Sharon Carter Retiring
After 20+ Years With EFNEP

Congratulations to Sharon Carter who, after 30 years as North Carolina Cooperative Extension’s Expanded Foods and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Assistant in Buncombe County, is retiring. Sharon has diligently worked with Buncombe County’s limited income families to improve their basic nutritional knowledge, food preparation skills and their families’ eating behaviors. Sharon was also a contributor to our On the Homefront newsletter. Although Sharon will be genuinely missed by her co-workers and families she has worked with, we wish her all the best as she begins her new life as a retired Extension employee.

Have a great retirement Sharon!

Just a Reminder
If you would like to continue to receive this newsletter, please contact our office to have your name remain on the mailing list. This can be done by one of the following three methods:
- Telephone: 828-255-5522
- Email: debbie_sparks@ncsu.edu
- Return the yellow insert from our previous newsletter

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Persons with disabilities and persons with limited English proficiency may request accommodations to participate in activities mentioned in this newsletter. Please contact this office at 828-255-5522 during business hours at least 3 days prior to the event to discuss accommodations.
Some “Free” Apps Can Cost a Pretty Penny

Many consumers are buying smart phones or other electronic devices because of the large variety of applications (apps) that are available for downloading. Apps are useful, or entertaining, software programs, and many are free or available for just a dollar or so. However, some free apps can actually end up costing you a lot of money.

Here’s an example: after you sign into your iTunes account to download a free app, your account (which is linked to a credit card) remains open for purchases for the next 15 minutes. Some free apps, like the popular game Smurf’s Village, include items that can be bought online to enhance or advance the player’s position in the game. In the case of Smurf’s Village, these items can cost from $60 to $100 each—meaning that if your child starts using the app immediately after it's purchased, hefty unwanted costs can pile up quickly.

Mobile devices are helpful, handy, and entertaining. But any device that is linked to a credit card can lead to unexpected costs, especially if it isn’t secured to prevent purchases when children use it.

If you feel that charges have been unfairly or inappropriately added to your bill, contact the Consumer Protection Division of the Attorney General’s office at 1-877-NO-SCAM. For more information on the safe use of technology for you and your family, visit www.ncdoj.gov.

Source: North Carolina Attorney General Roy Cooper.

Have You Ever Wondered?

• Why does my new dishwasher run twice as long as my old one even though it is suppose to be more efficient?

The reason that today’s dishwashers have longer cycle lengths is because they are more energy efficient. The energy efficiency of a dishwasher is largely determined by the amount of hot water it uses. Older dishwashers sprayed large amounts of hot water on dishes in a short period of time. Today’s dishwashers, use targeted fine streams of water to clean dishes so more time is needed to effectively clean. Since August 2009, Energy Star dishwashers are required to use 5.8 gallons of water per cycle or less. A dishwasher purchased before 1994 uses about 8 additional gallons of water in each cycle compared to a new ENERGY STAR qualified model.

• If I buy a new refrigerator, can I put my old fridge in the garage to use for cold drinks?

There are many things to consider before placing the old fridge in the garage. During the summer when it is 90 degrees in the garage the refrigerator will use 45-50% more energy than if it were in the 70 degree kitchen. In the winter when the temperature drops below about 40 degrees in the garage, the thermostat on the refrigerator may not run its cooling and defrost cycles for the appropriate amount of time. Since refrigerators are not designed to heat their interiors, placing a refrigerator in an unheated area that is below freezing may result in the freezing of your foods.
March is "National Nutrition Month®" - Eat Right with Colors

This year the American Dietetic Association has taken the theme of “Eat Right with Colors” for National Nutrition Month®. As you try to eat smart, make sure you include all the natural colors of fruits and vegetables so you can be confident that you are getting a wide variety of many of the nutrients you need to fight diseases and keep your body running well.

**Green** produce indicates antioxidant potential and may help promote healthy vision and reduce cancer risks.
- *Fruits*: avocado, apples, grapes, honeydew, kiwi and lime
- *Vegetables*: artichoke, asparagus, broccoli, green beans, green peppers and leafy greens such as spinach

**Orange** and **deep yellow** fruits and vegetables contain nutrients that promote healthy vision and immunity, and reduce the risk of some cancers.
- *Fruits*: apricot, cantaloupe, grapefruit, mango, papaya, peach and pineapple
- *Vegetables*: carrots, yellow pepper, yellow corn and sweet potatoes

**Purple** and **blue** options may have antioxidant and anti-aging benefits and may help with memory, urinary tract health and reduced cancer risks.
- *Fruits*: blackberries, blueberries, plums, raisins
- *Vegetables*: eggplant, purple cabbage, purple-fleshed potato

**Red** indicates produce that may help maintain a healthy heart, vision, immunity and may reduce cancer risks.
- *Fruits*: cherries, cranberries, pomegranate, red/pink grapefruit, red grapes and watermelon
- *Vegetables*: beets, red onions, red peppers, red potatoes, rhubarb and tomatoes

**White, tan** and **brown** foods sometimes contain nutrients that may promote heart health and reduce cancer risks.
- *Fruits*: bananas, brown pears, dates and white peaches
- *Vegetables*: cauliflower, mushrooms, onions, parsnips, turnips, white-fleshed potato and white corn

Keep to the natural colors and get the added benefit of promoting health and a variety of tastes at the same time.

**Quick Egg Safety Tips**

- Cook basic egg dishes until the whites are set and the yolks begin to thicken: they don't have to be hard.
- Cook the eggs or use a pasteurized egg product when making eggnog, ice cream, Hollandaise sauce and other recipes calling for raw eggs.
- Keep eggs and egg dishes in the refrigerator as much as possible, allowing no more than 2 hours at room temperature for preparing and serving.
- When coloring eggs, wash hands thoroughly before handling eggs at every step including cooking, cooling and coloring. Return eggs to the refrigerator at every opportunity. For coloring, use water warmer than the eggs. Use only food-safe decorating materials for eggs to be eaten.
- If eggs are used for hiding, do not use these eggs for eating because they can come in contact with bacteria and other germs as well as stay out of refrigeration for longer than 2 hours.
Your Credit Report

In our difficult economic times, it is more important than ever to have good credit.

Why is a credit report important?

**A:** Your credit report is important because lenders, insurers, employers, and others may obtain your credit report from credit bureaus to assess how you manage financial responsibilities. For example:

- Lenders may use your credit report information to decide whether you can get a loan and the terms you get for a loan (for example, the interest rate they will charge you).
- Insurance companies may use the information to decide whether you can get insurance and to set the rates you will pay.
- Employers may use your credit report, if you give them permission to do so, to decide whether to hire you.
- Telephone and utility companies may use information in your credit report to decide whether to provide services to you.
- Landlords may use the information to determine whether to rent an apartment to you.

How can I get a free copy of my credit report?

**A:** You can get one free credit report every twelve months from each of the nationwide credit bureaus—Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion—by visiting [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) or calling (877) 322-8228. You will need to provide certain information to access your report, such as your name, address, Social Security number, and date of birth.

You can order one, two, or all three reports at the same time, or you can request these reports at various times throughout the year. The option you choose will depend on the goal of your review. A report generated by one of the three major credit bureaus may not contain all of the information pertaining to your credit history. Therefore, if you want a complete view of your credit record at a particular moment, you should examine your report from each bureau at the same time. However, if you wish to detect any errors and monitor changes in your credit profile over time, you may wish to review a single credit report every four months.

What is a credit score? How is my credit score calculated?

**A:** A credit score is a number that reflects the information in your credit report. The score summarizes your credit history and helps lenders predict how likely it is that you will repay a loan and make payments when they are due. Lenders may use credit scores in deciding whether to grant you credit, what terms you are offered, or the rate you will pay on a loan.

Information used to calculate your credit score can include:

- the number and type of accounts you have (credit cards, auto loans, mortgages, etc.)
- whether you pay your bills on time
- how much of your available credit you are currently using
- whether you have any collection actions against you
- the amount of your outstanding debt; and the age of your accounts

For additional information go to: [http://www.federalreserve.gov/creditreports](http://www.federalreserve.gov/creditreports)
**What’s In Season! Dark Leafy Greens**

With the start of early Spring, the growing season begins. Many of us are trying to eat healthier and also support the local economy by buying our foods from local producers. Dark leafy greens like spinach, kale, and collards will be available soon. The cooler temperatures contribute to the greens having a sweeter flavor. In the hotter months, the greens need to be cooked longer to breakdown the carbohydrates (sugars) since they are less tender. Greens are a great way to get low calorie, tasty, and nutrient packed foods into your diet.

Leafy greens are high in Vitamin K, which is a natural blood thinner. If you are taking blood thinners like Coumadin (warfarin), you need to keep your leafy greens intake consistent in order for the medicines to work correctly. If they are one of your favorite foods, discuss keeping them in your diet with your doctor. They are also high in many of the phytonutrients such as lutein and zeaxanthin and health promoting sulfur compounds. Collard greens are very high in calcium and it is believed that even though high in oxalates, the calcium is well absorbed.

Store your greens in the refrigerator and the colder temperature will decrease the respiration rate and help them stay fresh and decrease the loss of nutrients. Most of your greens need to be used within three to five days. Once they start turning yellow they have lost much of their flavor and nutrients. Do not wash your greens before using, because the washing can destroy protective layers of the greens and they will spoil faster. Another tasty way to get your greens is to use young, early greens in salads and on sandwiches. Enjoy the tender leaves while they are sweeter and less bitter.

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**Upcoming Programs and Events**

**Successful Aging IX**

The Buncombe County Aging Coordinating Consortium, in collaboration with other local agencies, is offering the ninth annual Successful Aging Event. This event is held annually in Buncombe County during Older Americans Month for older adults, caregivers and anyone interested in aging successfully. This year the event will be held **Tuesday, May 3, 2011** at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Asheville. The day is filled with fun and informative workshops, entertainment and health screenings. The **registration fee of $15.00** includes lunch and all the day’s activities. Preregistration is necessary as space is limited. Brochures will be available shortly. Call the NC Cooperative Extension, Buncombe County Center at 828-255-5522 or Council on Aging of Buncombe County at 828-277-8288.

**Canning and Preserving Made Easy**

Canning season will be here before we know it and it’s time to get prepared. You want to check your equipment to make sure it is ready for use. Buy new lids to replace the lids used last year. Check your bands and jars to see that they are in good condition. You need to check your gaskets and pressure gauges. You can call our office to set up an appointment for checking the pressure gauge. To learn more about canning, or just to brush up on the newest information on food preservation from canning, to freezing, to drying, come to the **Canning and Preserving Made Easy** program on **April 28 from 6:00pm to 9:30pm**. This program will be an introduction to canning, pickling, making jams and jellies, freezing, drying and storage. Preregistration is required and a **fee of $10** will cover costs for materials. Call our office to register or for more information.
Basic Home Maintenance Tips

As we begin to think about spring repairs in and around our homes, there may be some areas that have been neglected in the past. This is the time to address those specific areas to prevent larger maintenance problems in the future.

● Clothes dryer

Dryer lint is highly combustible and can cause a fire if left unchecked for too long. Excess lint also reduces the dryer’s efficiency, so it will save you money to keep your dryer as lint-free as possible.

Clean the lint trap after each load of laundry. If your dryer has a venting hose that is vertical, check the vent connection for lint buildup. At least twice a year, move the dryer slightly forward and disconnect the vent from the back of the dryer. Clean out the lint from the hose and fitting; then reconnect the vent.

● Troubleshooting basement moisture problems

In order to know what is causing a basement moisture problem, you have to determine where the moisture is coming from. An inexpensive, yet effective way to find your problem is to: Cut a few 12”X12” squares of aluminum foil or thick plastic, and tape them on the concrete block walls and floor. Wait several hours and then check for condensation on the foil or plastic. If the room side of the foil or plastic is wet, moisture is in the air, a problem you can often solve by removing sources of excess moisture or using a dehumidifier.

If there is moisture between the concrete block and the foil or plastic, the moisture is coming in through the wall or floor from the soil. If this is the case you will need to look for the source outside. Begin by avoiding over watering of plants and shrubs near your foundation. Check that all gutter downspouts are directed away from the house for a minimum of six feet and the foundation grading is sloped away from the house. If you have been adding mulch every year around your house foundation, check to make sure it has not gotten above the waterproofing on the foundation walls.

● Roof with dark stains

Fiberglass shingles commonly develop a dark, mildew like stain. The stains are caused from Gloeocapsa Magma Algae that feeds off the limestone in fiberglass shingles. Although the algae won’t harm roofing materials, many homeowners prefer to remove or prevent it for aesthetic reasons. Either copper or zinc are effective deterrents. Using long, 7” wide copper or zinc strips underneath the last full course of shingles at the top of the roof, will do the trick. You should be able to slide the copper up under the shingles approximately five inches or so. This will leave approximately two inches exposed to the weather. When it rains, the rainwater will carry small amounts of metal residue down the roof preventing algae growth and stains. If you are installing new fiberglass shingles, look for shingles that contain copper coated granules.

● Fast fix for leaky toilets

If your toilet periodically runs for no obvious reason, the problem could be a small leak where the tank ball or flapper fits into the flush valve (the opening in the toilet tank, into the toilet bowl). Mineral deposits and sediment can collect on the flush valve and prevent the ball or flapper from forming a watertight seal. Before you buy replacement parts, try the following: raise the ball or flapper out of the way and scour the brass flush valve with fine steel wool. If your toilet has a plastic flush valve, use a plastic scouring pad. Scrub the ball or flapper clean also. This should fix your problem.
The Family is a Child’s First and Most Important Teacher

Helping the children in your life to be ready for starting school is one of the best ways to prepare them for a lifetime of success. Research shows that children who are unprepared for the entrance to kindergarten are more likely to fall behind in school, experience school failure, and they are more likely to drop out of school. Those children who are not prepared for the transition into school have found it difficult to stay on track and meet the expectations of each grade level. One of the major ways to determine school readiness is to assess a child’s literacy skills.

Families are the most important teachers in a child’s life. When children have the support at home to build early literacy skills, they begin school with the tools to get the most out of learning. These skills are reading, writing and using and understanding oral language. Besides these academic skills, a child also needs to value and have a positive attitude towards learning, be physically healthy, and have developed socially and emotionally.

With the increase abundance of technology and electronics in the household, we forget that one of the easiest ways to build those skills that will make a child succeed in school is to just pick up a book and read. It does not have to be only the parents that support children’s learning. Other adults and even older children can be the ones to read with them. As more parents are needing to work, many children are with other family members and those members can be the ones to support and share the value of learning. Here are some ways families can support and build a child’s literacy skills.

- Read books together – It helps to ask questions, give additional information and explanations beyond what is in the book. Share personal reactions, and relate concepts to the child’s own life.

- Go to the library – Most of our county libraries have story time and children’s librarians who can help you pick out books to share with your children. These books are free and can broaden your child’s exposure to more books.

- Read in the Community – Try labels in the grocery store or signs in stores or on the road. You can use these to help children pick out words and recognize the alphabet.

- Talk with your children – Having conversations with children at an early age and using a variety of words and concepts exposes them to oral language and builds their vocabulary. Reading is not the only component of literacy. It also includes understanding language and using it. Try having a daily “Share Your Day” time at the dinner table. This can get you in the habit of sharing what is happening in your life and giving your child a time to share what is happening in their life. Later on when they are older, it will be easier to keep informed on what they are doing if you already have a set time for this.

- Encourage questions – Ask your child questions and support their curiosity in order to encourage creativity and a value for learning.

- Offer choices – This helps create language, encourages independent thinking and develops decision making skills.

- Model desired behaviors and attitudes – A child’s attitude towards learning and his/her value of education is greatly influenced by the attitudes and values displayed by their family.
Oven-Fried Parmesan Chicken

Ingredients: (8 SERVINGS)
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into strips (about 2½ pounds)
- 1 cup nonfat, plain yogurt
- ¾ cup bread crumbs (Using Panko or larger size crumbs make a crunchier breading)
- 4 tablespoons grated Parmesan Cheese
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- Pinch of cayenne pepper
- Non-stick cooking spray

Directions:
1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees F.
2. Spray a cookie sheet with non-stick cooking spray.
3. Place chicken strips and yogurt in large bowl and refrigerate while preparing the rest of the ingredients.
4. In a medium bowl, mix the rest of the ingredients.
5. Coat each piece of chicken well with yogurt and dredge in the crumb mixture, pressing down on both sides.
6. Place the chicken on the cookie sheet and spray the top of each strip lightly with non-stick cooking spray.
7. Bake for 15 - 20 minutes or until the chicken is fork tender and the juices run clear.

♦ As an alternative to the bowls, you can use 2 gallon-size sealable plastic bags: one bag to marinate the chicken and one bag to bread the chicken.

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