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News Release

“Recession-Proof” Family

Many families are experiencing effects of the nation’s economic crisis. While some make adjustments and grapple with potential threats relating to job security, mortgages and bills, others are currently in the process of picking up the pieces as a result of a downturn within these and similar areas. As statistics conflict in the projection of the length of what has been termed a non-traditional recession, it is imperative that families determine their outlook, consider possible approaches and remain resilient throughout its duration.

Beware of Mental Recesses! Don’t fall into...

- Recession Depression:** Any crisis can be taxing; thus, a national one with varied widespread implications might result in feelings of depression. Although it can be normal, prolonged depression is viewed as a serious condition affecting mood and behavior that could require professional help.
- Recession Aggression:** Aggression is not essentially negative; however, anxiety and frustration can develop into aggression that lends to negative behaviors. It is important to police such emotion in crisis to ensure that it does not manifest into destructive, misplaced aggression.

Framing thoughts positively and exploring solutions are keys in counteracting such pitfalls.

‘Proof - Positive

Families can survive and certainly thrive amidst crises; nonetheless, operating without a road map of sorts can thwart the effectiveness of efforts and erode the necessary foundation.

Meeting to devise a family plan is an early starting point in confronting challenges and transforming negative feelings or actions into positive steps. With purposeful thought, this is where spouses and potentially the entire family can develop a shared perspective and plan regarding jobs, household budgets and similar issues encompassing the following and more:

- Smart Shopping:** Pre-shopping can help families save. Common tactics to dust off if not currently in place are preparing shopping lists and saving coupons. It also includes possibly

buying in bulk, choosing restaurant/entertainment venues wisely as well as analyzing and holding off on unnecessary purchases.

▪Child Care/Enrichment: The U.S. Census bureau reveals that the typical American family with two young children spends an average of \$14,000 a year on child care, which is almost a quarter of its annual income. Those recently laid off may find that they now qualify for child care assistance. Interested can contact the state's social service or local child care resource and referral agency on childcareaware.org.

Some summer economical child enrichment options may be found through community centers/programs, church vacation schools, YMCA's and camps such as those offered by 4-H and colleges. Families may also consider employing older relatives or other trusted sitters to take care of youth during the season as an economical alternative.

▪Health and Wellness: In conjunction with possible plans to budget and invest, incorporating elements to diffuse stress and promote wellness is an important component during these times. Attention to overall wellbeing helps to bolster morale and counter added pressure and related illness.

Strategies could involve exercise, hobbies, meditation/faith, as well as vacations and/or staycations.

▪Resources: There are many needs that can be matched with services. Family members should know that help is often as close as a computer click, look through the phone book or talk with appropriate individuals. Some available resources for families are offered at low cost and many others free.

Recession Lessons

Past recessions have tested the nation's families in various ways. Today, families have vast lessons to reflect upon and tactics and resources at their disposal to remain strong. Consider the following:

▪Parenting: Some of recession's smallest and greatest victims are kids. Households should be mindful of stress and areas of unintended neglect when it comes to children. Parents may recognize subtle signs indicating fear, frustration and withdrawal. During these and other times, it will be important to increase communication and plan for more quality time as possible. Parenting lines are also available to provide advice and referral services.

▪Marriages: Spouses will be key partners within a recession. Husbands and wives can, however, become readily accessible recipients of each other's frustration. As financial issues are cited as a factor of many marital disagreements, finding healthy modes of conflict resolution and making time to nurture the marriage help ensure that the couple remains strong during challenging times.

▪Individual: Some tolls are only or best known at the individual level. Taking self-inventory during these times help to identify areas of personal struggle. Being aware of the root of issues and potential problems empower not only the individual but strengthens the entire family.

A great lesson of past recessions for families is to remember that a recession is referenced as a *phase* of a nation's economy. Weather the "economic storm" through steps to ensure your family is recession-proof.

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) offers various resources that families may explore during these times. Need a road map? Visit the St. Clair County Extension office or click on the link from the front page of the ACES website www.aces.edu/theroadahead/ for your free copy. *The Road Ahead* publication booklet is designed to help individuals and families maneuver through challenging economic times. ACES also offers a money management calendar that is available free of charge each year along with many other publications and programs addressing parenting, agriculture, youth, food safety, health and more.

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.