A Few Discoveries in Family Life
by H. Wallace Goddard, Ph.D.

Dr. Wally Goddard, family life specialist at the University of Arkansas Extension Service and keynote speaker for the 4th Annual Family Conference, offers some insights into family life.

On Marriage
There have been many discoveries that have changed our lives. Think of the influence of penicillin, Teflon, electricity, and wireless communication. The discoveries are innumerable. Yet, in the vital area of close relationships, we often operate under badly outdated assumptions. For example, many people in the 1960s and 1970s promoted a medical model of marriage, i.e., notice anything that is wrong with your partner, think about it, talk about it, and invite your partner to fix it. It seems so reasonable. Many marriage programs have been based on skillful communication of discontents, but there is a new approach to marriage that is emerging from remarkable research.

Dr. John Gottman, University of Washington psychology professor and founder of the Gottman Institute, conducted a detailed study of marriage dynamics and offers some helpful hints for marriage couples. For example, he recommends editing what you say (some things don’t need to be said), using positives (kindness), and self-soothing techniques (calmness and gentleness). In successful marriages, partners value the relationship over being right (repair attempts). Happy couples make the creative use of differences, work to build their relationship, and actively invest in their love. It makes sense that a focus on problems only binds up the mechanisms of marriage. In fact, in some studies the best predictor of positive family relationships is simply the level of kindness.

On Raising Children
When it comes to raising children, many people are looking for some magical combination of rules, consequences, timeouts, and rewards that will teach their children to be good citizens. Decades of parenting research confirm that nothing matters more than love. Urie Bronfenbrenner, Jacob Gould Sherman Professor of Human Development and Family Studies and of Psychology at Cornell University, eloquently stated, “Every child should spend a substantial amount of time with somebody who’s crazy about him or her . . . There has to be at least one person who has an irrational involvement with that child, someone who’s in love with him or her, and whom he or she loves in return.”

Timeout, for example, is less important than loving and teaching a child. In fact timeout has often been misused as a means for punishing children. The assumption was that parents must make children suffer for their misdeeds. The fact is that the best use of timeout is for soothing or helping people to calm down. Timeout is as effective for parents as it is for children. When we feel calm, we are better able to solve problems.

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The state of Alabama has over 1,737,000 households (2000 Census). When we think of the term household, we generally get a mental image of members of a family living together under one roof. By definition, the traditional family has been characterized as a husband and wife team and their offspring sharing a common dwelling. But statistics present a more complex definition of Alabama’s families for the 21st century.

Unlike the traditional concept of two parents, 2.5 children and a pet, today’s family exists in a variety of forms. In fact, nontraditional families are currently more the norm. Across the nation some 30-60% of youth in urban school districts live with caregivers that are not their biological parents. In Alabama, 29% of families with children are headed by single parents. And, new forms of nontraditional families continue to evolve as social service agencies and kinship groups seek to ensure supportive and nurturing environments for parents and “displaced” children. Nontraditional families may be single parents, foster parents, multiracial, grandparents raising grandchildren, same-sex parents, and blended households.

Single-parent families are perhaps the most recognized form of the nontraditional family. Only one parent is in the home, generally female. More than half of all children will experience this family form at some point in their lives. But over the past decade, more fathers have stepped up to the plate to take on more responsible roles as single parents.

Programs like the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Fatherhood Initiative that promotes responsible fatherhood and supports national research, has helped to improve our understanding of the positive role of fathers in children’s lives.

Intergenerational households, where grandparents function in dual roles to rear their grandchildren, are becoming more prevalent also. Crisis situations such as death, health, substance abuse, etc. are more often resulting in children being placed with grandparents and other relatives.

Blended families created through divorce and remarriage are also on the rise. Projections are that 1 out of 10 children will go through at least two divorces before they reach the age of 16.

Same-sex families consist of two adults of the same sex who have established a functioning household. Children from other relationships may be a part of same-sex families or children may have been adopted or conceived through medical procedures.

Multiracial families have increased significantly since the late 60s. Research from the last decade indicates that over 1.5 million children lived with biracial families.

Foster families provide temporary family support to children placed in their care by the courts or government agencies.

Obviously, nontraditional families don’t fit the traditional mold. They have special needs that are quite different from those of the traditional family. But, they desire the same outcomes—healthy relationships based on love, trust and respect. Truly responsive service providers and programs such as those provided by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System recognize the uniqueness of the nontraditional family and offer workable solutions to address their needs and help them cope with their realities.
In recent years there has been a renewed cry in some circles for toughness in dealing with children. Ironically, the recommended actions will probably help some children while harming others. If parents are always trying to appease their children, they may need greater toughness, clearer rules, and more reliable enforcement. Yet, for parents who are not good at listening to their children and understanding their world, more toughness is the wrong answer. Some parenting programs recommend that parents figure out the child’s motive for misbehavior from the options of attention, power, revenge, and inadequacy.

New research suggests that the best parents minimize blaming of children or of themselves. In the most effective methods of problem solving, parents invite their children to explore their own meanings rather than try to analyze their psychological motives.

For example, a traditional parent’s response to a child who got in trouble on the bus was to load them with trouble at home. In contrast, a parent can use compassion and understanding to invite the child to explore the experience by possible saying, “You probably felt very humiliated when the bus driver chewed you out.” When the child feels peaceful, the parent can invite the child to find solutions and might consider asking, “What can you do to avoid such painful experiences on the bus?” Blame is not necessary to problem-solving strategies.

Some of these recent discoveries probably agree with our own good sense. Some of them challenge us to think in different ways. When we use the best ideas in our family relationships, they can make us more effective and more contented.
According to the 2000 Census, 40% or nearly 82 million men and women in the United States are unmarried, signaling the greatest number of single or one-person households in history. This figure includes nearly 20 million divorcees, 13.6 million widows, and over 48 million adults that have never been married. The rise in the single population is the result of several factors such as a greater number of couples or partners that cohabitate, delayed marriages, divorce, death of a spouse, or the hesitancy of men and women to remarry. This growing population has marketers, particularly in manufacturing and retail, scrambling back to the drawing board in an effort to meet their needs.

The fastest growing segments in the single population are one-person, elderly and single-father households. One-person households increased from 17% in 1970 to 26% by the year 2000. Women living alone made up 67% of one-person households in 1970; however, that number dropped to 58% by 2000. One-person households among men increased from 5.6% to 10.7% in the same period. One reason for this trend is that single men and women are marrying later. The median age for marriage doubled among women age 20-24 (36% to 73%) and tripled among women age 30-34 (6% to 22%). The numbers also increased among men 20-24 (55% to 84%) and among men 30-34 (9% to 30%) over the 30-year period.

As individuals delay marriage, many choose to cohabitate. Cohabitation climbed 28% between 1990 and 1994. By the year 2000, 30% of individuals between the ages of 18 to 24 either lived with their parents, a partner, or other adults. Also, 12% of men and 5% of women between the age of 25 and 34 still lived with their parents. It is estimated that 3.8 million American households contained unmarried partners; however, that number could be higher since individuals may be reluctant to admit their cohabitation status or such persons are classified as roommates or friends.

Children are the chief concern among households where cohabitation exists according to the 1999 National Survey of American Families conducted by the Urban Institute in Washington, DC. It is estimated that 1 out of every 10 births occur among cohabiting couples and 40% of all children will eventually live in a cohabiting household. The study indicated that such children fared no better socially or economically than children living in single-parent households. These children were more likely to live in poverty, to be insecure about food, to become poor readers, and to exhibit bad behavioral problems than those living with married couples or single mothers. The survey concluded that additional research should be conducted to assess the prolonged effects of cohabitation on children.

With the continuing emergence of new technology and a shift to become more health conscious, the life expectancy rate among individuals 55 years and older is steadily rising. The fastest growing segment of this population occurred among the 85 years and over population, increasing 38% increase from 3.1 million to 4.2 million adults. Unfortunately, women tend to outlive men, thus making up a significant number of single-person households. Among persons 55 years and over, 32% of the women compared to 9% of the men were widowed in 2000 alone. There is also great concern that older men and women are more inclined to be poor, socially isolated, at risk for adverse health problems, and of course, victims of mortality.

The most surprising trend among the single population is the growing number of single-father households. From 1970 to 2000, the number of single-father families grew from 393,000 to 2 million across the nation. This trend indicates that fathers are becoming aware of their role in the family structure and are asserting their rights as parents. Other contributing factors are a change in
family court decisions; the decision by women to focus on their careers, while men put their careers on hold or make a career change; and a modified societal view that men are nurturing, positive influences in their children’s lives.

Although there is still some stigma attached to being single, particularly beyond the 30th birthday, there are some advantages to living alone. Single adults enjoy a greater sense of freedom; single females are in better health than their married counterparts in unhappy marriages; singles have greater control of their finances; and with no partner to please, singles may have a greater sense of self-knowledge or the freedom to explore their own values, dreams, goals, and spirituality for starters.

Research indicates that by the age of 12 children have developed many of the attitudes and behavior patterns for money and credit management that they will take into adulthood. Research further supports that only 13% of teenagers ever produce a written financial plan. Ninety-four percent of high school students are likely to go to their parents for financial information.

Teenagers spent $155 billion in 2000. On average teens have access to money and are spending about $141 billion yearly. Yet, research indicates that their financial literacy is low. The holiday season is a good time to teach your children about money. Teaching them how to manage and budget their money for seasonal gifts, for example, can be an effective way to prepare them for financial responsibilities when they become adults.

The holiday season can be enjoyable to some and perhaps stressful to others. Start early and begin planning for the holidays to avoid the frustration. You may find that the holidays will consume more of your time than you realize. A beginning point could be helping your children learn about the marketplace and become savvy consumers through managing and budgeting the money they plan to spend on holiday gifts. Discuss the holiday gift budget. Look at shopping sources, i.e., newspapers, store circulars, bargain announcement flyers, catalogs and the Internet. An alternative could be to teach your child about the values of gifts that are made instead of those bought. Explain the downside of TV advertising and holiday advertising, that bombard the media during the holidays. They usually promote expensive toys, clothing, electronic gadgets and items, and other types of gifts.

An adage says, “What you do influences people more than by what you say.” Therefore, lead by example by using rational shopping skills.

Make this holiday season a lesson in personal money management. Your children will learn by your example, when you make wise holiday planning, savings and spending choices.
Hispanic is a term created by the United States (U.S.) federal government in the early 1970s in an attempt to provide a common denominator to a large, but diverse population with connection to the Spanish language or culture from a Spanish-speaking country. Over the past 20 years, this population has exhibited tremendous growth in the U.S. In fact, Hispanics have become the fastest growing U.S. minority group. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), the Hispanic population is growing seven times faster than the non-Hispanic.

Today, approximately 33 million individuals (12% of the U.S. population) are identified as Hispanics. From this total, 66.1% are Mexicans, 14.5% are Central and South Americans, 9% are Puerto Ricans, 4% are Cubans and 6.4% are other Hispanics. Furthermore, 81% of all Hispanic households in the U.S. are “family” type.

The Hispanic family is considered a very close-knit group and the most important social unit. The term familia usually goes beyond the nuclear family. The Hispanic family unit includes not only the parents and their children but also the extended family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.). Furthermore, godfathers and godmothers, who may not necessarily be blood related, are considered family members. Traditionally, in most Hispanic families, the father is the head of the family, and the mother is responsible for the home. Individuals within the family unit have a moral responsibility to aid other members of the family, who may be experiencing financial difficulties, unemployment, poor health, or other pressing life issues.

Family ties are very strong. For example, when someone in the family travels to another town, city, or even country for an education or for a short visit (business, vacation, medical reasons), staying with relatives or even with friends of relatives is a common practice. Entire families and even friends of the family often gather to celebrate birthdays, baptisms, first communications, graduations, weddings, and holidays. Hispanic families instill in their children the importance of honor, dignity, pride, and respect for authority and the elderly. An example of the latter is the use of titles of respect before people’s first names such as Don or Doña. When I was growing up in San Juan, Puerto Rico, I would listen to my friends refer to my father as Don Julio. Now my friends here in the U.S. tell their children to address me as Don Julio. It makes me feel kind of old.

Preserving the Spanish language within the family unit is a common practice in most Hispanic homes. However, even though Hispanics share the same language, their cultures may vary to some extent.

La Familia
by Julio E. Correa, Ph.D.
According to the National Assessment of Education Progress for the year 2000, 32% of 4th graders were at or above the proficient reading level nationally, with 24% in Alabama.

Public education is at a critical crossroad throughout the nation. For this reason, it is an important time to be informed and involved in the education process.

President Bush is pushing for the goal of “no child left behind” in his 2002 plan for education reform. Standards for education reform, however, are nothing new. Most people across the country agree that public schools should be held accountable to values of quality and equity. But are standards enough to change troubled school systems? History has taught us many lessons on how to address this problem.

The current wave of education reform gained the most definitive momentum during the early 1980s. The National Commission on Excellence in Education published a report entitled, “A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform.” This highly publicized and critical report on the state of public education in America brought education into a spotlight that has not diminished over the past twenty years.

The initial reaction to the report was to strengthen regulation regarding standardized testing and teaching professionalism. For example, states increased their graduation requirements and issued more standardized tests. In essence, schools attempted to address reform across the board. However, after a decade of such responses, it seemed as if the state of education was getting worse. This was particularly true of urban area school systems in which the downturn in the economy seemed to be having a devastating effect.

Throughout, many changing variables and a few trends remained consistent. First, the success of public schools goes beyond the doors of the schools into the neighborhoods, the business community, and the political arena. Second, cities across the country have proven the powerful impact that community involvement has on public education. Also, related to that is the negative impact when communities are inactive.

Forty-nine states have established statewide curriculum or standards in some form. Even so, educators and policy makers are beginning to realize that standards alone are not enough. In countless cities across the nation, research has demonstrated that true and effective public education reform can be achieved and sustained only if there is consistent public engagement in the education policy.

Since standards for public schools have become a national agenda, many have raised the issue of accountability. While the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 focuses on raising academic standards and closing the achievement gap is clear, the new law leaves many critical choices to the states. Therefore, accountability has become a major concern for members of local communities. In order to hold your school accountable, here are five major points to consider:

- Will the state’s standards and tests be vigorous enough?
- How will the state develop tests to target the assessment of their specific standards?
- Will states continue to rely on multiple-choice tests or move to include more questions that require extended written answers?
- Since the new law leaves room for states to define what is proficient, will the states raise or lower their bar for academic proficiency?
- Will states align more than their tests to their standards?

As changes in education sweep the nation, it is an excellent time for everyone to learn more about the education process. If the state can make the grade, then fewer children will be left behind.
A clear and irrefutable role exists for social work practice in the application of urban forestry interventions in limited-resource communities. By its own definition, urban forestry is the synthesis of many disciplines (see above schematic). It is the management of trees in urban environments. It is also the recognition that trees in the urban forest are a participating member of a much wider ecosystem that weaves together a supportive habitat for vegetation and wildlife. To this end, trees are seen as a valuable asset in the urban forest, and the urban forest is an inclusive macro ecosystem, with humans and their needs forming an important component. The schematic above provides a holistic conception of how one might define urban forestry and social work practice. Collectively, this entire suprasystem is called ecosystem management.

According to research scientist Dr. Ken Cordell, the U.S. Forest Service has moved to a more integrated view of the place of the social sciences with the 1995 launch of the Human Dimensions Framework and the 1997 vision statement for integrating the social sciences into natural resources planning. With the transition toward ecosystem management instead of land management and the incorporation of the human dimension into this management process, the social sciences have been able to identify and stake out a core role for their research disciplines in the overall ecosystem management field. Through advocacy, the social sciences got a “place at the table” with the physical sciences. Social work, however, is the other viable partner that is still under-recognized and misunderstood.

While the profession of social work has always conducted a substantial amount of empirical research on all aspects of human functioning, social work practice is where “research touches clients.”

Social work practice is concerned with the interaction between people and their social environments by focusing on how to build caring communities that nurture and enhance the capacity of individuals, families, and groups to grow and to thrive. The profession is guided by a set of values, principles, and ethics as espoused in the National Association of Social Worker’s Code of Ethics. Two of these ethical principles are noteworthy if one is to understand how advanced social work generalist practice can be diverse and inclusive of a number of physical and social science disciplines, practice modalities, and urban Cooperative Extension. Social workers place a high value on service and practice based on the ethical principle of the worker’s primary goal: to help people in need and to address social problems. As you can see, there are no restrictions on the ability of a competent social worker to fulfill this mandate. Further, social workers place a high value on social justice and practice based on the ethical principle that the profession has a duty and obligation “to challenge social injustice.” No other people-serving profession has such a historically rooted commitment to the eradication of social injustice, as evidenced by over 100 years of collaborative
work with other professions for the betterment of society.

In “A Technical Guide to Urban and Community Forestry,” published by the World Forestry Center, the authors note the “psychological and aesthetic values” of trees, including uplifted spirits of seniors, improved recovery rates of hospital patients, violence management with incarcerated inmates, and community revitalization initiatives. The research of Drs. Frances Kuo and William Sullivan at the Human-Environment Research Laboratory, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign documents the following:

- The greener a building’s surroundings in urban areas, the fewer reported crimes. Trees cultivate healthier, safer urban communities.
- Contact with nature may actually help reduce the incidence of aggression and violence in urban neighborhoods. Trees are valuable assets in crime prevention.
- Green outdoor spaces tend to allow for more creative play and improved access to adult interaction, both of which are considered highly beneficial to healthy child development.
- Green views and access to green spaces in urban areas have been shown to reduce chronic mental fatigue, restore attention, and relieve the everyday pressures of living in poverty. Trees are valuable urban assets that can give people hope.
- Higher self-discipline in girls can be achieved through increased exposure to nature. Essentially, girls exposed to green settings are better able to handle things like peer pressure, sexual pressure, and other challenging situations.
- Residents in public housing with trees found more constructive ways to deal with conflict in their homes.
- Outdoor spaces with trees in low-income neighborhoods attract more people.
- When trees are planted, communities grow, because the more trees and grass in the common spaces of inner-city neighborhoods, the stronger the social ties of the residents.

This research on the relationship of people and their social environments (the client system) is at the heart of social work practice. Wherever research results increase and enhance the client system’s capacity to achieve self-empowerment and community improvement, social work practice should be on the multidisciplinary team. While social scientists are generally research driven, social work is primarily a practice-driven profession. Social work practice declares that the client is of primary concern and the “client-in-situation” is the core medium for planned change. Physical and social scientists pride themselves on the objectivity and professional detachment of their empirical process. Social work practice prides itself on the deliberate search for subjective nuances to effect change; some nuances may be without empirical support, but all are guided by the profession’s code of ethics and an appreciation for the planned change process. In other words, research with compassion is the guiding light; for social workers cannot afford to let the “chips” or people fall where they may: that type of behavior would pose an “ethical dilemma” for responsible and conscientious social workers. When the scientific inquiry ends, professional social work practice springs into action!

Ecosystem management of urban forests must establish a co-equal three-fold approach to addressing the needs of resource-limited urban communities. Traditional foresters must continue to provide the answers to how to best manage the urban forest ecosystem. Social scientists are playing a key role in the development of research data on the human dimension of ecosystem management. Their research is being integrated into the biophysical knowledge base of ecosystem management; yet, they have been extremely slow to recognize and accept the limitations of their own discipline’s outputs. As research scientists, they do not practice. The application of their findings must make its way to those recognized practice professions, and social work is an interstitial profession with all other disciplines and professions, particularly those in the social sciences.

Having been shunned for decades by the traditional forestry community who still—I might add—use antiquated terms such as soft and hard sciences, the use of the USDA Forest Service/Extension multidisciplinary team, including experienced, visionary social workers and cutting-edge, inquisitive social science researchers, is a key element of contemporary ecosystem management. As team members, social workers should be able to develop creative and innovative urban forestry programs and services for resource-limited Extension/Forest Service audiences. Their place at the table as a practitioner should be co-equal and highly respected, and their capacity to launch research-driven practice with compassion should be recognized as the hallmark of over a century of finding solutions for those most marginalized in American society.
In 2000, the American Society of Microbiology’s Clean Hands Campaign released the results of a survey and observational study on hand washing. Their findings revealed that although 95% of men and women stated that they washed their hands after using a public restroom, only 67% actually do wash their hands prior to leaving a restroom. Hand washing is one of the simplest ways to prevent the spread of infectious diseases and could even save thousands of lives. However, many Americans still don’t get it!

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 79 million people in the U.S. become ill yearly as a result of food-related diseases and approximately 5,000 people die. Poor hygiene or improperly washed hands is the greatest contributor of food-related outbreaks.

The CDC cites five common ways in which diseases are transmitted in the home:

1. **Hands to food**--when the person preparing the food fails to wash their hands after leaving the bathroom.

2. **Infected infant to hands to other children**--when a parent changes an infant’s diaper and then interacts with other children without washing hands.

3. **Food to hands to food**--when an individual carries germs from uncooked food to other foods such as meats and salads.

4. **Nose, mouth or eyes to hands, then to others**--such as in the case of colds, eye infections, etc. where hand contact is made through sneezing, coughing or rubbing the eyes and no hand washing has occurred.

5. **Food to hands to infant**--when germs from uncooked food are transferred to hands and then to infants.

In each case, hand washing, i.e., rigorous scrubbing with warm, soapy water for at least 15 seconds, can prevent the spread of germs. Extension educators across the nation are also teaching germ prevention measures through hand washing. In fact, they’re making it fun!

Germ City is an interactive and scientific-based exhibit that increases the awareness of the consequences of poor hand washing. **How does it work?** While a catchy tune is playing, children are asked to cover their hands with a non-toxic lotion that glows under black lights. After one trip through Germ City, a long black tunnel filled with glow-in-the-dark streamers and objects, kids are then asked to wash their hands to see if there is a trace of the germs they may have missed. Extension educators at Utah State have actually documented the reduction of Hepatitis and Salmonella cases. And now, Germ City is available in Alabama through a three-year multistate agreement with Alabama A&M University, the University of Hawaii, Washington State University and West Virginia University. The project is being funded by the USDA.

Germ City is designed for young children age 3 and up, and will be used in elementary and middle schools, at health fairs, and Extension activities such as Farm Day and 4-H events. To date, Alabama Extension agents have used Germ City in Baldwin, Chilton, Crenshaw, Madison, Mobile, and Montgomery counties, resulting in over 3000 youth and adults learning how to properly wash their hands.

From September through October 2002, Germ City will be utilized in Autauga, Colbert, Hale, Madison, Mobile, Montgomery, Morgan and Pike counties. The Germ City unit is available for use by Extension personnel and other health educators. Why not utilize this unique tool to promote clean hands and healthy people in your area. For more information and availability, please e-mail Dr. Donnie Cook at dcook@aces.edu or call 256-858-4983.
The holiday season fast approaches and with it comes the overwhelming desire to travel. It is a time to go shopping, take the family home to grandma’s, hit the slopes, or get away from it all to some exotic location!

If your choice mode of travel is by airplane, the following suggestions will make your trip easier/safer:

- Pack as lightly as possible. Remember, you’ll probably have to carry or pull your own bags sometimes, so take no more than you can handle by yourself.
- Pack expensive gifts or personal items such as jewelry and cash in your carry-on luggage.
- Pack all medications in your carry-on. Ditto for a change of clothes in case your luggage is delayed or lost.
- Clean out your wallet before leaving home. Limit the number of credit cards you take and utilize travelers’ checks rather than cash when possible. Make sure you have a photocopy of each credit card, front and back, that you take with you. Don’t keep this in the same bag as the cards. That way, you’ll have important numbers for cancelling in case you need them.
- Keep a close eye on your tickets; they’re as good as cash.
- Give yourself plenty of time for check-in at the airport. The closer you travel to a holiday, the longer the lines become. Take along some reading material for those long waits at the gate.
- Save yourself some hassle and go through your bags looking for items that might cause you some problem with check in. For example, you don’t really need that nail kit in your carry-on luggage; pack it in a bag that you are checking.
- Don’t forget the weather at your destination. Will it be below freezing, snowing, or raining? Take a coat on board with you to wear when you land.
- Nowadays, many of us feel safer traveling by car, and that may be the way you choose to go. Unfortunately, winter is not necessarily the best time to travel by car. Inclement weather—fog, snow, or heavy rain—make it difficult to see and be seen when driving. Some vehicle colors, especially gray, tend to blend into misty backgrounds during dusk and dawn.
- Also, heavy traffic, winter weather, and fewer daylight hours can be a hazardous combination on the roads. Therefore, it’s imperative that drivers have their vehicle thoroughly checked out before heading out for the holidays. Be aware of potential road and weather conditions.

Here are some car safety travel tips to follow this holiday season:

- Take your car in for a pre-trip inspection by a certified technician.
- Replace any inoperative light bulbs and repair any dimly lit bulb circuits.
- Replace windshield wipers and top off all fluids, especially antifreeze.
- Do not put a wreath on your car since mounting objects in front of the radiator can restrict airflow to the vehicle’s cooling system.
- Watch the weather report and prepare accordingly. For travel to extremely cold locations that may be prone to icy road conditions, be sure to carry adequate supplies in case you are stuck out in your car. A heavy coat, a hat or scarf, gloves or mittens, an extra blanket, some bottled water, a few high power snacks (chocolate, anything with peanut butter, or trail mix), some flares, and your cell phone. These could save your life!
- Plan your itinerary and travel route carefully by obtaining maps and directions prior to leaving home.
- Make sure you are well rested before a long journey. It’s a good idea to designate a co-captain to stay alert with you.
- When departing, consider leaving a day earlier. When returning, consider leaving a day later. Avoid “hurrying the holiday” by allowing plenty of time. Consider an overnight stay along the way, rather than making the trip an endurance test.
- Avoid stopping to sleep at unsecured highway rest stops during long distance driving.
- Plan creative stops along the way. Brief visits to nearby parks or landmarks can make your trip more memorable. Many of these will be specially decorated for the holidays.
- Don’t drink and drive. Any alcohol, even a small amount, can impair your driving so be a safe driver this holiday season.

Have a safe and happy holiday season!

Travel Tip Web Sites:
www.hcso.tampa.fl.us
www.kidsource.com
www.aa.com
www.think.dft.gov.uk
Trees add aesthetic and social qualities to our environment and have life-giving, psychological, family development, community revitalization, and financial values we should be aware of and appreciate.

Environmental Benefits
1. Trees reduce temperature by shading.
2. Trees block winter winds and reduce the “chill factor.” Trees also block winds that could cause property damage.
3. Trees help control pollution by acting as “nets” that catch poisons in the air.
4. Each day, one acre of trees makes enough oxygen for 18 people.
5. Trees and forests slow run-off from rain, decreasing erosion and flooding.
6. The sound of the tree leaves and branches in the wind masks other manmade noises.
7. Trees block and reflect sunlight to minimize eyestrain.
8. Trees are homes to many birds and mammals.

Economic Benefits
1. Trees and forests generate many products for cash value such as lumber, paper, firewood, chewing gum, and rubber.
2. Trees produce food such as fruit, maple syrup, and nuts.

Social Benefits
1. Trees are signs of an attractive community. We feel more at peace where there are lots of trees. They make life more pleasant.
2. Many people enjoy hiking, picnicking, or camping in an area that is shaded by trees.
3. Outdoor spaces with trees in low-income neighborhoods attract more people.
4. Residents in public housing with trees find more constructive ways to deal with conflict in their homes.
5. When trees surround your house, bird songs fill the air, adding delight to daily routine.
6. Tree-lined streets make people feel welcome and comfortable.
7. Uplifted spirits is one important benefit of trees in neighborhoods and around homes.
8. Neighborhood tree planting programs can generate community identity, strengthen social ties, and enhance cooperation within neighborhoods.
9. Higher self-discipline in girls can be achieved through increased exposure to nature. Essentially, girls exposed to green settings are better able to handle things like peer pressure, sexual pressure, and challenging situations.
10. A study found that the greener a building’s surroundings in urban areas, the fewer reported crimes. Trees cultivate healthier, safer urban communities.
11. Contact with nature may actually help reduce the incidence of violence in urban neighborhoods. Trees are valuable community assets.
12. Green views and access to green spaces in urban areas have been shown to reduce chronic mental fatigue, restore attention and relieve the everyday pressures of living in poverty. Trees are valuable urban assets that give people hope.
13. Green outdoor spaces tend to allow for more creative play and improved adult interaction – both of which are considered highly beneficial to healthy child development.
14. It’s extremely important for parents, teachers, and caregivers to recognize the value of green settings in healthy child development. Playing outdoors, particularly in green settings, has proven to be an effective way to restore focus and improve concentration.
15. When trees are planted, communities grow. Studies found that the more trees and grass in the common spaces of inner-city neighborhoods, the stronger the social ties of the residents.
16. It’s no longer a secret!!!! Natural, green places contribute to the viability of all communities.
The Huntsville Times recently ran a three-part series on two Madison County neighborhood tracts—one rich, one poor—that revealed a wide disparity between the two based on United States Census Bureau 2000 data. The Census Bureau defines a tract as a statistical geographic area of a county with approximately 1,500 to 8,000 people. In this case, the standard characteristics (social, labor, housing, income, and education) were presented through a comparative analysis. Many of the indices listed were quite grim for the poor tract, with the cumulative effect of placing this tract in the hardcore, at-risk category. Clearly, the series documented one indisputable fact: the poor tract is approximately 75% African-American and the rich tract is 93% Caucasian. Interestingly, except for the details, any average member of the poor/rich tract could have provided the same analysis on the different demographic niches of these two groups. Over the past 40 years, the evidence presented has become well known: poor neighborhoods compared to higher-income neighborhoods have poorer quality and more crowded housing, fewer employment opportunities, fewer empowerment resources, schools with poorer performance records, steep income disparity, limited developmental capital, nil wealth-generating assets, and bleak youth outcomes.

If both tracts could claim historical parity, the recitation of the deep-rooted plight in the poor tract would be cause for despair. But history, particularly in the Deep South, has a way of explaining the unexplainable. Of course the series did not address the historical context of the poverty. Perhaps this oversight was positive. We all know the history and impact of slavery, segregation, and racism on Southern society. I suppose those issues were a given in the preparation of the series. The challenge now is to decide what to do about the ones left behind and there is no doubt about who should go back and get them. Certainly, anyone from the 3,492 residents of the rich tract may decide to help out. But those of us who escaped through the portal of opportunity provided by civil struggle and legal breakthroughs over the past 40 years have a moral, cultural, and ethical duty to reach back for those “left behind.”

The series painted a picture that warrants ample cause for concern and more concerted intervention. Clearly, The Huntsville Times’ series documents with demographic evidence that 581 poor residents of Madison County’s census tract 16 were left behind. Unlike Harriet Tubman, who never lost a passenger on her Underground Railroad, we lost a few in our frantic but successful efforts to leave poverty behind. But the cargo is small enough (581) for us to reach back and get all of them. Our internal resources in the African-American middle-class village in Huntsville are vast enough to support a well-orchestrated backtracking to those still on the banks of despair, intractable poverty, and community disintegration.

The African proverb should be our drum call—It takes the village to save a people. The trek of the Magi bearing gifts to the poor child lying in a manger is our holiday North Star.

Merry Xmas!
Algunos Descubrimientos En Vida Familiar
por H. Wallace Goddard, Ph.D.

Matrimonio

Han habido muchos descubrimientos que han cambiado nuestras vidas. Muchos programas matrimoniales han sido basados en comunicaciones diestras sobre el descontento, pero hay un nuevo enfoque hacia el matrimonio que está saliendo de investigaciones extraordinarias. Por ejemplo, el Dr. John Gottman, Profesor de Sicología en la Universidad de Washington y Fundador del Instituto Gottman, recomienda que se edite lo que uno dice (en otras palabras, hay cosas que no se deben de decir), use lo positivo (amabilidad), y use técnicas tranquilizadoras (calma y bondad).

Crianza de Niños

Cuando se refiere a la crianza de los niños, mucha gente anda en búsqueda de alguna combinación de reglas, consecuencias, recompensas, y pausas que enseñen a sus niños a ser buenos ciudadanos. Décadas de investigación en el área de crianza de niños confirman que nada es más importante que el amor. Por ejemplo, las pausas son menos importantes que amar y enseñar a los niños. Las pausas son de utilidad para la calma y mejor resolver problemas.

Seguridad Durante las Compras Navideñas
por Erica James

Comprar durante la época navideña es bien entretenido, pero puede ser también peligroso. Desafortunadamente, la criminalidad aumenta durante esta época del año. Los siguientes son algunos consejos sobre la seguridad durante las compras de navidad:

• Nunca deje niños pequeños ir al baño por si solos.
• Nunca deje su cartera desatendida en un carrito de compras.
• Trate de estacionar su automóvil en un área bien alumbrada.
• Evite ir de compras solo o sola.
• En vez de una cartera de mano, porte una mochila pequeña.
• Inspeccione el asiento trasero de su automóvil antes de montarse.
• Siempre reporte personas raras a la policía o a seguridad del centro comercial.

Recuerde que comprar a través del Internet puede ser igual de peligroso que ir a la galería o al centro comercial. Siempre recuerde los siguientes consejos al comprar artículos de un sitio web:

• Lea cuidadosamente las declaraciones de privacidad.
• Nunca provea información personal a menos de que una transacción haya sido iniciada a través de conexión codificada.
• Conozca al comerciante en línea.
• Observe si el sitio web contiene un número para los servicios al consumidor.
• Hable con sus hijos acerca de como usar el Internet con seguridad.
Consejos De Viaje Durante las Navidades
por Jeanetta Anderson y Jean Hall Dwyer

Con las navidades a la vuelta de la esquina, entran los deseos de viajar. Si su modo de viajar es por avión, las siguientes sugerencias pueden hacer su viaje más fácil y seguro:

- Porte los menos paquetes y maletas posible.
- Porte regalos y artículos caros en su equipaje de mano.
- Porte todos sus medicamentos en su equipaje de mano.
- Porte las menos tarjetas de crédito posible, y use cheques de viajero. Asegúrese de tener una fotocopia de cada tarjeta de crédito, por delante y por detrás, que lleve consigo.
- Mantenga ojo visor a su boleto de viaje.
- Llegue con tiempo al aeropuerto.
- Asegúrese de que sus maletas no contienen artículos que le traigan problemas a la hora de registro.
- No olvide chequear el pronóstico del tiempo para su destino final.

Si su modo de viajar es por automóvil, las siguientes sugerencias pueden hacer su viaje más seguro:

- Lleve su automóvil al mecánico para una inspección antes de salir.
- Cambie cualquier bombilla que no esté operando bien.
- Cambie los limpiaparabrisas, y asegúrese de que los líquidos, especialmente el anticongelante, estén hasta arriba.
- No ponga objetos de ninguna clase en frente del radiador, por cuanto esto podría afectar el sistema de enfriamiento de su automóvil.
- Observe el pronóstico del tiempo, y esté preparado.
- Planifique su itinerario y ruta con cuidado mediante la obtención de mapas antes de salir de su casa.
- Asegúrese de estar bien descansado, y seleccione un co-piloto que lo mantenga alerta.
- Siempre salga un día antes y regrese un día despues.
- Evite paradas en la carretera para dormir en sitios poco seguros.
- Planifique paradas creativas durante el viaje.
- Recuerde no beber mientras guía.

Enseñando A Niños Y Jóvenes A Gastar Sabiamente Durante las Navidades
por Bernice Wilson, Ph.D.

Enseñando a los niños y jóvenes como manejar y presupuestar su dinero para regalos de navidad puede ser una forma efectiva para prepararlos a asumir responsabilidades financieras. Un punto de comienzo podría ser ayudando a sus hijos a aprender sobre el mercado y cómo convertirse en consumidores sabios a través del manejo y presupuesto del dinero que tienen planes de gastar en regalos de navidad. Discuta con ellos el presupuesto navideño, sitios de compra, especiales, y el valor personal del regalo. Discuta con ellos también los anuncios televisivos y los anuncios dentro de las tiendas, dado que usualmente lo que se promueve son juguetes, ropa, aparatos electrónicos, y otros artículos bien costosos.
Definiendo Familias No Tradicionales
por Jannie Carter, Ph.D.

Familias no tradicionales pueden ser una de las siguientes:

- Familias en donde solo uno de los padres, por lo general la mujer, está viviendo en el hogar.
- Familias en donde los abuelos u otros parientes tienen la función dual de criar los nietos.
- Familias que son el resultado de matrimonios entre padres y madres divorciadas.
- Familias que son el resultado de la unidad de personas o padres del mismo sexo.
- Familias que son el resultado de matrimonios entre personas de distintas razas.
- Familias de crianza temporal por conducto de las cortes o agencias gubernamentales.

De una forma o la otra, estas familias tienen las mismas necesidades que las familias tradicionales – relaciones saludables basadas en amor, confianza, y respeto.

Ciudad Microbio: Manos limpias Y Gente Saludable
por Donnie Cook, Ph.D.

Mala higiene o manos lavadas impropia es el contribuidor mayor de brotes de enfermedades relacionadas con los alimentos. Los Centros de Prevención y Control de Enfermedades cita 5 formas en la cual enfermedades son transmitidas en el hogar:

1. Cuando personas preparando comidas no se lavan las manos luego de haber utilizado el baño.
2. Cuando los padres cambian los pañales de un infante enfermo y luego interactuan con otros niños sin haberse lavado las manos.
3. Cuando un individuo porta gérmenes de alimentos no cocidos a otros alimentos tales como carnes y ensaladas.
4. Cuando una persona que está enferma hace contacto con otra luego de haberse tocado la nariz, los ojos o la boca sin haberse lavado las manos.
5. Cuando gérmenes de alimentos no cocidos son transferidos a las manos y luego a los infantes.

Ciudad Microbio es una exhibición científicamente basada e interactiva que crea conciencia sobre las consecuencias de un impropio lavado de manos.

Datos Demográficos Sobre los Solteros
por Wendi Williams

De acuerdo al Censo del 2000, 40 % o casi 82 millones de hombres y mujeres en los Estados Unidos están solteros. Estas cifras incluyen casi 20 millones de divorciados, 13.6 millones de viudas, y sobre 48 millones de adultos que nunca se han casado. El alza en la población de solteros es el resultado de factores tales como el incremento en parejas o compañeros que cohabitan, matrimonios demorados, divorcios, viudez, o indecisión de hombres y mujeres a casarse nuevamente.

Con todo y el estigma adherido al ser soltero, particularmente después de los 30 años de edad, hay algunas ventajas. Adultos solteros tienen más libertades; mujeres solteras están en mejores condiciones de salud que mujeres descontentas con su matrimonio; solteros tienen más control sobre sus finanzas; y sin pareja o compañero que satisfacer, solteros tienen la libertad de explorar sus propios valores, sueños, objetivos, etc.
Los Árboles Son Tus Amigos
por Marilyn Simpson-Johnson, LMSW, Y Stephanie Love, Servicio Forestal del Departamento de Agricultura Federal

Beneficios Ambientales

1. Árboles reducen la temperatura a través de la sombra.
2. Árboles bloquean los vientos invernales y reducen el factor de enfriamiento.
3. Árboles ayudan a controlar la contaminación atrapando venenos en el aire.
4. Cada día, un acre de árboles produce suficiente oxígeno para 18 personas.
5. Árboles y bosques reducen los golpes de agua mediante la reducción de la erosión y la inundación.
6. Sonidos del viento en las hojas y ramas de los árboles ocultan otros ruidos creados por el ser humano.
7. Árboles bloquean y reflejan la luz del sol para minimizar vista fatigada.
8. Árboles son el hogar de muchos pájaros y mamíferos.

Beneficios Económicos

1. Árboles y bosques generan productos tales como madera, papel, leña, goma de mascar, y goma.
2. Árboles producen alimentos tales como fruta, jarabe de arce, y nuez.

Beneficios Sociales

1. Árboles son indicativos de una comunidad atractiva.
2. La gente gusta ir de caminata, merendar al aire libre, o acampar en áreas sombreadas por árboles.
3. Vecindarios de bajos ingresos con espacios exteriores llenos de árboles atraen más personas.
4. Residentes en viviendas públicas llenas de árboles encuentran formas más constructivas de bregar con conflictos hogareños.
5. Cuando su hogar está rodeado de árboles, los cantíos de los pájaros dan deleite a la rutina diaria.
6. Calles con líneas de árboles, hacen la gente sentirse bienvenidos y cómodos.
7. Uno de los beneficios de los árboles alrededor de vecindarios y hogares es un espíritu elevado.
8. Programas comunales de siembra de árboles producen identidad comunal, fortalecen lazos sociales, y estimulan la cooperación dentro de los vecindarios.
9. El aumento en la auto-disciplina en niñas se puede alcanzar a través del aumento en exposición a la naturaleza.
10. Un estudio encontró que mientras más verde los alrededores de los edificios en áreas urbanas son, menor son los casos de crímenes reportados.
11. El contacto con la naturaleza puede ayudar a reducir la incidencia de violencia en vecindarios urbanos.
12. Acceso a rutas panorámicas y áreas verdes en zonas urbanas han demostrado que reducen la fatiga mental y alivian las presiones diarias de vivir en la pobreza.
13. Espacios exteriores verdes promueven mayor creatividad e interacción entre adultos.
14. Es extremadamente importante que padres, maestros, y otros reconozcan el valor que tienen las áreas verdes en el desarrollo sano de niños.
15. Cuando se siembran árboles, las comunidades crecen.
16. Finalmente, sitios naturales y verdes contribuyen a la viabilidad de todas las comunidades.
Vamos A Retroceder!  
por Marilyn Simpson-Johnson, LMSW

Recientemente, el Huntsville Times corrió una serie que pinta un retrato que amerita una preocupación y una mayor intervención. Claramente, la serie del Huntsville Times documenta con datos demográficos evidencia de que 581 residentes pobres del trecho 16 del censo del condado de Madison fueron dejados atrás. El reto ahora es decidir que hacer con aquellos que fueron dejados atrás. Por supuesto, no hay dudas sobre quien debe de ir a buscarlos. Aquellos de nosotros que escapamos a través de la oportunidad provista por la lucha civil y los adelantos legales en los últimos 40 años tenemos la obligación moral, cultural y ética de volver hacia atrás y ayudarlos. Los recursos internos de la clase media afroamericana de Huntsville son suficientes para organizar un retroceso para buscar aquellos todavía en desesperación, pobreza, y desintegración comunal.

Integrando Prácticas De Trabajo Social Con Manejo Del Ecosistema  
por Marilyn Simpson-Johnson, LMSW

El uso de grupos multidisciplinarios de Extensión, incluyendo trabajadores sociales con prácticas avanzadas de destrezas, conocimientos, y perspectivas valoradas, es un elemento importante en el manejo contemporáneo del ecosistema. Como miembros del grupo, trabajadores sociales deben de desarrollar programas creativos e innovadores en el área de forestación urbana y desarrollar servicios para audiencias de recursos limitados. En otras palabras, el manejo de árboles en ambientes urbanos. Esto también quiere decir que hay que reconocer que los árboles en el bosque urbano son miembros que participan en un macro ecosistema que incluye al ser humano y sus necesidades.

Corrigiendo las Calificaciones  
por Kevin H. Crenshaw, Abogado

Por los últimos 20 años, las escuelas han tratado de bregar con la reforma educativa. Sin embargo, después de 10 años, aparentemente la situación de la educación se ha puesto peor. Esta situación ha sido más evidente en los sistemas escolares de las zonas urbanas, donde la caída de la economía aparentemente ha tenido efectos devastadores. Por lo tanto, la responsabilidad se ha convertido en la mayor preocupación de los miembros de la comunidad.

A medida que el cambio en la educación arropa la nación, es un momento excelente para que todo el mundo aprenda más sobre el proceso educativo. Si el estado puede dar el grado, entonces menos niños se quedarán atrás.

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