



UNIVERSITY OF
FLORIDA

EXTENSION

Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Living Well in Baker County

Dear Extension Friend:

April 2007

April is among us and with it brings spring! In this month's issue of *Living Well*, we'll talk about Finding Balance in Your Child's Life in the *Relationships* section. We'll talk about the Earned Income Tax Credit in *Money Matters*, Exercising More in *Healthy Lifestyles*. Also



in *Food Safety* we'll discuss how you can protect yourself and your family from foodborne illness from eggs this spring. Finally, in *House and Home*, we'll talk about heating and cooling with color. If you have any questions about the information in this newsletter please contact our office or see the UF/IFAS Ex-

tension website at [Solutionsforyourlife.com](http://solutionsforyourlife.com). Also, if you'd like to sign up a friend or neighbor to receive this newsletter you can do so at the Baker County Extension website: <http://baker.ifas.ufl.edu>.



Heather M. Futch
Multi-County FCS Agent
Baker/Bradford Counties

Inside this issue:

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| <i>Relationships</i> | 1 |
| <i>Money Matters</i> | 2 |
| <i>Healthy Lifestyles</i> | 2 |
| <i>Food Safety</i> | 3 |
| <i>House & Home</i> | 4 |

Relationships: Finding Balance in Your Child's Life

Children often feel the push to become involved in as many different activities as possible. And, parents, who tend to have their own wide variety of interests, don't always see or set the limits that their children need. As a parent, it's important to monitor your child for signs of activity "burn out" and to step in when you know your kids are being overloaded. If you've got a "stressed out" kid, here are some simple strategies to help improve the situation.

First, set priorities. Help your children pick activities that are most important to

them, make sure they can handle these, along with other responsibilities, and then help them manage their time wisely.

Second, check on their homework load. Making schoolwork the first priority shows your children how important an education really is. *Third*, be sure to schedule downtime. Time to "rest and relax" is just as important as the activities themselves.

And finally, be a role model. Parents with too many ac-

tivities in their own lives will likely find that "overscheduling" is happening in the lives of their children, too.

Out-of-school activities aren't bad for children. In fact, research shows extracurricular activities

have been linked to higher grades regardless of the type of activity. The important thing for parents to remember is to help their children find a balance in their lives.



Source: Patel and Guerrero, University of Florida

Special points of interest:

- *April is Child Abuse Prevention Month*
- *"Be Money Smart" Classes*

Money Matters: Are You Eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit?

Earned Income Tax Credit – it's not just for families with children

Low-income workers without qualifying children are estimated to make up the largest segment of eligible taxpayers who fail to claim the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

If you were at least age 25 but under age 65 at the end of 2006 and had earned income of less than \$12,120 (or \$14,120 if married filing jointly), you may qualify for up to \$412 in EITC. If you are married and file a joint income tax return, either you or your spouse must meet the age test requirement.

Earned income for EITC includes wages, salaries, tips, and other taxable employee pay and net earnings, if you are self-employed.

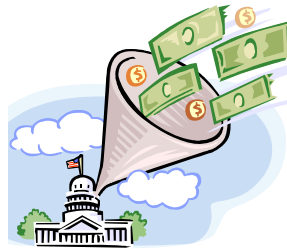
Some types of income that do not qualify as earned income are interest and dividends, pensions and social security, unemployment benefits, alimony and child support. For

more information on income that qualifies, see EITC Questions and Answers.



In short, to qualify for EITC, you must meet the following rules:

1. Must have a valid Social Security Number.
2. Must have earned income from employment or from self-employment.
3. Your filing status cannot be married, filing separately.
4. Must be a U.S. citizen or resident alien all year, or a nonresident alien married to a U.S. citizen or resident alien and filing a joint return.
5. You cannot be a qualifying child of another person.
6. If you do not have a qualifying child, you must: be age 25 but under 65 at the end of the year, live in the United States for more than half the year, and not qualify as a dependent of



7. You cannot file Form 2555 or 2555-EZ (related to foreign earned income).
8. For tax year 2006, investment income must be \$2,800 or less.

If neither you nor your spouse meets the income test, you cannot claim the EITC. You should write "No" next to line 66a (Form 1040), line 40a (Form 1040A), or line 8a (Form 1040EZ) when you prepare your return.

Remember: taxpayers do not have to have children order to qualify for the EITC -- these childless, low-income workers probably comprise the largest segment of eligible taxpayers who fail to claim the credit. Often, the worker without a qualifying child is overlooked in outreach efforts and unaware that there are provisions to claim EITC. However, taxpayers with qualifying children are eligible for a much larger EITC than those without qualifying children.

Source: IRS Stakeholder Partnerships, Education & Communication (SPEC) Office

Healthy Lifestyles: Increasing Your Activity Levels

Being physically active is a key element in living a longer, healthier, happier life. It can help relieve stress and can provide an overall feeling of well-being. Physical activity can also help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight and lower risk for chronic disease. The benefits of physical activity may include:

- Improves self-esteem and feelings of well-being
- Increases fitness level
- Helps build and maintain bones, muscles, and joints
- Builds endurance and muscle strength
- Enhances flexibility and posture
- Helps manage weight
- Lowers risk of heart disease, colon cancer, and type 2 diabetes
- Helps control blood pressure
- Reduces feelings of depression



and anxiety

- Make physical activity a regular part of the day.

Choose activities that you enjoy and can do regularly. Fitting activity into a daily routine can be easy—such as taking a brisk 10 minute walk to and from the parking lot, bus stop, or subway station. Or, join an exercise class. Keep it interesting by trying something different on alternate days. What's important is to be active most days of the week and make it part of daily routine. For example, to reach a 30-minute goal for the day, walk the dog for 10 minutes before and after work, and add a 10 minute walk at lunchtime. Or, swim 3 times a week and take a yoga class on the other days. Make sure to do at least 10 minutes of the activity at a time, shorter bursts of activity will not have the same health benefits. To be ready anytime, keep some comfortable clothes and a pair of walking or running shoes in the car and at the office. For more information visit MyPyramid.gov.

Source: MyPyramid.gov

Food Safety: Eggs-tra Care for Spring Celebrations

It's spring -- the season to enjoy the great outdoors and celebrate special occasions, like Easter, Pass-over, and graduation! While eggs are used all year 'round, they are especially important for many spring and summertime activities. They are used for cooking festive delights and for decorating and hiding just before the big Easter Egg Hunt.



Like all perishable foods, such as meat, poultry, seafood and produce, eggs need to be handled properly to prevent foodborne illness. Occasionally, eggs with clean, uncracked shells can be contaminated with bacteria.

Eating foods containing harmful bacteria can give you a foodborne illness. That's why it's important to cook eggs thoroughly and use a food thermometer to make sure that food containing eggs reaches a safe internal temperature. Here's what YOU can do to have a safe and egg-

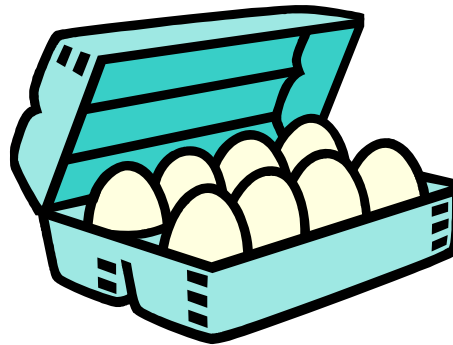
cellent spring and summer!

Clean Up, Clean Up...

- Before you begin preparing holiday dishes, remember that clean hands are key! Always wash hands with warm water and soap *before and after* food preparation, as well as when you're handling raw animal products, such as raw

eggs.

- Beware of cross-contamination. Foodborne illness can occur when kitchen equipment is not thoroughly washed between uses. Always wash surfaces and cooking equipment, including blenders, in hot, soapy water *before and after* food preparation.



Cook and Keep Cool...

- Bacteria can multiply in moist foods, including desserts and

salads containing high-protein foods. Refrigeration slows bacterial growth, so it's important to refrigerate eggs and egg-containing foods. Your refrigerator should be at 40 °F or below. Use a thermometer to monitor.

- Remember the 2-Hour Rule: Don't leave perishables out at room temperature for more than two hours. Bacteria love to grow in protein-rich foods.

- Whether you like your breakfast eggs scrambled or fried, always cook eggs until the yolks and whites are firm.

- Tasting is tempting, but licking a spoon or tasting raw cookie dough from a mixing bowl can be risky. Bacteria could

be lurking in the raw eggs.

- Cook cheese cakes, lasagna, baked pasta and egg dishes to an internal temperature of at least 160 °F. Use a food thermometer to check.

Source: *FightBac.org*

Events for March:



Prevention is the best hope for reducing child abuse and neglect and improving the lives of children and families. Strengthening families and preventing child abuse requires a shared commitment of individuals and organizations in every community. For more information on child abuse, parenting, and child care please contact the extension office. Join together and educate yourself this month in an effort to prevent child abuse.



Be Money Smart Classes

Find yourself struggling to balance your checkbook, have a hard time understanding exactly why your credit score keeps dropping or what even that credit score is?? In conjunction with Northeast Florida Community Action Agency, Baker County Cooperative Extension will be offering Money Smart Classes. For more information about courses contact: Heather Futch @ 259-3520 or Vivian Sykes @ 259-4481.

Class Offerings for April:

| | | |
|------------|---------|--------------------|
| April 16th | 10:00AM | "Borrowing Basics" |
| April 30th | 10:00AM | "Check It Out" |

Classes will be held at
Northeast Florida Community Action Agency

University of Florida
Baker County Extension Service
1025 West Macclenny Avenue
Macclenny, FL 32063

Phone: (904) 259-3520
Fax: (904) 259-9034
Email: hfutch@ufl.edu

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House & Home: Heating and Cooling With Color

Color has a powerful influence on emotions and feelings that can affect the indoor temperature. It can also stretch or shrink rooms, and make undesirable features disappear. Since color has a direct emotional and psychological effect on people, you can decorate your home to create an atmosphere that is cozy or cool, lively or serene, country or contemporary. Look at some of the ways you can make color work for you.

Lighting and Color

Color affects the lighting used in a room. Dark colors absorb light, so rooms with walls, floors and furnishings in dark colors will require more lighting. This not only increases the amount of electricity needed to operate the lights, but also increases the amount of heat given off by incandescent lighting. During warm summer months this extra heat puts a burden on cooling the home.

Light-colored ceilings reflect more light

than dark-colored ceilings, thus making the room brighter. Therefore, less artificial light is needed. A lighter ceiling will also appear higher, so the room will seem larger and more open.



Tips for Using Color

- Your perception of color is influenced by lighting, surrounding colors, the amount of light reflected by various textures, and the size of the color areas.
- A color is brighter when it is used on four walls of a room instead of just one.
- Colors look different in natural sunlight than under artificial light.
- Rough textures make a color look very different than smooth, slick surfaces. Compare black velvet with a slick, black vinyl upholstery fabric for an example of this.

- Colors look brighter when used with their complementary colors.

- Glare can be minimized by using a light color scheme, and reducing the contrast between lighter and darker surfaces. Texture and finish are also important in controlling glare. Generally, soft textures or dull finishes absorb light helping to reduce glare.
- To create a cool effect in your Florida home, consider these suggestions when selecting room colors.
- Keep the background walls, floors and ceilings light or neutral colored.
- Use tints, or mixtures of a color plus some white, rather than bright colors for large areas in a room.
- Use warmer, brighter, more intense colors for accessories and smaller areas.
- Reactions to colors are primarily emotional, and quite varied. It is your perception and response to color that is important, and that should be considered when creating your energy-conscious room.

Source: Hammer, University of Florida