A Wood Products Workshop for Homeowners and Builders is being held from 8:30 am – 5:00 pm Saturday, April 28 at the Mountain Horticultural Crops and Research & Extension Center in Fletcher. The workshop is sponsored by the Buncombe County Extension Center and the NCSU Department of Wood & Paper Science. It will focus on the common wood products used in home construction, from the structure to the exterior and interior. The workshop will also focus on businesses in the local area that are making these products available to local consumers. The use of green building materials will be promoted because of their importance and contribution to supporting a sustainable lifestyle. The cost of the daylong workshop is $40 and includes all materials, breaks and lunch. For a brochure or to register, contact Nancy Ostergaard, Buncombe County Extension, 255-5522.

Moving Towards a Healthier You: Noonliting: Have you slipped back to your old behaviors after your New Year’s resolutions to eat healthier and be more physically active. Noonliting: Moving Towards a Healthier You, a weight management class, will begin the end of April. This 10-week program will meet on Wednesdays from 12:00 noon to 1:00 pm beginning April 25 through June 27. Classes are held at North Carolina Cooperative Extension – Buncombe County Center, 94 Coxe Avenue, Asheville. Pre-registration is required and there is a fee of $20 for materials. For more information and to enroll call 255-5522.

Successful Aging V: The N. C. Cooperative Extension has joined with other Buncombe County agencies to offer the fifth annual Successful Aging event. This event is targeted to older adults, caregivers and others interested in aging successfully. This year it will be held May 8 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Asheville. The day is filled with fun and informative workshops, entertainment, and health screenings. The registration fee is $15 and includes lunch. Pre-registration is necessary. For a brochure call the Extension Center at 255-5522 or The Council on Aging at 277-8288.

Parenting Matters: It’s not easy being a parent. In fact parenting is probably the most challenging job most of us will ever have. Come to this eight-week, hands-on creative learning program for parents who want to make a difference in their child’s life and improve their parent-child relationship. You will learn how to manage stress, improve your communication skills, avoid power struggles with your child, and build a support system to help you. This eight-week program will meet on Thursdays from 12:00 noon to 2:00 pm beginning May 3 through June 21. Classes are held at N. C. Cooperative Extension - Buncombe County Center, 94 Coxe Avenue, Asheville. Pre-registration is required and there is a fee of $10 for materials. For more information and to enroll call 255-5522.
Home Maintenance

Now is the time to inspect your home after the winter season. The periodic inspections should start at the foundation and continue by working upward and inward. Some common areas to include:

- Make sure gutters and downspouts are clean and in good repair.
- Check wood structural members, such as joists, beams and columns, with a screwdriver to be sure the wood is solid and free from decay.
- Examine the inside of the basement walls for dampness or water stains indicating seepage or leaks.
- Clean leaves and debris from around an outside heating/air conditioner condenser and trim back shrubs that may block air movement.
- Check for curled, damaged or loose shingles. The use of binoculars may be helpful for high roofs.
- Examine all roof flashing and flashing around chimneys, vent stacks, roof edges, dormers, and skylights.
- Examine all trim for tightness of fit, damage, or decay.
- Check painted surfaces for peeling, chipping, blistering or chalking paint, water damage or decay.

These are just a few of the areas that should be inspected on a regular basis. Keeping your entire home well maintained and in good condition will add to the value. Doing the maintenance and repair as the need arises also keeps small problems from becoming bigger, more costly problems. If a complete checklist would be helpful, contact the Extension Center.

Tame the Tube and Increase Family Connections

National No TV Week is April 23 to 29. There are many health reasons to watch less television from our challenges to maintain healthy weights to decreasing attention deficit problems in our kids. But the latest data also shows that the media is influencing our children and becoming more and more the source for their developing values instead of the family.

Sixty-eight percent of parents surveyed have noted that the media generally impacted their children’s health, but 78% to 87% of the parents did not see the media impacted their children’s health behaviors such as smoking, drinking alcohol or developing unhealthy attitudes about sex. Parents did feel that it was their responsibility to monitor the media use by their children. Though they did see it as their responsibility, 68% of the parents felt it was also the media producers responsibility to monitor how media impacts children. The impact of the media is not just with school aged children and older, children under 6 years old are watching more and more television. With the increased ease of getting on the internet, television is not the only media affecting our children. Media influences include internet sites, television, videos and DVDs as well as video games.

What can families do to combat this influence? Join others during the week of April 23-29 and make it a TV free week. You may be surprised how hard this might be for your family, because on average the American household has the TV on for 8 hours a day. Try these tips for decreasing TV time and plan what you and your family will do in place of watching the tube.

- Rearrange the home so that the TV is not in the center of focus.
- Turn TV off during meals; use this time to share what has been happening with each other during the day.
- Start watching TV with your children to monitor what they are being exposed to and discuss the shows or games as a way to influence their developing values.
- Don’t use the TV as a babysitter. Try and find other toys and games to keep children occupied while you do needed chores around the house or get time to yourself. Make a list of those things that have worked in the past, such as crayons and paper, and have them on hand.
- Plan activities to do outdoors, especially during No TV Week.
- Keep a supply of books from the library at home to encourage reading without going out and spending alot on new books. Make sure your child has a library card of their own; this creates more interest in books.
- Start a complex jigsaw puzzle for the family to work on during this week. Even young children can help older family members find the pieces they need.
Remaining in Place

Most of us take for granted we will be able to have the ability to live and function as we would like in our own home. Yet almost everyone – four out of five, according to research – will have some physical problem that could make it difficult to live independently. Could you move around your home if you had crutches from a broken leg, needed a wheelchair because of an accident or had limited movement as the result of a heart attack? The design of your home can make life more difficult or easier when having limitations.

It is never too early to begin thinking what changes may be necessary to make a home more accessible. Is there at least one entrance into the house without climbing steps? A bedroom and bath on the main floor? A clothes washer that is front loading? Or a bathroom door that opens out? These are just a few of the requirements a home would need to have in order to accommodate someone with limitations due to age or injury.

Purchasing or remodeling a home with all the accessible features is called life-cycle housing. Homeowners who build, buy, or remodel life-cycle housing are better able to maintain independence and the self-esteem that goes with independence. Planning for future changes now will help keep dollar costs down later, but the real reward is continued independence.

What do the Dates Mean on my Egg Carton?

Have you ever wondered what the date on your egg carton really means or what all the numbers stamped on there represent? Well those are our guide in determining the freshness of the eggs. If eggs carry the USDA grade shield (the shield needs to be there not just the words "Grade A"), the carton must have what they call a “Julien Date”. This is a three-digit code that represents the date that the eggs were washed, graded and placed in the carton. This code is based on the consecutive day of the year starting with January 1 as 001 and ending with December 31 being 365. Most eggs will be safe to eat if kept refrigerated properly for 3 to 5 weeks past this date. If a USDA shield carton has a sell by date that date cannot exceed 30 days past the pack or Julien date. If it uses the terminology “Best By Date”, that date cannot exceed 45 days past the pack or Julien date. Once you buy your eggs and bring them home, they will usually keep for another 3 weeks. The best rule to follow with eggs is to not use any eggs that look or have an off smell.

Health Benefits of Spring Garden Chores

As the weather starts to warm up and we can feel the beginning of spring, this can be the perfect time to do your spring garden chores. Doing the yearly maintenance in the perennial garden, getting the vegetable garden ready, starting those early plants, or preparing the beds for your favorite annuals can give you the added benefit of getting you out and moving. Gardening can be a wonderful way to get your physical activity. Whether you are digging, hauling out debris or spreading mulch, your heart gets pumping and in return it gets stronger.

The whole family can get involved by getting outside. Give younger children chores they can easily do and watch as they become more connected to what they plant. Children love to watch things grow. Older children can start to take on some of the tedious chores that you hate to do. Try setting up a reward for the number of wheel barrels they can haul or flower beds they can mulch. One word of warning, if you haven’t been lifting, hauling or doing heavy yard work for a while, remember as with any exercise, start slow and work yourself up. You have to get your muscles used to the new activity and starting too hard or for too long can end up causing injuries. So get out those garden tools and enjoy the sunny spring days and the lasting results of better health and enjoyable summer gardens. It’s worth the work now!
Removing Mineral Deposits

If you have hard water, there will be an increase in the amount of films and stains from soap, minerals, and other substances. Bathroom fixtures, sinks, dishes, and other surfaces will need frequent cleaning to prevent build-up. The calcium and magnesium in water leaves hard deposits called lime scales. These minerals make cleaning products less effective. To clean away lime scale, you need a cleaning product with “sequestrants”. The sequestrants capture and deactivate the minerals in the water. (Calgon is one example of a product with sequestrants.)

To clean hard-water marks (ie. soap scum) there are some cleaners that can also be made at home.

1. Make a paste of white vinegar and baking soda. Place it on the stain and let it stand, following with a good rinse.
2. Mix 1 teaspoon Calgon in a gallon of water; apply, then rinse well.
3. Mix 2-4 tablespoons trisodium phosphate in a gallon of water; apply, then rinse.

*Cooking for One or Two* - Come learn how to adjust to cooking for one or two as family members have left the nest or you are faced with preparing meals for yourself only. Presented for the Buncombe County Parks and Recreation’s Seniors aged 50 and Better program, the program will be **Tuesday May 1 at 10:00 am** at their center at 49 Mt. Carmel Road. Call Grace Young at 250-4265 for more information, to register and get directions.

NJO/CH:gs

*Individuals with disabilities who would like to participate in any program mentioned in this newsletter, but who need special assistance to do so, should call the Extension Center at 828-255-5522 at least five days prior to the event.*