Cooking 101 - In our fast paced life, many of us have forgotten how to cook or never learned how in the first place. Are you tired of eating out of a can or box? Come learn some basic cooking skills or catch up on the latest in cooking during this series of classes. All classes will have hands on activities and there will be a cost of $5 per class for supplies. Come to one or all four. Pre-registration is required.

* Basic Cooking 101: April 28, 5:30 to 7:30 pm or April 30, 10:00 am to 12:00 noon. Learn some of the basic cooking skills you need to make foods from scratch. This will include the difference between liquid measures and dry measures. What are some basic ingredients needed to make healthy meals from breakfast to dinner. Also, how do you use appliances like blenders and food processors to make cooking easier.

* Basic Sauces, Marinades and Soup Stocks: May 5, 5:30 to 7:30 pm or May 7, 10:00 am to 12:00 noon. Learn how to make savory sauces, marinades and soup stocks. Class includes safe techniques for making marinades and also what types of sauces and marinades goes best with different meats, poultry and fishes.

* Basics of Bread Making: May 12, 5:30 to 7:30 pm or May 14, 10:00 am to 12:00 noon. Learn the basics of bread making. Class will focus on easy everyday breads from biscuits, rolls, pizza dough to using whole grains in breads. Come prepared to get your hands messy as you work the dough and make some tasty breads.

* Cooking with Herbs: May 19, 5:30 to 7:30 pm or May 21 10:00 am to 12:00 noon. Come learn the herbs you can grow yourself or buy locally to add flavor and spice to your dishes.

Reducing Mid Life Clutter - A person does not have to be in mid life to determine they have too much clutter! In this day of confusing our wants and needs we tend to accumulate more then needed and find ourselves not knowing how to get rid of it. If clutter is getting you down, the workshop at 6:30 pm on Tuesday, May 6 will give you tips to begin the battle.

Basic Home Maintenance Course – Have you wanted to make those basic home repairs but didn’t know where to start? The Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Center is offering a five-series Basic Home Maintenance Course beginning Tuesday, June 17 from 5:30-7:30 pm. Remaining dates for the course are: June 19, 24, 26 and July 1. 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 pest, etc. The fee of $20 includes all materials. Space is limited; pre-registration is required.
Humor and Health: Laughter’s Effect on the Body

Research has shown that laughter is beneficial to our health. Humor has been known to improve our emotional and mental health but it also has benefits to our physical health and the prevention of chronic diseases as well. Here are some ways that laughter help:

- Stimulates our organs by enhancing our intake of oxygen-rich air, stimulating our hearts, lungs and muscles and increasing endorphins that are released by the brain.
- Gives our body a work out. A hearty laugh works our stomach muscles and can burn calories equal to other abdominal exercises.
- Lowers blood pressure by initially increasing our heart rate in ways similar to a stress response but then this increase is followed by a decrease which results in a relaxed feeling.
- Laugher decreases stress hormones and soothes tension and eases the stomach digestion and other physical symptoms of stress.
- Improves the immune system by increasing infection fighting antibodies and increasing cell activities that are beneficial to fighting diseases such as cancer.
- Laugher may increase the production of our bodies own painkillers.
- Stimulates both sides of our brain to enhance learning.
- Increases personal satisfaction so that we are happier in our professional and personal relationships. This satisfaction leads to greater job satisfaction and feelings of personal accomplishments.

With all these benefits of laugher, don’t forget to see the “sunny side” of situations. Keep a few favorite comics or jokes around to remind you to smile, laugh or see the positives when the going gets rough.

Family Relationships: Understanding the Five Languages of Love

In our interactions with family members, either our children or others close to us, we need to understand how they and how we like to be shown love. The Five Languages of Love are based on the work of Gary Chapman who wrote a book by this title.

- Touch Me – in this way people like to be touched or hugged. Be mindful of how you feel or your family reacts to touch. Does your child like to be held, lean against you or hang on you when they feel most stressed or just get home from school? These can be signs that they prefer touch. Set time for hugs.
- Tell Me – in this way people like to hear they are loved. It may mean that they like to hear certain words regularly. With kids it might be saying “I love you; you are a great kid” or sharing a memory. Sometimes these “Tell Me” people are uncomfortable with spoken words but still need to get notes or written expressions of love.
- Show Me through spending time – in this way people like you to express love through spending time with them. This could be an impromptu game of ball or planned trips to mall or fishing. It also can be as simple as showing up for events the child or family member is doing.
- Show Me through gifts – in this way people like to receive or give gifts to show love. It may be small or large gifts ranging from a flower picked or buying a larger item.
- Show Me through acts of service – in this way people like you to express love through an act or providing something. This could be completing a chore your child usually does during a week that is busy for them or making a favorite meal.

Remember to be sensitive to the way that your family likes to receive love. It may differ from the way you prefer it and different family members may like to be shown love in different ways. Taking the time to use the method they prefer can add to your expression of love and make it extra special. Also, share your preference with those that love you and see if they pick up on it and begin to show you love in the way you like it best.
Understanding Credit Card Jargon

With so many individuals using credit cards and now finding themselves in credit card peril, it may be a time to review some of the small print in credit card paperwork. A better understanding of the terms may help avoid some of the problems.

- **Average daily balance** -- This is the method by which most credit cards calculate your payment due. An average daily balance is determined by adding each day's balance and then dividing that total by the number of days in a billing cycle. The average daily balance is then multiplied by a card's monthly periodic rate, which is calculated by dividing the annual percentage rate by 12. A card with an annual rate of 18% would have a monthly periodic rate of 1.5%. If that card had a $500 average daily balance it would yield a monthly finance charge of $7.50.

- **Annual percentage rate (APR)** -- A yearly rate of interest that includes fees and costs paid to acquire the loan. Lenders are required by law to disclose the APR. The rate is calculated in a standard way, taking the average compound interest rate over the term of the loan, so borrowers can compare loans.

- **Balance transfer** -- The process of moving an unpaid credit card debt from one issuer to another. Card issuers sometimes offer teaser rates to encourage balance transfers coming in and balance-transfer fees to discourage them from going out.

- **Cash-advance fee** -- A charge by the bank for using credit cards to obtain cash. This fee can be stated in terms of a flat per-transaction fee or a percentage of the amount of the cash advance. For example, the fee may be expressed as follows: "2%/$10". This means that the cash advance fee will be the greater of 2% of the cash advance amount or $10. The banks may limit the amount that can be charged to a specific dollar amount. Depending on the bank issuing the card, the cash advance fee may be deducted directly from the cash advance at the time the money is received or it may be posted to your bill as of the day you received the advance. The cost of a cash advance is also higher because there generally is no grace period. Interest accrues from the moment the money is withdrawn.

*Source: bankrate.com*

Checking Your Gutters

As much as most homeowners don’t like climbing on ladders and checking their gutters, it is a necessity of being a homeowner. Any gutters holding leaves, branches, or other winter debris will prevent water from flowing properly into the downspouts. Cleaning them now prior to our spring rains can prevent water from entering the basement or crawlspace. What to check:

- If a section of your gutter is sagging, remove it, reset it to the proper pitch, and reattach. The gutter should slope toward the downspout 1/2" per 10 feet of length.

- Check the fascia (the wood behind the gutter), to see if it is deteriorating. If rotten, replace it with pressure-treated wood. If loose, reattach it with galvanized nails driven into rafter ends. If the rafter ends are rotten, nail small sections of pressure-treated wood to the side of the existing rafters. Nail fascia and gutters to this new wood.

- While it is raining, look for leaks in the gutter seams and where downspouts join the gutters. Use gutter seam sealer and sheet metal screws to reattach and reseal these joints.
Rain Barrel Sale

The 80 gallon barrel measures 37 inches high and 28 inches wide. It is made of 20% recycled high density polypropylene. The heavy concave lid channels water flow into the barrel. The screened entry blocks leaves, debris and insects and the dark green color discourages algae growth. Two overflow ports to move water away from your home. It comes complete with fittings and installation instructions. The cost of the 80 gallon barrel is $110 with payment to Master Gardener Project Fund by May 9. Pick up Day is Saturday, May 17, 9:30 am – 1:30 pm, at the WNC Farmers Market. To order your barrel, call Buncombe County Cooperative Extension at 255-5522 or mail payment to Master Gardener Project Fund, 94 Coxe Avenue, Asheville, NC 28801.

Canning Season is Just Around the Corner – Are You Prepared?

Canning season is just around the corner and now’s the time to make sure all your equipment is ready to use.

- Check canning jars for hairline cracks, chips or nicks on the sealing edge. Discard any jars not in good condition in order to avoid breakages or failure in sealing.
- Buy new lids to replace lids used last year. Check bands to make sure they will tighten well on jars.
- Make sure you have jelly bags, wide mouth funnels, crocks or other materials that you like to use while canning or making jellies and pickles.
- Check the gaskets and pressure gauge on your pressure canner. You can call our office, 255-5522, to make an appointment for checking the pressure gauge.
- Look for our canning and preserving classes coming in June and July.

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.

On the Home Front is a newsletter produced by the Family and Consumer Sciences Agents in Buncombe County. The purpose of this newsletter is to inform and educate Buncombe County residents on workshops and issues that affect them, and to provide ideas for helping improve their quality of life.

Editors: Nancy J. Ostergaard and Cathy Hohenstein, Extension Agents, Family & Consumer Sciences

Check out Buncombe County Center’s website at...http://buncombe.ces.ncsu.edu