Tired of Spending Too Much on Winter Heating?

As thermometers drop and energy prices climb, local residents can learn no-cost and low-cost ways to save on energy bills by attending the free educational workshop, Saving on Your Energy Bills, scheduled for Tuesday, October 7 at 6:30 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. Pre-register is required. Requirements for the homes receiving audits include: less than 2,000 square feet, one HVAC system and home must be 5 years or older. Only individuals attending the workshop will qualify for the reduced audit price.

Basic Home Maintenance Course

Does your home need minor repairs and you can’t afford someone to come in and complete them? Are you wasting water because of a leaky faucet? Are you spending too much on utility bills? The Buncombe County Cooperative Extension Center is offering a five-series Basic Home Maintenance Course beginning Thursday, October 16 from 5:30–7:30 pm. The remaining dates for the course are: October 21, 23, 28 and November 4. 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 includes all materials. Space is limited so pre-registration is necessary.

THE ABOVE CLASSES WILL BE HELD AT THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY CENTER OF NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION AT 94 COXE AVENUE, ASHEVILLE. FOR MORE INFO CALL 828-255-5522.

October is International Walk to School Month

In October families around the globe are making the effort to walk or bike to school during the International Walk to School month. As our recent gas crunch has hit, many families in the Asheville area are trying alternatives to driving their children to school. Be patient if you are driving and extra cautious around our schools for those walking, biking and even skateboarding youngsters. You may even want to try it yourself and bike, walk or roll into work or on your errands and get the added health benefit of adding more physical activity into your day. Even taking the bus causes most of us to walk more. So save some gas and join those children in using your feet more this October.
If It's October, There Will Be Ladybugs

Most of us have gotten used to the arrival of the Asian Multi-Colored Lady Beetle every October. It doesn’t mean they are a welcome visitor but it may help us cope if we have a better understanding of their habits. The beetles use visual or physical cues to find suitable overwintering sites. These locations tend to be the sunnier or warmer sides of buildings, or on exposed, light-colored buildings. Recent research suggests that once the beetles arrive at the site, they use chemical cues to locate the specific crevice they want to inhabit within the structure. The sources of these chemical cues have not been clearly identified, but may be beetle feces from the previous winter, the odor of beetles that died at the site, or an attractant pheromone. These factors may help to explain why beetles seem to pick the same sites (not necessarily every year but perhaps more frequently than they pick nearby areas).

The beetles can fit through very small gaps or cracks in siding, masonry, around window and door casings, and even through attic and soffit vents. The beetles hibernate as adults, usually in wall voids (they cannot survive long in the heated rooms of a house). Fortunately, Multicolored Asian lady beetles are primarily a nuisance only. If squashed, however, the beetles may stain fabric and painted surfaces. They do not eat wood or furniture. Some people have reported receiving a mild "nip" by beetles that have landed on them. There have been concerns that large numbers of beetles may possibly cause air quality problems indoors that could trigger allergies and/or asthmatic reactions.

Spraying Vs. Exclusion:  Spraying pesticides have limited effectiveness in stopping the beetle invasion. Repeatedly spraying the entire interior or exterior areas of a house isn’t practical, economical or (most importantly) safe for humans and pets. While it is not 100% effective, preventing the beetles from entering the home is currently one of the best long-term approaches to dealing with the lady beetles.

- Adjust or install tight-fitting door and/or sweeps or thresholds at the bottom of exterior doors.
- Install weatherstripping around other parts of the doorframe.
- Seal utility openings where air conditioner pipes, phone, cable TV and other wires enter the foundation and siding. Holes can be plugged with caulk, cement, urethane foam, or copper mesh. Steel wool may be used, but it may rust and possibly stain siding if it is exposed to the weather.
- Caulk around windows, doors, siding and fascia boards.
- Keep window screens in good condition and install insect screening behind attic gable vents.

Vacuuming. If you decide to vacuum up the beetles, empty the vacuum bag relatively soon afterwards. Dr. Susan Jones at Ohio State University has found an easier way to collect vacuumed beetles by inserting a woman's knee-high stocking into the vacuum's extension hose and then securing it with a rubber band before putting the attachment back on. This allows you to trap the beetles inside the stocking, which then conveniently closes up at the end with the rubber band when you remove it. You can also simply tie a knot in the end of the stocking. You can transfer the beetles to a container and keep them in a refrigerator over the winter (many will die there) or place them outdoors under a porch or in some other protected area and then release them into gardens next spring. An alternative is to toss your beetle-filled stocking into the garbage or dump the beetles into a container, freeze them, and then discard them.

FreezeThat Pumpkin Butter, Not Can It

With the colder months beginning and our winter squashes, like pumpkins available, it is important to keep in mind ways to safely store and preserve them. The most up-to-date recommendations for preserving pumpkins and other winter squashes is to freeze or if canned to only can in cubes. It is unsafe to can them mashed or pureed. This includes canning pumpkin or winter squash butters. Some of the factors that are critical to the safety of canned pumpkin products are the viscosity (thickness), the acidity and the water activity. When we mash or puree these squashes, there is too much variability in the final product to determine safe processing times and methods. You may freeze the butters and purees for later use. For other information on preserving or preparing our abundance of fall produce, call our office.
Recommended Schedule for Health Testing for Women

Many of us consider ourselves healthy and may not need to visit the doctor regularly. This is some information on the recommended schedule for routine health tests for women. If you get an annual physical each year, these tests should be occurring when recommended, but it is still good to know what the recommendations are so that you can be prepared and knowledgeable about your health and disease prevention. Screenings are one of the ways that we can help in the prevention of many of the complications that come with chronic diseases. Early detection has been shown to increase the positive outcomes from treatment when diseases do occur.

Bone Health – Discuss need of mineral density test with health provider.

Breast Health – Age 20 to 39: Breast Self Exam every month; Clinical Breast Exam every year. Age 40 and older: Breast Self Exam every month; Clinical Breast Exam every year; Mammogram every 1 to 2 years per health providers recommendation.

Colorectal – Age 50 and older. Choose schedule below:
- Fecal occult blood test every year
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy and fecal occult blood test every 5 years (A combination of first two is preferred)
- Double contrast barium enema (DCBE) every 5 to 10 years
- Colonoscopy every 10 years
- Rectal exam with each sigmoidoscopy, colonoscopy or DCBE.

Dental Health – Dental check up every 6 months.

Diabetes – Age 45 and older: Blood Glucose test every 3 years or as directed by health provider.

Eye Exam - Age 40 to 64: Every 2-4 years; Age 65 and older: Every 1 to 2 years.

Hearing Test – Starting at age 18, then every 10 years.

Heart Health - Check blood pressure at least every 2 years or as directed by health provider. Discuss checking cholesterol with health provider.

Reproductive Health - Pap test and pelvic exam every 1 to 3 years.

Thyroid Test – Starting at age 35, then every 5 years.

Getting Prepared

Being prepared in advance of a disaster or winter storm aids in relieving the amount of stress that we get should an event occur. Thinking agencies or individuals will take care of us during the difficult time is not the answer as personal preparation is the most important. If your budget doesn’t permit you to create the recommended disaster kit all at once, you can begin gathering a few items each time you visit the grocery store. The recommended items are:

- 1 gallon of water per person per day and plan on a minimum of three days.
- Keep a two week supply of non-perishable food - food not requiring refrigeration, cooking or water to prepare.
- Choose the size container that can be used in one meal so there are not leftovers.
- Include some comfort foods to help reduce stress.
- Choose food your family will like and also foods that have a long shelf life.
- Canned fruits, vegetables, and fruit juices are excellent choices since they contain liquid.
- High energy foods (peanut butter, jelly, crackers, granola bars, trail mix, dried fruits and nut) are good choices.
- Canned meats such as tuna, chicken, and Vienna sausage give you protein without requiring refrigeration.
- Extra batteries for flashlights and/or lanterns should be on the list.
- Don’t forget special needs for family members, ie. baby diapers, insulin, etc.

Rotate your food periodically to keep it fresh. If hot food or coffee is something that would make it easier coping with a disaster, consider what you would use if electricity were not available. Is this a good time to purchase a camp stove? **Remember when using a portable stove during an outage, it must be done outside the living area with good ventilation to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.**
The Colors of Health

Fruits and vegetables come in a wide variety of colors and flavors, but what is really important is what’s inside. Grocery stores and farmers markets are bursting with fresh fruits and vegetables this time of year that provide vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals. These help your body:

- Stay healthy and energetic
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Protects against the effects of aging
- Reduces the risk of some cancers and heart diseases

The Food Pyramid suggests we eat 2 cups of fruit per day and 2½ cups of vegetables. (These recommendations are for a 2,000 calorie diet).

So what equals a cup of vegetables?

A fist is about the size of a cup.
- a measured cup of cooked vegetables
- a measured cup of raw vegetables

**Exception** - 2 cups raw leafy greens = 1 cup of vegetables

What equals a cup of fruit?

- a fist size piece of fruit
- 1 cup of fruit pieces—fresh, canned, or frozen
- 1/2 cup dried fruit
- 8 ounces of 100% fruit juice

When choosing fruits and vegetables, go for a variety of colors or produce to give your body the mix of nutrients it needs. Here are some suggestions and information about fruits and vegetables that are at the peak season right now:

**Apples** - Choose firm apples with no soft spots. Apples may reduce the risk of colon cancer, prostate cancer and lung cancer. Apples also help with heart disease, weight loss and in controlling cholesterol. Apples have fiber which reduces cholesterol by preventing reabsorption.

**Bell Peppers** - Choose peppers with firm skin and no wrinkles. A good source of vitamin A and C, peppers can reduce the risk of some diseases. A single raw red pepper—hot or sweet—can meet the daily requirements for two important antioxidants Vitamins A and C.

**Eggplant** - Pick symmetrical eggplant; avoid oversized eggplants which may be tough or bitter. Eggplant is effective in the treatment of high blood cholesterol. It can block the formation of free radicals and control cholesterol. Eggplant is a source of folic acid and potassium.

**Leafy Greens** - When selecting greens, remember they cook down considerably. Greens are an excellent source of Vitamin A and C and they also contribute calcium, fiber and other nutrients.

**Squash** - Look for squash that is firm with bright colors and glossy exteriors. Squash are actually edible gourds. They are a good source of potassium, niacin, iron and beta-carotene. Squash blossoms can also be eaten.

**Melons** - Choose melons that are the right color and have no soft spots or mold. Most melons need to ripen a few days after purchase. Melons should be heavy for their size. Melons are 90% water, but they are very nutritious, containing vitamins A & C.

**Tomato** - Select firm fully colored fruit. Probably the most popular garden vegetable in America, tomatoes are packed with Vitamin C, potassium, fiber and Vitamin A. They are also a good source of lycopene which reduces the risk for many types of cancer.
Halloween Time
It is Halloween time again and here are a few safety tips from the U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission which will help protect children who plan to go trick-or-treating this Halloween.

- Children should go only to homes where the residents are known and have outside lights on.
- People expecting trick-or-treaters should remove anything that could be an obstacle from lawns, steps and porches. Candlelit jack-o'-lanterns should be kept away from landings and doorsteps where costumes could brush against the flame. Indoor jack-o'-lanterns should be kept away from curtains, decorations, and other furnishings that could be ignited.
- Young children should always be accompanied by an adult or an older responsible child.
- All children should WALK, not run, from house to house and use the sidewalk if available.
- Carry a flashlight to see and be seen. Wear costumes that are light and bright to be more visible to motorists or decorate costumes with reflective tape for better visibility.
- Bags or sacks should also be light colored or decorated with reflective tape.
- Do not obstruct vision; tie hat or scarves securely. Costumes, wigs and beards should be flame resistant. Well-fitting costumes and shoes prevent falling. Use cosmetics or wear properly fitted mask.
- Examine all treats before eating and discard any homemade candy or baked goods. Inspect commercially wrapped treats for signs of tampering, such as an unusual appearance or discoloration, tiny pinholes, or tears in wrappers. Throw away anything that looks suspicious.
- Parents of young children should also remove any choking hazards such as gum, peanuts, hard candies etc.

For more tips or to printout safety tips go to the Consumer Product Safety Commission website: http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/100.html

Is Phantom Energy Sucking Your Wallet Dry?
The average American home is brimming with consumer electronics and appliances – televisions, DVD players, stereos, and kitchen gadgets – the list goes on. All of these appliances are great to have when you need them, but they can add to your power bill even when turned off. These types of appliances can account for 15% of your power bill, and up to 40% of the energy they require is used when they are not running. Called “phantom” energy use, the power that clock displays, remote controls, and other features use in Off mode can really add up. While altering the energy requirements of existing appliances is not possible, using consumer electronics mindfully or replacing them with energy efficient models will significantly reduce the amount of energy they require. Following are several ways to reduce the energy consumption of existing appliances:

- Unplug chargers for cell phones and other electronics when the equipment is fully charged.
- Use a power strip as a central power supply for computers and peripheral equipment, video games, and other electronics. Turn off the power strip when the equipment is not in use.
- Enable power management features on your computer, monitor, and other office equipment.
- Avoid using a screen saver on your computer’s monitor; allow the monitor to switch to Sleep mode or turn it off when not in use.

For more information on minimizing phantom energy use, see: www.energystar.gov or visit the U. S. Department of Energy at: www.eere.energy.gov/consumer/your_home/appliances/index.cfm/mytopic=10040
Inspect and Repair

For most individuals their home is the largest financial investment that they own. Keeping it in good repair and properly maintained will help in retaining its value over the time of home ownership. Now is a good time before cold weather arrives to inspect and determine what is needed to prepare the home for winter. Although the list below is not complete, it may provide a starting point.

- Check your home for water leaks.
- Have a heating professional check your heating system every year.
- Protect your home from frozen pipes.
- Replace your furnace filter.
- Have a certified chimney sweep inspect and clean the flues and check your fireplace damper.
- Inspect and clean dust from the covers of your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.
- Make sure the caulking around doors and windows is adequate to reduce heat/cooling loss.
- Check the condition of the weatherstripping and door sweeps around exterior doors.
- Remove any branches touching the roof or sides of the home.

If making common repairs is overwhelming, plan to attend the Basic Home Maintenance Course offered by the Extension Center. Information is on the front page of this newsletter.

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.