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News Release

Family Secret Weapons

Knock on five neighborhood doors and you may find five different faces of today's families. From traditional nuclear families to step families to those with grandparents raising grandchildren, caregivers and single parents, the diversity and complexities of modern day families are definitely evident. The many differences found between families are paralleled with the many existing within them; however, there often are many threads that tie and unite them. Commonalities rooted in comfort, support, enjoyment, love and laughter bind the family unit; while on the other hand, opposite counterparts exist that possibly tear away at their strength.

Those elements that deter or destroy the bonds and structure of the family can be viewed as the "family secret weapons." The danger of these secret weapons is that they often can be allowed to take up permanent residence because they operate as the root of an outward problem. A brief look at this issue may unveil ways to properly identify weapons and reveal keys relevant to unlocking family concerns and dilemmas.

Hidden Arsenal

Secret weapons, the underlying problems, the root issues describe those elements which must be uncovered and adequately addressed in order to bring about effective resolutions. Common weapons in many families' arsenal include:

- Unmanaged stress/ anger
- Improper eating/ physical activity patterns
- Lack of effective communication and/or conflict resolution
- Ineffective parenting strategies
- Unresolved* family disputes/problems.

Surface Problems

Various studies reflect the premise that often the surface problems are circular or like revolving doors in reference to their reoccurrence due to the issues masked beneath them. Surface problems that many families face are:

- Abuse (i.e., family, self, drug)
- Marital issues
- Generational "preventable" health problems/issues
- Undesired generational family structure trends
- Depression, anxiety
- Constant family discord/dissension.

Solutions to Disarm:

Realizing the distinctions and connections among the above issues is a very empowering part in reducing many of the threats within any family. With this knowledge in hand, relatives are better equipped to recognize and work toward appropriate solutions to improve and/or maintain desired relationships, structures and overall well-being. The following are two additional avenues available for families and individuals to explore:

·**Counseling:** Certain difficult or complex issues may be best eased through methods of therapy or counseling. Churches, community agencies, grant programs and private businesses/individuals are venues offering these services.

·**Community education:** Organizations such as your local Extension office have ongoing programs and workshops available on various topics relating to issues important to families and individuals. These programs are often provided free or of little cost to the public. The Extension also offers free educational publications which are available at each local office as well as online at www.aces.edu.

The St. Clair County Extension Office will be offering the following family and child development related programming this fall. Contact the Extension Office at (205) 338-9416 to register or for more information.

Caring for Caregivers Conference: October 10th, 17th & 24th

Grandparent Raising Grandchildren Seminar: October 23rd

Smarts Steps Seminar (Step-families): November 6th

Mastering the Magic of Love Seminar (Married/engaged couples): November 13th

For questions or more information on this or related topics, contact Synithia Williams, Regional Extension Agent in Family and Child Development for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System at (205) 329-1148 or email at willisl@aces.edu.

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the primary outreach organization for the land-grant mission of Alabama A & M University and Auburn University, delivers research based educational programs that enable people to improve their quality of life and economic well-being. Visit our website at www.aces.edu/StClair.