especially for girls, biographies of women can provide role models and career inspiration. Biographies of men can help boys understand struggles and how to overcome them.

Halsted emphasizes that bibliotherapy, even at the simplest level, is not simply handing a child a book: "A story is not a pill that will cure. To be most effective, the reading must be followed by discussion with a concerned adult who has also read the book."

Use Books to Guide Child's Development continued

The questions that an adult can ask, questions that are designed to move the reader through the stages of the bibliotherapeutic process, include:

- What is the central character's biggest problem?
- What strengths does he/she have that helps him/her cope?
- How has someone you know handled the same situation?
- What effect do the people in the book have on one another?

Halsted recommends 4 types of questions to ask about a story:

1. Factual questions to measure comprehension.
2. Interpretative questions to develop understanding.
3. Divergent questions to extend the topic past the story, such as, "What if something else had happened?"
4. Evaluative questions that challenge the child to make judgments, such as, "What do you think about what happened?"

When you encourage a child to discuss books with you, you provide an opportunity for ideas and opinions to be expressed without risk of criticism. Another way parents can help a child benefit from reading is by encouraging the use of new vocabulary and to avoid meaningless slang expressions. (For example, one book that Halsted recommends for 4-year-olds is Where Does the Trail Lead, by Burton Albert. This will introduce nouns such as "tide pools," "ghost town" and "twilight," as well as the names of plants and artifacts that can be used to describe what the reader will see on his or her own walks.)

Source: <http://www.parentingpress.com/ezine/apr/index.html#1f>

Fun Activities to Do with Your Child

Make a Snack – Peanut Butter Balls

You will need:

- ½ cup peanut butter
- ½ cup honey
- 1 cup non-fat powdered milk
- 1 cup crushed cornflakes

All cooks should begin by washing their hands. Your child can help measure, mix the ingredients, and make the balls.

What you will do:

Have your child help measure and mix the peanut butter, honey, and milk in a large bowl. Mix the ingredients to form a large ball. Put the ball on the table and let the children knead it. If the ball is sticky, add a little more dry milk. Let your child break off pieces to make a lot of smaller balls. Roll the balls in cornflakes until they are covered. Store in a tightly covered container in the refrigerator.

Caution: Do not use honey in uncooked foods for infants under the age of two years. Honey may contain botulism toxins.



Make an Art Box

Collect art materials and put them in a shoe box.

Some things you might put in the art box are: construction paper, paint, pipe cleaners, washable markers, colored pencils, crayons, glue stick, white glue, & children's safety scissors. Pull out the art box on a rainy day or when your child is bored.

Make a Collage Box

Fill a shoe box with some of these items: Ribbons, feathers, old jewelry, pinecones, pebbles, glitter, yarn, & magazines. On a rainy day, or when your child is bored, take out the collage box. Give your child a large piece of paper, glue, children's safety scissors, and the collage box. Let her make a picture from what she found in the box.

Caterpillar to Butterfly

Paint a clothespin green to resemble a caterpillar. When the paint dries, wrap the caterpillar in gauze to make a cocoon, and mount the cocoons on a tree display. When child is not around, unwrap the caterpillars, slip colorful tissue paper in the clothespins, and then rewrap them. Children are delighted when they unwrap the cocoons and find beautiful butterflies!

Source: YWCA Child Care Resource and Referral Calendar; April 2009

"Eggs-traordinary" Suncatcher

For this Easter project, remove the backing from an eight-inch square of clear contact paper. Place the contact paper sticky side up. Then place rectangular pieces of pastel tissue paper all over the covering, allowing the tissue paper to overlap. Remove the backing from a different eight-inch square of contact paper. Place the paper on the project sticky side down. Press the covering firmly to seal the edges. Trace a seven-inch tagboard egg on the project, and then cut out the tracing. Punch a hole in the top of the decorated egg, tie a length of thread through the hole, and then display the egg in the window.

Source: YWCA Child Care Resource and Referral Calendar; April 2009

Curl up with a fun book & read on a rainy spring day

Make Sure Your Money Lasts for a Lifetime

1. Build a good working budget.
2. Pay off debt.
3. Increase your savings.
4. Make good investments.
5. Keep your job, if possible.
6. Maintain health insurance.
7. Plan for your retirement financial needs.
8. Consider working with a financial planner.

Become a Hancock Saver

We just celebrated Hancock Saves Week, February 20 – 27. But it's not too late to become a Hancock Saver. Join the growing number of Hancock County youth and adults who are taking the challenge of saving. Just complete the attached flyer and return it to OSU Extension Hancock County. Feel free to call me at 419-422-3851 if you have questions.

7 Ways to Make the Most of Your Tax Refund

1. Pay past due expenses
2. Reduce credit card debt
3. Create an emergency fund
4. Save for a major appliance
5. Save for a child's education
6. Boost retirement funds
7. Pay down on home mortgages

Healthy Kids, Healthy Weight

By Patti Koester, Family Nutrition Program Assistant

We should all be concerned about the increase in childhood obesity our country. For the first time in our history, we may see children die before parents due to chronic diseases associated with obesity. We can get involved in the community by working with our schools to provide school lunches that not only include foods containing less fat, sugar and sodium, but present healthy choices in ways that will make them attractive to kids. Get on parent committees that organize fun events and provide fun foods that are healthier options than candy, cookies, chips & soft drinks. We can get involved with healthcare professionals by sharing concerns about a child that may be overweight. But most importantly, we can get involved in our homes with our kids.

Here are some simple "at home ways" to help children maintain a healthy weight.

WATCH HOW MUCH

When serving food to your children, dole out one serving.

For instance, pour 1 cup of juice rather than setting the bottle of juice out for children to help themselves. Put one ounce of peanuts in a cup, rather than handing over the whole can. Count out 14 tortilla chips instead of sending junior off with the whole bag. Read what a serving size is on the Nutrition Facts Label.

RETHINK THAT DRINK

Pop, "fruit punch", "De-Light drinks", and the "pouch drinks" are all in the category of "soft drinks" Sugar laden soft drinks are the #1 contributor to excess sugar calories in children's diets. One cup of these drinks often contains 6-8 teaspoons of sugar. A 20-oz. bottle of cola contains 20 teaspoons of sugar! You would never allow a child to sit down and eat 20 teaspoons of sugar! So why allow him to DRINK 20 teaspoons of sugar? Offer thirsty children water beginning at an early age.

SNACK ZONE

Snacks should be planned and eaten in a designated snack spot; Definitely not in front of the TV or computer.

FUEL UP FIRST

Mom was right – breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Studies show that people who eat breakfast weigh less. Try to get nutrient dense foods in the morning rather than those with just a lot of sugar and fat.

MEANINGFUL MEALS

Eating family meals together has lots of benefits, including *parents being good role models* for eating good foods in the right amount.

STAY OFF THE FAST FOOD TRACK

Those trips through the drive-thru really add lots of fat, sugar, and salt to kid's diets.

5-A-DAY

Yes, we keep hearing eat more fruits and vegetables. It is the original fast food. Have fruits and veggies handy for snacks – especially after school.

MOOOOVE IT!

Kids need active play everyday – a minimum of 60 minutes of the kind of activity/play that gets them sweaty, breathing faster, and heart beating faster. This can be bike riding, swimming, dancing, active playground activities (climbing ladders on slides, climbing, pulling, swinging, jumping) or organized sports.

SCRUNCH THE SCREEN TIME

Limit the amount of time kids sit in front of TV, computer, video games etc to LESS THAN 2 HOURS A DAY

DOWN TIME!

Make sure your child is getting the appropriate amount of sleep. There are recent studies that seem to indicate a connection between lack of sleep and weight gain. Make sure the bedroom is quiet – no TV, radio or other noise distraction.

Stand Up at Your Sitting Job

Don't get stuck sitting all day at your job.

Make a few changes to get some exercise in your day.

Here are some ideas:

- † Sit less.
- † Stand while talking on the phone. Bend over to take notes.
- † Raise your workstation if possible.
- † Walk to talk to a person in your office instead of using the phone or e-mail.
- † Take a walk during your break & at lunch.
- † Walk up & down stairs.
- † Park in the farthest place in the parking lot
- † Be creative in adding extra steps to your day

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