IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
University Extension

NOVEMBER ISSUE 2007

FAMILY Ties

Holidays

NOT JUST FOR CHILDREN

When you hear the word "holiday." what comes to mind? "Is it your favorite cookie recipe, special music, the familiar smell of traditional foods, memory-making times with family, or other wonderful things?"

Often, for the older adults in our families, holidays produce a mixed range of emotions. Along with many happy memories, older adults also may be coping with stresses triggered during holiday times.

A few tips to help families with older adults prepare for the holidays:

Give practical and useful gifts: Give gifts of safety, comfort, and convenience. Share home-made goodies that your older adult enjoys by bringing them a 'one-serving' portion. Many times our elderly family members have physical conditions that include special diets. However, one small, special treat is often permissible, but be sure to check with their health care professional first.

Consider your older relatives' physical abilities and needs: Engaging in family traditions such as decorating a tree, spending time caroling outside, or baking may require some creative re-planning as family members age.

Tune into the holiday blues: During holiday get-togethers plan a specific remembrance celebration of good friends and family members who are no longer alive. Encourage your elderly adults to share their difficult feelings by making time to listen to them. Sometimes these feelings surface after the holiday is over when there are likely to be fewer visitors.

Holidays may be times to assess your older adult's physical and mental health. The holidays may be a rare time for all family members to be in one place at one time. This together-time could give your family an opportunity to tune into and assess changed habits such as decreasing appetite, neglect or deterioration of personal hygiene, and the purchasing of unusual items, especially purchases from television advertisements.

Families need to recognize warning signs of depressions. While the 'holiday blues' are usually temporary, clinical depression tends to linger long after the holiday is over. Depression affects 15 of every 100 adults over age 65 in the United States. Don't wait for it to disappear. Instead, contact the older adult's healthcare provider for help should you observe any warning signs in your elderly family member.

Volunteer during the holidays. Families can work with their older members to take food when visiting shut-ins, provide or purchase something for a community holiday event, or make a quilt for the local shelter. Studies show that older persons who volunteer stay physically active; engage their brains, thereby protecting memory; and have fewer medical problems than the senior population in general.

Visit Iowa State University Extension's Web site for publications and programs for older adults and their families: http://www.extension.iastate.edu/homefamily/aging/

Although holidays can be stressful for all of us, they also can be times of great joy. Remember to include your older adult family members in the making of new traditions and in planning for family celebrations. With careful preparation, holidays can be times of celebration and memory-making for both young and old.

NORTHWEST AREA
Family Newsletter

Prepared by Eugenia Hanlon, Jan Burk, and Nancy Clark

ISUE Family Specialists

Holiday Gift Idea

FOOD & NUTRITION

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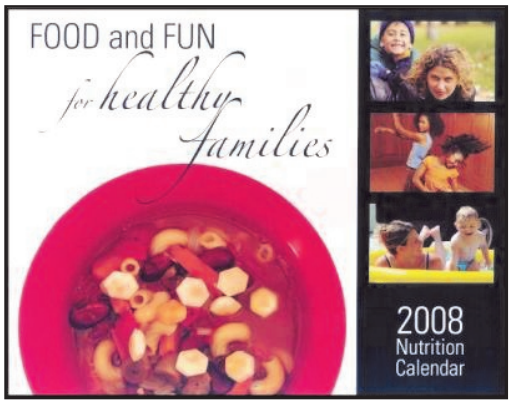

This full-color 12-month calendar is a great addition to any kitchen.

• Featuring nutritious, taste-tested recipes -- plus menu ideas.

• Provides monthly tips for increasing family activity levels

• All recipes have 15% or less calories from fat and contain minimal added sugars. Sodium content is low and/or suggestions for reducing sodium content are given.

• Cooks of all ages will find this a valuable asset all year long.

• Only $4.00 per copy.

Go to: http://www.extension.iastate.edu/healthnutrition/ for ordering information, or stop in at your local extension office.

November is

NATIONAL POMEGRANATE MONTH

Have you ever eaten a pomegranate? Pomegranates have been cultivated for centuries, but for many of us they may be a new fruit to try. Rich in vitamin C and B6 as well as potassium, they may look more like a decoration than something to eat.

To select a perfect pomegranate, begin by looking at its skin. It should be thin, shiny, tight and unbroken. It should seem heavy for its size. The peak time for pomegranates is late October through December.

Store pomegranates in a cool, dark place for up to one month or in the refrigerator for up to 2 months.

To prepare a pomegranate, cut off the crown end and lightly score the rind in several places with a knife. Immerse the fruit in water for about 5 minutes. Holding the fruit under water, break it into chunks, separating seeds from membrane. The seeds will sink, but the rind and membrane will float. Use a slotted spoon or strainer to skim off the membrane and rind – discard. Pour waters and seeds into a strainer.

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Inside, are hundreds (about 800) of translucent, scarlet red seeds encased in a spongy white membrane.

You may eat the seeds immediately; refrigerate for 3 days, or store them in the freezer for 6 months. An average pomegranate will yield about ¾ cups seeds or ½ cup juice.

RED AND WHITE FRUIT SALAD – Serves 4

2 pomegranates, chilled
2 bananas
1 tablespoon brown sugar
¼ cup lime juice – or juice of 2 fresh limes

Combine lime juice and brown sugar for the dressing. Seed the pomegranates. For each serving, mound seeds from half of one pomegranate in the center of a small plate. Place half of a sliced banana around the seeds. Drizzle with lime dressing. Serve.

*Source: Pick a **better** snackTM - POMEGRANATE by Jan Temple, Iowa State Nutrition & Health Field Specialist*

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Keep Your Money

YOU EARNED IT !

Are you looking at gathering your tax information for the New Year, and getting a tax refund? Have you considered options of having the tax return done a no cost? Some individuals choose not to even file income taxes, but miss out on hidden money that is available to them.

Apply for Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and other credits at free tax sites across Iowa. Get up to $4,000 in taxes returned to you quickly and at no cost! **Who Can Get the EITC for Tax Year 2006?**

- Families with one child who earn less than $32,001 (or less than $34,001 for married workers) are eligible for a credit of up to $2,747.
- Families with two or more children who earn less than $36,348 in 2006 (or less than $38,348 for married workers) are eligible for a credit of up to $4,536.
- Workers without a qualifying child who earn less than $12,120 in 2006 (or less than $14,120 for married workers) are eligible for a credit of up to $412.
- Investment Income Limit = $2,800.

OTHER IMPORTANT CREDITS…

Child Tax Credit = up to $1,000 per child under age 17. Workers must earn over $11,300 in 2006 to qualify for the refundable Additional Child Tax Credit.

Want to get your taxes prepared for free? To locate a site near you, dial 211 and ask for the closest Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) site. Some sites are located at your local libraries. Usually it is one day per week. I would suggest calling ahead and making sure that the volunteer is available on that particular day if extensive travel is needed.

Oftentimes specific items are required, so be sure to ask those questions as well. These sites are usually income related or age related. Some are specifically for elderly and other do a combination of income and age. If you are eligible for fuel assistance you may be eligible for this service as well and it could save you several hundreds of dollars.

What to bring:

- Social security cards for taxpayer, spouse, children and other dependents.
- Proof of bank account for direct deposit
- Amount of payments for student loan interest, child care expense, and college tuition.
- All W-2 and 1099 statements.
- Advance Child Tax Credit Information.
- Amount of property taxes paid.

Workers with income who don't have a social security card may still be required to file a tax return or may want to file a tax return to receive a refund. Workers can request an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) when they file their tax return. For more information about what documents you will need to request at ITIN, you can access Iowa Legal Aid's article on ITIN's at www.iowalegalaid.org under Legal Resources and other resource for Iowans, sub-topic Work, subtopic Taxes.