New Weight Management Program: Eat Smart/Move More/Weigh Less. This new weight management program gives you practical skills to lose or maintain your weight in a healthy way. Even if we are able to maintain our weight, we may still want to plan for eating healthier and keep moving more. The class will meet on Mondays, 12:00-1:00 pm, September 8 through December 22. Plan to attend all sessions or as many you can. A $25 registration covers supplies, personal journal and magazine; pre-registration is required.

Local Shred-A-Thon Scheduled: The NC Attorney General’s Office, in addition to local agencies, is sponsoring a shred-a-thon on Saturday, September 20, 10:00 am to 3:00 pm. The event will be held at the Better Business Bureau, 112 Executive Park, Asheville. Shred-a-thons are a perfect way to destroy old tax records, employment records or credit applications. You DO NOT need to remove staples and paper clips from the documents. It usually takes about 10 minutes to dump the materials, sign a release, and watch the documents shred. Local sponsors are the Better Business Bureau and Pro-Shred.

Tired of Spending Too Much on Winter Heating? As thermometers drop and energy prices climb, local residents can learn no-costs 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. The workshop is sponsored by the N. C. Cooperative Extension – Buncombe County Center, and will be held at 94 Coxe Avenue. Pre-registration is required as space is limited. Register by calling 255-5522. 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.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO REGISTER FOR ANY OF THESE CLASSES, CALL 828-255-5522. ALL ARE HELD AT THE BUNCOMBE COUNTY CENTER OF NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION, 94 COXE AVENUE, ASHEVILLE.

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NC State commits itself to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status or disability. NC State welcomes all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.
Water Conservation Tips

With our rainless summer continuing, we need to be thinking of what new opportunities we have to save water in and around our homes. Water is something that most take for granted and don’t value until it is no longer available for one reason or another. Since 75% of our water is used in our bathrooms, they are a great place to begin conserving.

Fix any leaking faucet. A slow steady drip that may seem just a nuisance can actually waste over 350 gallons a month. One with a steady stream can waste 4600 gallons per month. Another source of wasting water is a running commode. If you hear the sound of water filling the commode tank and no one has recently flushed, there is water running from the tank into the bowl. A good method for checking leaks is to put a dye tablet or small amount of food coloring into the toilet tank. Let the toilet sit unflushed for a few minutes. Follow up with an inspection to see if colored water has entered the toilet bowl, is leaking from the outside of the tank bottom, or from the seal at the toilet base. If colored water is present, it indicates a leak in that particular location and can easily be remedied.

If a low flow showerhead (2.5 gallons per minute) has not been installed, you are probably using 5-7 gallons per minute while showering. To determine if the showerhead is low-flow, set a 2 quart saucepan on the floor of the shower and position it in the middle of the shower stream. With the shower on full, count how many seconds it takes to fill the pan. If it takes fewer than 12 seconds, a low-flow showerhead should be installed. Remember, not to dispose of the clean water that fell into the pan but recycle it by watering plants or giving to your pet.

Getting in the habit of turning off the water while brushing teeth or shaving can save up to nine gallons of water. It is better to recognize the value of our water resource while we still have it available. For additional water conservation tips check out: http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/agcomm/difference/drought/pdfs/water_conservation_home.pdf

Demand (Tankless or Instantaneous)

In days past, taking a hot shower or washing dishes meant water had to be heated ahead of time and stored, which can be inefficient. There are now alternatives to our traditional way of heating water. There are pros and cons to each system but as a result of inquiries to our office, a better explanation of an alternative may be necessary. The demand units heat water as it is needed. When a hot water tap is turned on, cold water travels through a pipe to the water heater where the water is heated over a gas burner or electric element. This supplies a constant flow of hot water, but can be limited by the heater’s flow rate. Tankless or instantaneous water heaters generally provide water 2-5 gallons of water per minute. Sometimes household hot water demands require a back-up demand water heater for additional capacity (for example, when running the dishwasher and taking a shower at the same time). Households can also install a separate demand water heater for an individual appliance, such as a washing machine or dishwasher.

Gas versions of demand water heaters provide a higher flow of hot water, but can waste energy if they employ a constantly burning pilot light. With a gas-fired demand water heater, find out how much gas the unit’s pilot light requires, and be sure to factor the energy costs for the pilot light into your water heater budget. Also, consider a model with an intermittent ignition device (IID) that lights the pilot light only as needed, rather than having the pilot light burn constantly.

If your home uses 41 gallons of water per day or less, a demand water heater can be 24-34% more efficient than a standard storage tank model. These heaters can be 8-14% more efficient in homes that use 86 gallons of water or more per day. Demand water heaters are usually more expensive than conventional (storage tank) models, but energy savings may offset that higher cost.

When buying a demand water heater, look carefully at the amount of hot water you will need, and look for a high-efficiency model that will save money and energy over the lifetime of the heater. The U.S. Department of Energy offers detailed information on calculating flow rates and hot water demand in your home at: http://www.eere.energy.gov/consumer/your_home/water_heating/index.cfm/mytopic=12830.
Frequent Questions about the Recent Salmonella Outbreak

With the recent outbreak of Salmonella in our country, many of us have questions about Salmonella and specifically this outbreak. These are answers to just a few of the questions.

- **What is Salmonella?** Salmonella is a type of bacterium. The type of Salmonella causing illness in this outbreak, Salmonella Saintpaul, is relatively uncommon. Fruits and vegetables that come into contact with Salmonella may become contaminated with it, causing illness if eaten. Salmonella lives in the intestinal tracts of some animals, and can live in soil and water for months. Once Salmonella has contaminated something, it can be spread from surface to surface. Fresh produce contaminated with Salmonella can spread the bacterium to the hands of a person who cuts the produce and to the cutting board on which the produce is sliced, for example.

- **What kind of illness does Salmonella cause?** Most persons infected with Salmonella develop diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps 12-72 hours after infection. Infection is usually diagnosed by culture of a stool sample. The illness usually lasts 4-7 days. Although most people recover without treatment, severe infections may occur. Infants, elderly persons, and those with impaired immune systems are more likely than others to develop severe illness. When severe infection occurs, Salmonella may spread from the intestines to the bloodstream and then to other body sites, and can cause death. In these severe cases, antibiotic treatment may be necessary.

- **Does the discovery of the contaminated jalapeños and Serrano peppers mean the source of the Salmonella Saintpaul outbreak has been found and that the outbreak is over?** Although the outbreak appears to have peaked, it is ongoing. Cases of Salmonella Saintpaul continue to be reported, and FDA continues its investigation. Epidemiologic data to date suggest that the entire outbreak can not be explained by the contamination found recently.

- **Should consumers avoid fresh jalapeño and Serrano peppers or foods that contain them during this outbreak?** Jalapeño and Serrano peppers grown in North Carolina and other parts of the United States are not associated with this outbreak. The FDA advises all consumers to avoid raw jalapeño and Serrano peppers, and foods that contain them, such as some types of salsa and pico de gallo, if the jalapeños or Serrano peppers were grown, harvested, or packed in Mexico. Consumers are advised not to wash, peel, or cook these kinds of raw peppers to try to get rid of Salmonella contamination that may be present. These actions are not likely to get rid of Salmonella, which is very hard to remove by conventional means, and might spread the bacterium to the environment; for example, to hands, sinks, cutting boards, knives, and other foods.

- **How can consumers tell where jalapeño and Serrano peppers are from?** Consumers may ask their retailers or food service providers, such as store or restaurant managers, where the jalapeño and Serrano peppers they sell were grown, harvested, and packed.

- **Is it safe to eat canned jalapeño and serrano peppers or processed foods that contain them?** All consumers may continue to eat canned jalapeño and Serrano peppers processed in a commercial food-processing facility, or foods that contain them; for example, the canned processed jalapeños and processed salsas sold in grocery stores.

Source: FDA

Don’t Discard the Granite

Our office has received several phone calls recently from worried residents that their granite countertop is giving off radon gas. The needless fear may have come as a result of a NY Times article earlier year. In a follow up report from Dr. Richard Toohey, President, Health Physics Society, he stated the following “No action needs to be taken to remove granite countertops in existing homes. If there are concerns by the homeowners, appropriate radon concentration monitoring should be conducted in the living areas of the home (per EPA protocols). If the granite countertop is determined to be a cause for concern, the most risk-reducing and cost-effective action to take would be to remove radon from the air throughout the home rather than remove the granite countertop.”
Do Your Packed Lunches Make the Grade?

By doing a little homework you can make your lunches go straight to the head of the class. You can make your own lunch more exciting and take some of the drudgery out of packing lunches for the family. The more you involve your family in planning, the more likely they are to eat them. With a few suggestions and new ideas you can come up with some healthy and delicious lunches. Here are some suggestions to help make lunches more exciting and healthy:

Parenting Issue: Packing a school lunch is a parenting issue. Mom and Dad lose control of what their child eats, or more often does not eat at lunchtime. Your job as a parent is to figure out what your child will eat. Be sure to include energy and brain power boosters that are healthy and tasty. This also works for other family members too.

Recommended Containers: Insulated, soft side lunch boxes or bags are the best for keeping food cold; however, metal or plastic boxes and paper bags can be used. If you use paper bags, double the bags for more insulation. If you plan to pack perishable foods, purchase or make other plans for an ice source such as freezing water bottles or juice boxes.

The Grocery Store: This may take a little patience and compromise. Involve everyone in shopping for lunch items in order to please everyone. You may think you have a lunch box full of goodies, but everyone else may think they are boring or even weird. To save time and confusion at the store, brainstorm at home and come up with a list of ideas. Be sure to include items everyone can help prepare.

Make a Chart: Ask everyone what their favorite foods are. Categories might be sandwiches, fruits, veggies and desserts. Everyone agrees to eat their lunch if it’s on the list. Allow family members to make changes along the way. You might be surprised at what is on the list. Post on the refrigerator for future reference.

Plan Theme Lunches: This can be fun for the whole family. You might try items with the same shape. “Round” would include things like bagels with cream cheese, oranges, and carrot rounds. Backwards lunches—make a sandwich with the bread in the middle and the cheese on the outside. Have lunches centered around colors, holidays, tea parties or cowboys. Just have fun!

Pack More Than Food: Pack little notes, photos, jokes, comic strips or sports articles. This lets your family know you are thinking of them even when you're not there. It also lets you know at lunchtime, someone is smiling because of you!

Remember Food Safety: You can protect your family from bacteria. Bacteria grows quickly at room temperature when there’s a source of food and moisture. Remember the following tips:

- Wash hands and food preparation areas in hot soapy water.
- Wash raw fruit and vegetables in clean water.
- Keep hot foods hot - heat hot foods thoroughly and put in a warm thermos.
- Keep cold foods cold - make sure you have an ice source for your perishable foods.
- Store lunches out of direct sunlight and away from radiators.
- Discard leftovers that are perishable – keep foods that do not need to be kept cool for after school snacks.
- Wash the inside of your lunchbox each day and let it air dry so it will be clean the next day.
- Do not reuse food packaging or paper bags.

Fast Idea for a School Lunch

Use your favorite chili recipe; heat thoroughly and pack in thermos with cup top. In a separate plastic bag, pack corn chips and shredded cheese. Crumble the chips in bottom of thermos cup and add shredded cheese with warm chili. The chili will melt the cheese. Also include other shredded veggies like carrots.
The Magic of Friendship

Friends are very important. Many people report that they turn first to friends in a crisis. Friends are often nearer than family and can help more quickly in time of trouble. Those without friends suffer from various degrees of isolation and loneliness. In contrast, older adults with close friends spend most of their social lives in activities with these friends. In one nationwide study, 91 percent of people over 65 with close friends said that they see these friends almost every day. This is only slightly lower than the 94 percent of adolescents who try to see their friends every day.

Some research studies have found a link between the strength of a person’s network of friends and his or her physical and social health. Friendship can bring a person:

- Emotional support—the caring, love, and esteem of others.
- Tangible help in times of crisis, as well as on a daily basis.
- Communication and information in the form of opinions and recommendations.
- Something to do. Most older adults do more if they have a friend who also wants to go along.

**Physical results of the magic of friendship:** Disease, death rates, and life expectancy are related to the strengths of a person’s social ties. Those with few relationships tend to be at much higher risk for disease or death than those who have strong ties with friends or family. This holds true for men and women from all ethnic groups and at all social and economic levels.

**Emotional results of the magic of friendship:** Being able to confide in a close friend helps reduce the strain of daily hassles. Close personal relationships also help people adjust to changes such as death, birth, marriage, and moving to another home. Quality friendship is more important than the number of friendships a person has. One study of women under stress showed that those without a confidant were 10 times more likely to become depressed. Casual friendships seemed to help very little, but even one intimate relationship helped support the person and relieve some of the depression.

It is an old saying, but still true: “To have a friend, you must be a friend.” If you lack the friendships you desire, you may need to take the initiative to be a friend to someone else. If you feel isolated, think about joining a civic group, a social club, a volunteer organization, or a church. These are great places to meet people, and you may discover people with whom you have a lot in common. Who knows? A wonderful friendship may be just around the corner.

Ostergaard Receives Healthy Home Specialist Credential

The Healthy Homes Specialist (HHS) Credential is the newest addition to the National Environmental Health Association’s (NEHA) credential offerings. It was developed in partnership with the National Center for Healthy Housing (NCHH) and the National Healthy Homes Training Center & Network. The HHS exam tests your understanding of the connection between health and housing, enabling you to take a holistic approach to identify and resolve problems that threaten the health and well being of residents. Attainment of the HHS credential demonstrates professional direction, achievement and the knowledge to carry out functions and duties of a technical nature in a responsible manner.

Nancy recently completed both a two hour written exam and a visual exam to earn the credential.
Re-Think Your Drink

Do you pay attention to what (or how much) you drink each day? For many of us, the availability of high-calorie sodas and fruit drinks at our work or school, make it easy for us to grab a drink on the go – without thinking about how healthy that drink is. These drinks can add up calories and before we know it, we’re drinking as much as 1000 to 1300 calories. So before you pick up that can of soda or specialty coffee, think about replacing it with something your body needs, like water, low-fat milk or 100% fruit juice! Here are some tips to get you to rethink your drink all day long.

- **Drink in the AM:** Pour a glass of juice or low-fat milk.
- **Drink all day:** Keep a water bottle handy.
- **Drink in the evening:** Serve healthy drinks for dinner like low-fat milk, 100% juice and water.
- **Drink before activity:** Hydrate yourself with water by drinking at least 8 to 16 ounces of water a couple of hours before you begin any intense physical activity; then another 8 ounces right beforehand.
- **Drink during activity:** Stay cool with cool fluids.
- **Drink after activity:** Rest, refuel, and rehydrate, but be careful of high calorie sports drinks.

If you choose a higher calorie drink, make some adjustments to your food intake to balance those extra calories that day.

NJO/CH/SKC: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.*