



# Family Matters

January/February, 2003

A Family Newsletter prepared by Iowa State University Extension Family Specialists

## What's Your Wealth?

Now is a great time to assess your wealth. Once a year it is important to total up what you own, subtract what you owe and then determine your wealth.

Wealth, you may ask, why is it important?

As you think about your future, it is your wealth that will allow you to realize your goals. By living below your means today, you will "find" money to invest.



Even small investments add up over time. To learn more ask for *PM 1816 – Begin By Planning Today* at your local ISU Extension office or our website at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/financial/retire.html>

Many of us do not think about our wealth. Some people even feel embarrassed when we think about having assets. Yet as we look down the road to important family goals, many of them do take money.

College for your child, financial security in later life, buying a home, owning a business, or another important goal for our family, all require building wealth. What are you doing today to build wealth?

## Keep your cool

*DO* you often find yourself yelling or running out of patience with children or family members? Try these hints to help you keep your cool and get their attention:

- Speak quietly - whisper - instead of yelling
- Write *short* notes instead of giving *long* lectures
- Try using one word instead of using sentences. Instead of "How many times do I have to tell you to do your homework?" simply say "Homework."

Yelling and losing control are often symptoms of stress.

Are you:

- Getting enough sleep and exercise?
- Eating well?
- Making time to do things you enjoy?

Take good care of yourself and you may find it much easier to stay kind, firm and keep your cool.

*2003*

## New Year's Resolution

If becoming more physically active is on your resolution list and fitting activity into your daily schedule is a challenge, request the pocket-size brochure, Quick Fit Program: EDC 247 from your local county extension office. It contains a guide for 15 minutes of walking and muscle conditioning. It does not require any special equipment, clothing nor do you have to go to the gym. It can easily be done during a break at the office or at home. The "Quick Fit" routine will move you closer to getting at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily.

## Holiday Bills?

Have holiday bills replaced holiday cards in your mailbox? Are these bills of concern to you?



Often while shopping people do not think about credit card charges as debt. While shopping were you planning how to pay off the debt you incurred? In the hectic high spirited holiday shopping season, we are often focused on making our list and checking it twice and not on how to pay the charges after the first of the year. It seems like such a long way in the future.

Often it is this lack of planning that allows credit card debt to build season after season. Are there times when holiday gifts from last year have not been paid as you begin to make your list for this year's giving?

How much more are you paying for gifts? Is it 12%, 18% or more? Every month that passes before you pay your credit card bill completely, costs you money and increases the cost of the gifts you gave.

Your Family Resource Management Field Specialist has a computer program called Power Pay to help you consider various payoff options and helps you design the option that works best for your family. Please call her to arrange a time to meet or call your local ISU Extension Office to make arrangements to meet her.

## Save Today for Future Gift Giving

Early in December, an ISU Extension client excitedly reported that she had the money to pay cash for her holiday gift giving. Last January she decided how much she would like to spend on holiday gifts . . . eleven months later, she was looking forward to shopping without worrying about money.

For illustration, let's say you plan to spend \$500 on holiday gifts in December 2003. So beginning in January save just over \$10 each week or \$45 each month through November. Think about how nice it will be to have money in hand for the gifts you would like to give next holiday season!

## Stretching a Dollar

Do your dollars stretch from paycheck to paycheck? Consider every expense. Is it a need or a want? Could you cut out one pop, candy bar, pack of cigarettes, bottle of beer, or lottery ticket a day or a week? If you "save" a dollar a day, in a year you will have "found" \$365 for a special family goal.

Bringing your lunch from home could save you \$4 a day, \$20 a week or more than \$1,000 in a year. Could you use this money to build wealth or pay for some special family goal?

Are there other places where you can "find" money to save or invest? Consider:

- Board games at a friend's home with everyone bringing something to eat. Kids included.
- Give a gift of time. A gift certificate of child care, a car wash, washing windows as a gift.
- Plan family menus using the grocery store ad.
- Look for ways to reuse clothing and home furnishings in new ways. Be creative!

## Family Mealtime

For many families, finding mealtime with the whole family is a challenge! Eating together as often as you can with as many of the family as you can is important to family togetherness. Children learn manners, share the day's experiences, relationships are strengthened, and members feel a sense of belonging and support.

Sometimes conflict, tension, and fighting may replace conversation and togetherness. So what can you do?

First, set a goal of a pleasant family mealtime. Set a positive example by talking respectfully to family members. Focus on the positive, complimenting children when they do something right. Set some rules for family mealtime such as: take turns talking, listen to others and show respect. Follow through when someone misbehaves.

Don't let the value of family mealtime become lost in the busy-ness of life.

## Keep Children Buckled Up

*For many young children, especially those between 9 and 24 months, complaining and climbing out of the car seat is not unusual behavior.*

However, research shows that child safety seats, when used correctly, can reduce fatalities among children less than 5 years old by over 70 percent.

Try the following ideas for teaching your toddler to stay buckled up.

- Introduce your child to a new car seat with a short trip for fun.
- Make regular stops to stretch; sing songs together.
- Have some special books and soft toys for the car.
- Show your child that everyone else in the car is restrained.

If your child complains or climbs out of a car seat follow these steps.

- Stop the car right away and put the child back in the car seat.
- Tell the child the car will not start again until he or she is fastened in the child restraint seat.
- Stay calm, be firm and don't make "exceptions".

Remember, resistance is usually just a passing phase and most children can be taught to stay properly restrained in a few days or weeks.

## What's Taking the Place of Physical Activity?

Watching TV and playing video games are popular "activities" for children. Average time spent:

- 2.5 hour per day for 2 to 7 year olds
- 4.5 hours per day for 8 to 18 year olds

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends:

- Limit TV viewing to 1 to 2 hours per day of quality programs
- Remove TV sets from children's bedrooms
- Children under 2 years of age should not watch television

## Family First in 2003

The beginning of a new year is always a good time to ask the question, "Are we doing what we need to do to keep our family bonds close and loving?" Ask yourself:

### Are we...

- Guiding our children?
- Honoring our partners?
- Respecting our parents?



### If divorced...

- Are we co-parenting with civility for the sake of the kids?

### If remarried...

- Is there good partnering between parent and stepparent?
- Do we plan enough time for the couple?
- Is guilt causing overindulgence of our children?
- Does the couple agree and follow through on discipline?
- Are there house rules?

Create and use family rituals to make your family interaction more predictable and loving:

- Meals - Have at least two ritual meals a week. There will be no TV, just good family conversation.
- Good manners - Hello, good-bye, please, thank you. We let others finish their sentence and look people in the eye when others are speaking.
- Keeping things in order – Things in their place and a place for things.
- Bedtimes – Share a story. Include meditation or some other quiet activity into your bedtime routine.

*(Adapted from Family Information Services, Mpls., MN)*