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News Release

Family Staycations: The Budget Friendly Route

Don't cancel those plans for the family vacation just yet! Or, maybe you should explore a similar option with less miles on the car and more money in your pocket. Staycations are popular alternatives to vacations that are spent around or close to home, yet can offer many of the same elements of its pricier counterparts.

In such financially challenging times, many families may consider forgoing vacation plans; however, staycations can be designed to fit almost any budget. A few easy calculations quickly reveal how planning this period to relax, bond, enjoy and possibly rebuild on any budget is time worth "spending!"

Adding in quality time is a universal trait of strong families. Simple, yet equally challenging, it easily can become a dwindling occurrence in any household without purposeful plans in place. *Reductions* in such family staples as family dinners, vacations and reunions over time can rob families of the fibers that unite them. Making this time a priority throughout the year, statistically results in stronger, more-in tune households, which generally *equals* healthier and happier families. Although obstacles exist, options such as staycations offer alternate routes to family bonding.

Consider the following as you begin charting your course to the staycation that best fits your family:

Are We There Yet?

A feature of staycations is that the route to family fun can be a short one. Whether it is a weekend, week or other, begin determining the best length for your family. To jump-start the planning process, consider a few probable dates and pencil them in on the calendar.

Take a Right at Home, Hang a Left Around the Corner...

Reflecting on your budget and desires, establish whether you will plan your staycation around the home or extend it to city or state perimeters. Many opt to do a mixture of these. You may begin by jotting down some possible in-house activities and outings to help determine your approach. Many gem locations are often found right under your nose! There may be local sites that your family has never or rarely visited together. Also, there are old favorites that you enjoy over and over. Possible outing venues include local museums, amusement parks, sporting games, zoos as well as traditional parks and similar natural attractions. In-house activities could involve

game nights, movie rentals, competitions and even cookouts. When personalizing this family time, be creative and think outside the box!

All for One, One for All!

As you began brainstorming ideas for activities on your staycation, keep the end objective in mind. What is it that you hope to accomplish? For most, a staycation allots adequate time for unwinding and rest. It incorporates elements that foster family sharing, enlightenment and connecting. Lastly, plan to ensure that there's family fun for all.

Look at and present the family staycation to your family as a great and important time to strengthen and enjoy the family. Staycations and vacations, alike, offer critical elements to families and, inevitably, the community in which the families reside.

For more information on this or related topics, please contact Synithia Williams, Regional Extension Agent in Family and Child Development for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System at the St. Clair County Extension office at (205) 338-9416 or email at willisl@aces.edu.