

Upcoming Geary County Extension Programs

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

February

15 — Geary County 4-H Club Day—8:00 AM; JC Presbyterian Church

**19+ — Board Leadership Workshop Series— a series of four workshops designed to provide basic training for members of community based boards; Feb 19, 20, 26 & 27—6:00 to 8:00 PM; Location TBA; Registration is \$40.00

**20 — Stepping Stones for Step Families—looking at the challenges and opportunities in step-parenting—6:30 PM; Dorothy Bramlage Library Classroom; free program

March

6 — Cooking Class—10:00 AM; Geary County Health Dept; contact Susie Bilderback, Geary County Family Nutrition Program (FNP) Program Assistant at sbilderb@ksu.edu

**27 — Cut the Clutter—6:30 PM; Dorothy Bramlage Library Classroom; free program

29 — Geary County 4-H/Sr. Citizens Center 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.



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

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Ask the Agent

From Leah: Q—What are the benefits and dangers of using “energy drinks?”

A—Energy drinks typically contain massive quantities of caffeine which can cause some minor health concerns (laxative effect, insomnia, headaches) as well as much more serious adverse health effects (increased blood pressure, irregular and abnormal heart rhythms, impaired blood flow to the heart, and sudden death.) Some of these drinks also contain high levels of sugar and other ingredients that can also have adverse effects.

Solution?: Read the labels and try to limit your total caffeine intake to 300 mg *per day* (for adults) which is about 3 cups of coffee. Consider how many servings you are consuming at a time. Many of these drink’s containers actually hold 2—4 servings. What may appear to be a healthy limit at first glance may be unhealthy due to the number of servings in the container. Children under the age of 12 have no need for caffeine in their diet. Parents should avoid offering them to children.

When It’s Cold Outside...Cuddle Up and READ!

Did you know...?

Research behind the importance and impact of developing reading skills at a young age is overwhelming. Parents, grandparents and caregivers can instill a passion for books and reading in the children they care for by reading TO them, WITH them, and AROUND them.

Winter months often find us huddled up in the house trying to stay warm and safe from the elements. Often times, our staple for entertainment becomes the TV or video games. Might I suggest a mind-healthy alternative? READ! The quiet time with your children and for yourself is a great way to relax and enjoy a view into the scenery of a book.

Need some book titles to get you started? Here are some of the books we have been enjoying in my own home:

Hank the Cowdog by John R. Erickson (50-book series) – My 4th grader is reading his way through these books which are laced with harmless humor and a boatload of ranch house fun.

I Survived by Lauren Tarshis (8-book series) – My 3rd grader enjoys the thrill and drama of these historical perspective books with the common theme of resiliency being woven throughout.

Clifford the Big Red Dog by Norman Bridwell (also a series) – My 2nd grader grabs for these first. This endearing dog has the most amazing adventures and a wonderful “owner” that loves him unconditionally.

The Goldy Bear Culinary Mysteries by Diane Mott Davidson (17-book series to date) - I enjoy these books as they weave my interest in cooking with the realities of living a life of balancing work, home, husband and family in the midst of a mystery to be solved. She includes great recipes into the storyline, as well. They are always a “yummy” read – no pun intended!

Look at the book lists provided on the RIF (Reading is Fundamental) website at <http://www.rif.org/us/literacy-resources/> to find more good reads for emerging, developing, or young (teen) readers.



Consistent and predictable routines and schedules is important to help toddlers feel safe, secure and loved. Babies and young toddlers have a difficult time understanding object permanence. This means that when you are out of sight you are non-existent to them. As a result, they may cry or become agitated because they have no idea that you still exist.

You can help them understand object/person permanence by playing simple games with them. Games like “peek-a-boo” are an excellent way to display this concept to babies and young toddlers. This can be really fun and also strengthens the child’s trust and sense of predictability in you.

Toddlers will often fuss and cry when they are separated from their parent. This is a very normal reaction and you can help your toddler with this transition by setting up a very predictable and consistent routine. This is important for separating and reunification. Making certain you explain to your toddler that



he/she will be staying and you will be back to pick him/her up. It is very important to explain to a toddler who will be picking him/her up, as well. Although young toddlers don’t have a sense of time it is important to take time and explain when they will be picked up.

As long as this routine is consistent your toddler will have more trust and confidence in what you tell them when you are dropping them off. Always remember to *never* sneak away from your child. Sneaking away increases your child’s insecurity about when you might sneak away again and they may protest with fear of you disappearing unexpectedly.

Sometimes writing out specific routines, such as, day care drop off and pick up, bedtime, morning etc. will help eliminate confusion and frustration for both child and parent. For [helpful handouts](#), visit [The Incredible Years](#) website.

Source: Michigan State University Extension & www.innerchildfun.com

The Saving Habit

Wrestling with debt is never an easy task, but if you begin the process by starting with a savings plan, the task can become less daunting.

First, recognize that you need to start gradually, especially if you have not had a regular savings plan in the past.

Develop a system of saving money regularly. Even if you have a modest income, setting aside a set amount from each paycheck is a great place to start. The standard recommendation is to save 10% of your income, if possible. Consider this as a way of “paying yourself first.”

Have your savings automatically withdrawn from your paycheck by setting up a direct deposit to your savings account. If your employer is unable to set this up, then have your financial institution make an automatic transfer of funds from your checking account to your savings account.

Building up a “nest egg” is important for your future financial stability. Before you make any major purchases with your savings account, make sure you have enough money saved up in your “nest egg” to cover at least six

months of living expenses. This will help make sure you have some financial protection in case of an unexpected lay-off, expensive auto repairs, or unexpected medical costs.

Once your “nest egg” has been set aside, identify specific goals for your savings plan. You need to plan for big expenses that you are anticipating. Perhaps you want to replace your car or buy new appliances for your home. Saving for these expenses should be above what you save for emergencies.

If you have the option to participate in tax-advantaged retirement accounts or matching funds, take advantage of it. Some employers will provide tax-sheltered investment options and perhaps offer a matching contribution to what you invest into these types of programs. You can also invest in your own IRA (Individual Retirement Account) with a financial institution or investment firm. You can set up automatic payments from a checking account to make this process easier to use.

The key to becoming successful at saving is to start the process and make it a way of life—make it a habit of saving something from every paycheck or from every month.

Source: FDIC Consumer News, Fall 2012

Healthy Habits



WALK KANSAS 2014

Put on your “walkin’ shoes!” Walk Kansas

launches March 16.

Registration packets became available January 27 at the Geary County Extension office. This 8 week program is a great way to find some motivation for movement. If you need to add some energy to your physical activity plan and fit more time in to spend with family or friends, Walk Kansas is a great way to do it. Find five other friends to be on a team and get ready for some fun. For more information about Walk Kansas and how to get involved, visit our website: www.geary.ksu.edu.

Put Your Best Foot Forward for Health

February is American Heart Month

According to the Center for Disease Control, “heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women, but heart disease is preventable and controllable.”

Here are a few of the steps the CDC recommends to prevent heart disease:

- ◇ Eat a healthy diet
- ◇ Maintain a healthy weight
- ◇ Exercise regularly
- ◇ Monitor your blood
- ◇ Don’t smoke
- ◇ Limit alcohol use
- ◇ Monitor cholesterol levels
- ◇ Take your medications if you are being treated for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes.



Connecting with Kids

Keeping our kids safe is a top priority for parents and guardians. Sometimes we don’t see the danger coming or don’t realize the dangers they are exposed to. As a parent, becoming more familiar with the technology kids have in their hands is critical. Check out the sites below to get you started:

Online Safety Information site:

www.netsmartz.org

This website is a one-stop-shop for parents and children of all ages to learn about internet safety through games, videos, and fact sheets. Discussion questions are provided to help parents know how to talk to their children about the advantages, concerns and dangers of internet use.

Kid-friendly Websites:

<http://www.factmonster.com/>

This website is a great place to use as a launching point for kid-friendly reference resources. It includes a dictionary, thesaurus, encyclopedia, and almanac. It also has links to a variety of subject-matter resources, as well.

<http://www.kidsclick.org>

If you are looking for good books to read by topic, age, or author this is the place to start. This site guides you in discovering a variety of book titles on the subject of your choice.

<http://kidsconnect.com/>

Created by a now-retired teacher, this website offers over 400 portals to educational and information sites geared toward elementary age children. It also provides a good overview on internet safety tips and statistics.