This issue features a variety of topics, including weight management, energy conservation, and home maintenance. Each section is designed to provide practical advice and resources for residents of Buncombe County.

**Eat Smart Move More Weigh Less**

It may seem early to be thinking about the winter holidays, but in order to be prepared to avoid the weight gain that naturally comes with the holidays and the slowing down during the colder months, Eat Smart Move More Weigh Less, a weight management class that gives you practical skills to lose or maintain your weight in a healthy way, is starting in September. This 13 week program will meet on **Mondays from 12:00 noon to 1:00 pm beginning on September 20th and will run through December 6th.** $25 fee for materials.

**Tired of Spending Too Much on Winter Heating?**

As thermometers drop and energy prices climb, local residents can learn no- and low-cost ways to save on energy bills by attending the free educational workshop, **Saving on Your Energy Bills,** scheduled for **Tuesday, October 12 at 5:30 pm.** In addition to learning how to implement energy-saving measures in their homes, participants will have the opportunity to sign up for home energy audits at a special workshop price. The standard cost of $500 will be reduced to $100 and participants can have a qualified Home Energy Rater conduct an audit of their home and make energy saving recommendations on a personal level. **Only individuals attending the workshop will qualify for the reduced audit price.**

**November/December Basic Home Maintenance Course**

As extra money continues to disappear from our pockets, our homes still need to be kept in good condition. Neglecting the minor repairs will only lead to more expense and lessen a homes value in the future. Have you wanted to make those basic home repairs but didn’t know where to start? This five-series Basic Home Maintenance Course will show you how. Beginning **Tuesday, November 16th from 5:30 – 7:30pm.** The remaining dates for the course are **Tuesdays, November 23rd, and 30th, and December 7th, and 14th.** Some of the topics to be covered are: saving on your heating and cooling bills, basic plumbing repairs, interior and exterior maintenance, landscaping and lawn care, indoor air quality, common household pests, etc. The fee of $20.00 includes all materials and handouts for this five series course.

All classes are held at the Buncombe County Cooperative Extension. Pre registration and pre payment are required for all classes. If you need more information on any class, please call the Extension Center, 828•255•5522.
Preparing for the Heating Season

According to the Department of Energy, approximately 56% of your utility bill goes for heating and cooling your home. Because of this, it is important that a homes’ Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system be maintained to ensure the maximum efficiency. Regardless of the type of system you have, dirt and neglect are the #1 causes of heating and cooling system failure and a contributor to high-energy bills. You can keep your heating and cooling system at peak performance by having a licensed HVAC technician conduct routine maintenance on your unit. While it isn’t necessary to have an HVAC service contract in order to have your unit maintained by a professional, it can be a cost effective way of maintaining your unit.

If you choose to invest in a HVAC service contract, consider a few simple rules to ensure that you are getting what you pay for.

1. Study up. Read all the information you have on your current HVAC system and know the model number. Take note to any rooms in the house that might feel too hot or too cold. This information will help your technician/contractor better understand your needs.
2. Ask for referrals. Sometimes friends, family, and co-workers are the best resource we have to a good reliable contractor.
3. Ask for references. Ask contractors you speak with for customer references. Get at least three and call them. Check with the Better Business Bureau for any complaints that may have been lodged against the contractor.
4. Find special offers. At different times during the year heating and cooling companies will offer a special rate with a maintenance agreement.
5. Expect a home evaluation. The contractor should spend a significant time inspecting your current system to access your needs. He or she may make suggestions about your current system to make it more energy efficient. Pass it on. If you are satisfied with the service tell a friend.

A service contract also allows you to prevent any unforeseen problems and unwanted costs while keeping your heating and cooling system at maximum energy efficiency. A service contract should be performed twice a year. HVAC technicians are busier during the summer and winter months so it is best to schedule the maintenance of your system in the spring and in the fall. One way to remember to schedule an appointment is to call your HVAC technician when the time changes to and from day light savings time.

You Can Have the Steak but Avoid the Bacon

Recent studies have indicated that eating red meats such as beef, pork and lamb can be part of a heart healthy diet, just watch how they are prepared. An analysis of studies which include a total of 1.2 million participants, has shown that processed meats are the meats that increase our risk. Every serving of processed meats increased the risk for heart disease by 42% and diabetes by 19%. These meats, such as bacon, cold cuts, smoked hams, and hot dogs are higher in salt and non-salt preservatives and that may explain the higher risk rather than the saturated fat, as was once believed. The research is not finished, and red meats may be connected to increased risk for colon and other cancers. Experts still suggest that the best sources of protein are fish, beans, nuts and poultry, but these findings indicate that eating un-processed red meats a few times a week can be part of a heart healthy diet. They just recommend keeping the processed meats like bacon or pepperoni pizza to one time per week.
Moving Towards Physical Fitness.

We all hear that we need to move more and stay physically active but in our busy lives, that can be harder than it sounds to get done each day. Also, just being physically active doesn’t mean we are physically fit. Physical Activity, Exercise and Physical fitness are not the same and sometimes we confuse them.

**Physical Activity** is simply moving our bodies. You don’t need special clothes or equipment to do it. You can take the stairs more often, take a short walk, clean the house or park further away in the parking lot. These activities are beneficial and we can feel better and reduce the effects of stress when we increase physical activity.

**Exercise** is a type of physical activity that’s more specialized. It’s something that’s done especially to make our bodies healthier and stronger. Examples are walking, jogging, lifting weights, taking an exercise class, swimming laps, or stretching.

**Physical Fitness** is where you’re headed once you climb the ladder of physical activity and exercise. It’s your goal. A person who has Physical Fitness has a stronger heart and lungs, as well as muscles that are both stronger and more flexible.

The exercises that help improve your physical fitness are:

- **Aerobic exercises to strengthen your heart and lungs.**
  - Do activities that make you breath harder, makes your heart beat faster. You should be able to talk but not sing during these activities. To get the maximum benefit do aerobic exercises 3 to 5 days a week for 30 to 60 minutes each time.

- **Strength building exercises to strengthen muscles.**
  - Examples of strengthening exercises are lifting your own body weight by doing push ups and sit-ups. Use stretch bands to create resistance and make your muscles stronger. You can also use hand weights or household items like cans of soup or empty milk cartons filled with water to lift. To allow our muscles time to strengthen, you need to give them a day of rest between lifting exercises.

- **Flexibility exercise, such as yoga, to create a more flexible body.**
  - You can join a class or get a video. You can also start to reach and bend more in your everyday activities. To build our flexibility we need to do these activities at least 2 to 3 times a week.

With all activities, pay attention to your body. You should not be in pain or feel strong discomfort or soreness. If you do, back off and give yourself time to rest and start back up slower. Slight soreness is okay. Listen to your body. Being physically active is a lifelong journey, you want to stay healthy not risk an injury.

Another thing to keep in mind, is that if we enjoy the activities we are more likely to continue to do the activities and more likely to improve our fitness. If you are concerned about medical or health conditions, talk with your health provider before changing or adding a new exercise to your day. They can help determine whether an exercise or activity is right for you. So, start today, not tomorrow and move more towards getting more physically fit.

Source: Cooking with EFNEP | Recipes for Eating Smart and Moving More Cook Book.
Stretching Your Dollars

For many, the family budget continues to get harder to live on and households are searching for new ways to save. Although using manufacturer’s coupons is nothing new - it may be new for your family. Taking the time to look for, cut out, and use cents-off coupons could save on your food dollars. Finding a filing system that works for you and makes it easy to find the coupon you need in a timely manner adds to the success of coupon shopping.

Set up a file by putting coupons into groups such as cereals, cleaning supplies, pet food, etc. If you shop at one store and know what is in each aisle, then filing coupons in the order that you shop may work best. Use them as you make your shopping list, or if you find a sale in the store. Before going to the store, write down your shopping list on an envelope, place a mark next to the items you will be using a coupon for and then place the coupon in the envelope.

Even if you have a coupon, be sure to look at other prices. Most coupons are for the higher priced brand name items. These items may cost you more even if you use a coupon then if you bought the item with the store’s name on it, or something you can find in the generic aisle. Use coupons to buy only items you use often, things you would like to try, and when items are already on sale. Don’t fall into the trap of buying an item just because you have a coupon. Often you can use both the store coupon that is attached to the shelf where the item is located and the coupon you have resulting in even more savings.

To get the most from your coupons:

$ Watch the weekly ads. Buy the items only when they are on sale and use a coupon.

$ Take advantage of “double coupons,” but make sure the store doesn’t have higher prices then the competitor to begin with.

$ Shop at stores that take the manufacturer’s coupon and the in-store coupon for the same product.

$ Watch for refund offers.

$ Take your coupon collection to the store in case something is on sale and wasn’t on your grocery list.

$ Then you can save twice – the sale price and the use of a coupon.

$ Clip coupons even if you don’t use them and trade with someone for the coupons on items you do use.

Remember: It is not a “buy” and you haven’t saved if the item purchased is something you would not usually purchase and use.
When Anxiousness becomes Anxiety

Nervousness, or being anxious, can be normal and even be healthy at times. Many situations can cause us to worry or wonder if we are doing a good job. At this time of year, it may be that we are worrying about our children. They may be starting college, leaving home for the first time or if younger, beginning a new school. The anxiety you feel as you worry about them is normal. You may not have children to worry about but may be starting a new experience yourself like a new job or you have become a caregiver for a family member or close friend, or just worrying about the future. In these situations, you still may be worrying whether you are making the right decisions or have the experience to do the new job. Problems can occur when you worry or are anxious all the time and that anxiety gets in the way of functioning. Try some of these tips to help reduce the anxiety and decrease the worry.

- Take time to get in touch with your feelings and thoughts. Quietly doing this, by letting the thoughts or feelings flow, instead of trying to come up with answers for all your worries. Write them down or draw how you are feeling. This helps you identify exactly what is causing you to worry.
- Find someone to talk to about your anxiety and worries. This could be professional help, a caring friend, a counselor or a clergyperson. Make sure the person you talk with helps you feel better and does not just let you worry more about the situation.
- If you worry about your child going off for the first time, either to college or a new home, set up a way to stay in contact. Let them know that they can call you anytime, but you may want to call them, just avoid worrying too much if they do not call back. You can also use email to send messages back and forth. That may be easier. Lastly, a regular postal letter or card or care package is a nice way to let them know you are there for them.
- As a caregiver, you can identify practical activities to do in order to learn more about the condition or what has you worrying about the person in your care. This knowledge about what to expect or do for the person can help relieve some of the anxiety you face as a caregiver.

Recognize some of the physical signs of anxiety, such as, muscle aches, cold and clammy hands, dizziness, sleep disturbances, upset stomach, fatigue, and a racing or pounding heart. Regular exercise, relaxation techniques like deep breathing, visualizations, listening to calming music and taking a mental break or time out should help decrease the symptoms of anxiety and reduce the worry.

So, make a plan to ask for help and find an activity that helps you take that break from the worry and decrease the anxiousness so that it does not turn into anxiety that can affect your health both mentally and physically.

What is LEED for Homes?

If you have seen reference to a home being LEED certified but not sure what it meant the following should give you a better understanding. The United States Green Building Council created LEED as a rating system for green building. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) LEED for Homes applies this rating system to “green” homes. A green home uses less energy, water, and natural resources; creates less waste; and is healthier and more comfortable for the occupants. Benefits of a LEED home include lower energy and water bills; reduced greenhouse gas emissions; and less exposure to mold, mildew and other indoor toxins. The net cost of owning a LEED home is comparable to that of owning a conventional home.

The rating systems are broken down into points for each type of credit. Certification levels within the systems are:

- Minimum points: Certified
- Second highest points: Silver
- Third highest points: Gold
- Fourth-maximum points: Platinum
Preventing Bed Bug Infestations

Bed bugs are very successful hitchhikers, moving from an infested site to furniture, bedding, baggage, boxes, and clothing. Although they typically feed on blood every five to ten days, bed bugs can be quite resilient; they are capable of surviving over a year without feeding.

A few simple precautions can help prevent bed bug infestation in your home:

- Check secondhand furniture, beds, and couches for any signs of bed bug infestations, as described below before bringing them home.
- Use a protective cover that encases mattresses and box springs which eliminates many hiding spots. The light color of the encasement makes bed bugs easier to see. Be sure to purchase a high quality encasement that will resist tearing and check the encasements regularly for holes.
- Reduce clutter in your home to reduce hiding places for bed bugs.
- When traveling:
  * In hotel rooms, use luggage racks to hold your luggage when packing or unpacking rather than setting your luggage on the bed or floor.
  * Check the mattress and headboard before sleeping.
- Upon returning home, unpack directly into a washing machine and inspect your luggage carefully.

Identifying Bed Bug Infestations

Much of the time, a bed bug infestation is only suspected when bites appear on a person. Oftentimes, the bites are misidentified, thus allowing infestations to go unnoticed, which gives the bed bugs time to spread to other areas of the house.

When cleaning, changing bedding, or staying away from home, look for signs such as:

- dark spots (about this size: •) which are bed bug excrement and may bleed on the fabric like a marker would
- eggs and eggshells, which are tiny (about 1mm) and white
- skins that nymphs shed as they grow larger
- live bed bugs, and rusty or reddish stains on bed sheets or mattresses caused by bed bugs being crushed

Common Bed Bug Myths

Myth: You can’t see a bed bug.

  * Reality: You should be able to see adult bed bugs, nymphs and eggs with your naked eye.

Myth: Bed bugs live in dirty places.

  * Reality: Bed bugs are not attracted to dirt and grime; they are attracted to warmth, blood and carbon dioxide. However, clutter offers more hiding spots.

Myth: Bed bugs transmit diseases.

  * Reality: There are no cases that indicate bed bugs pass diseases from one host to another. Lab tests have shown that it is unlikely that the insect is capable of infecting its host.

Myth: Bed bugs won’t come out if the room is brightly lit.

  * Reality: While bed bugs prefer darkness, keeping the light on at night won’t deter these pests from biting you.

Myth: Pesticide applications alone will easily eliminate bed bug infestations.

  * Reality: Bed bug control can only be maintained through a comprehensive treatment strategy that incorporates a variety of techniques and vigilant monitoring. Proper use of pesticides may be one component of the strategy, but will not eliminate bed bugs alone. In addition, bed bug populations in different geographic areas of the country have developed resistance to many pesticidal modes of action. If you’re dealing with a resistant population, some products and application methods may only serve to make the problem worse. It is a good idea to consult a qualified pest management professional (PMP) if you have bed bugs in your home.

For additional information on bedbugs contact the Extension Center.

Source: US EPA
Preparing and Canning Sauerkraut

25 lbs cabbage
3/4 cup canning or pickling salt

**Quality:** For the best sauerkraut, use firm heads of fresh cabbage. Shred cabbage and start kraut between 24 and 48 hours after harvest.

**Yield:** About 9 quarts

**Procedure:** Work with about 5 pounds of cabbage at a time. Discard outer leaves. Rinse heads under cold running water and drain. Cut heads in quarters and remove cores. Shred or slice to a thickness of a quarter. Put cabbage in a suitable fermentation container and add 3 tablespoons of salt. Mix thoroughly, using clean hands. Pack firmly until salt draws juices from cabbage. Repeat shredding, salting, and packing until all cabbage is in the container. Be sure it is deep enough so that its rim is at least 4 or 5 inches above the cabbage. If juice does not cover cabbage, add boiled and cooled brine (1-1/2 tablespoons of salt per quart of water). Add plate and weights; cover container with a clean bath towel. Store at 70º to 75ºF while fermenting. At temperatures between 70º and 75ºF, kraut will be fully fermented in about 3 to 4 weeks; at 60º to 65ºF, fermentation may take 5 to 6 weeks. At temperatures lower than 60ºF, kraut may not ferment. Above 75ºF, kraut may become soft.

If you weigh the cabbage down with a brine-filled bag, do not disturb the crock until normal fermentation is completed (when bubbling ceases). If you use jars as weight, you will have to check the kraut 2 to 3 times each week and remove scum if it forms. Fully fermented kraut may be kept tightly covered in the refrigerator for several months or it may be canned as follows:

**Hot pack** – Bring kraut and liquid slowly to a boil in a large kettle, stirring frequently. Remove from heat and fill jars rather firmly with kraut and juices, leaving 1/2-inch headspace.

**Raw pack** – Fill jars firmly with kraut and cover with juices, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Adjust lids and process according to the recommendations in Table 1.

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Source University of Georgia, National Center for Home Food Preservation.
Bran Muffins

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cup flour
- 1/4 cup raisins (optional)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 egg
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 2 cups bran cereal

Directions:

Put flour in mixing bowl, add salt, baking soda, and sugar. Mix well. Stir in the bran cereal, add raisins and mix well. Make a well in the center of the mixture and set aside. In another bowl, beat the eggs, milk and oil together. Pour the egg mixture into the well of the cereal mixture and stir until all ingredients are moist. Cover and store in the refrigerator until ready to bake.

To Bake: Preheat oven to 425° F. Spray or grease the bottoms of a muffin tin or use paper liners. Fill the tins about 2/3 full. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until golden brown.

Makes 10 servings. Serving size - 1 muffin.

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