

The Communicator

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March 2005

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Featherstone, Haberly, and Hepworth Awards Announced

The Faculty Development committee has met and disbursed more than \$10,000 in awards to this year's recipients. Sandra Evenson will receive the Marion Featherstone FCS Faculty Enrichment Award to support travel to the Joanne B. Eicher Festschrift held in St. Paul, MN September 16-17, 2005, where Sandra will deliver a paper with the title "Real Indian Madras: If It Smells Like a Duck..."

Joey Peutz will receive the Marion Hepworth Award to support continued enhancement of Spanish language skills and pursuit of coursework toward her PhD in Adult and Organizational Learning.

Diana Christensen has received Haberly funding to support her attendance at the annual CSREES Children, Youth and Families at Risk Conference in Boston, MA, May 25-27, 2005. Diana will present several grandparenting resources developed by UI FCS faculty in the Program Showcase including the 18 tip sheets for grandparents raising grandchildren that she authored with the Idaho KinCare Coalition.

Carol Hampton and Joey Peutz received Haberly awards to support attendance at the National Extension Association of FCS annual meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to present Ready, Set, Food Safe and possibly Preserve@Home. Julia Welch also received a Haberly award to attend NEAFCS. She will present a poster at the Showcase of Excellence for the workshop "Long Term Care: Planning for Quality of Life."

Barbara Petty was awarded Haberly funding to attend the National Extension Family Life Specialists Conference in Washington, DC. This is held every three years.

Marnie Spencer received Haberly funding to attend the 2005 National Association of Extension 4-H Agents Conference, October 30-November 3, 2005 in Seattle. If accepted, she will present "Meal Time in Less Time."



Director
March 2005



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Linda Gossett received Haberly funding in order to attend the Consumer Trends Forum International (CTFI) in Minneapolis. The theme of the 2005 Forum is "Mapping the Future."

Joey Peutz received a Haberly award to attend the 2005 Organizational Leadership Academy. The theme for the event is "The Role of Courage in Organizational Leadership."

We look forward to hearing from these FCS faculty and educators regarding their national conferences and presentations. Each will submit a summary of skills and knowledge gained to be printed in *The Communicator*. Watch for their interesting feedback.

March is Nutrition Month

March is National Nutrition Month and the US Senate has designated March 13-19 "Extension Living Well Week." The week's theme is "Raising Kids, Eating Right, Spending Smart, Living Well," a theme that perfectly captures our goals. Rhea Lanting, president of the Idaho Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, urges Idahoans to take a little time during the week to find out how their local UI Extension office can help them live well. She planned to share information with county Commissioners and take them a healthy food basket. What a great idea! We'll see that President White gets a similar basket.

IDAFCS

The Idaho Association of Family and Consumer Sciences is on the move once again. IDAFCS President Mary Lee Wood is providing the leadership to revitalize the Idaho affiliate. The Eastern Idaho District IDAFCS in conjunction with BYU Idaho will sponsor "Obesity: Problems, Issues and Changes" on Wednesday, March 23 at 5:30 on the BYU-Idaho campus. The 2004 MRDS video of Joanne Ikeda will be shown. Interested IDAFCS members, FCS professionals, friends, and students are welcome. Contact Rhonda Lyman at lymanr@byui.edu for further information or to reserve a seat.

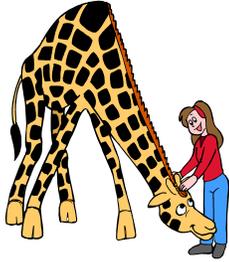
A professional development grant opportunity is available for those of you who are AAFCS/IDAFCS members. Funding up to \$400 is available. Application deadline is March 31, 2005. If you are interested in applying, contact chair Beverly Healy for a copy of the guidelines via email bhealy@uidaho.edu, phone: 208-377-2107 or writing to her at: 5880 Glenwood Ave., Boise, ID 83714-1342.

Kudos to Lisa Honn, University of Idaho Student Chapter member, who is currently the AAFCS P/GS chair.

Kudos to Theresa Golis, IDAFCS Teacher of the Year (TOY) and Idaho nominee, National TOY recognition at the AAFCS annual meeting. If you are not currently a member but a FCS professional and are interested in membership, contact Mary Lee at mlwood@velocity.net or call her at 208-482-7006.

Reminders

The 2005 UI/FCS sponsored Cook's Tour to Northern Italy will occur June 19-28. If you're interested, but did not receive a brochure; please contact Lynette Brown (lbrown@uidaho.edu) in the School of Family and Consumer Sciences.



“Are Fairs, Petting Zoos Just Too Dangerous?”

An article with the title “Are Fairs, Petting Zoos Just Too Dangerous?” was on the front page of the December 2004 issue of the food industry food safety newsletter *Food Protection Report*. It featured an interview with prominent food litigation lawyer William Marler of the Seattle law firm Marler Clark. Marler is quoted, “I think counties and states may have to reassess whether it is worth having fairs, petting zoos, and other events that bring people in close contact with animals. I know it sounds un-American, but we are now having outbreaks of *E. coli* O157:H7 linked to these events almost on a yearly basis.”

The article noted that since 1998, at least seven *E. coli* O157:H7 outbreaks have been traced to fairs. The most recent outbreak occurred in North Carolina. Marler noted that although the specifics of each *E. coli* outbreak at fairs differ, they have a common denominator and the pathogen lurks in ways that were not seen decades ago. A 2003 study by USDA found *E. coli* O157:H7 was commonly present at fairs at levels of the bacteria similar to those found in commercially reared livestock.

Oregon Case. Marler Clark had filed suit on behalf of 12 families against Lane County, Oregon, where an August 2002 county fair was identified as the source of the state’s largest outbreak, which sickened at least 80 confirmed cases. The Oregon suit was withdrawn in mid-October 2004. Marler noted that investigators “could not prove the exact mode of *E. coli* transmission...[whether] airborne transmission, or whether it was foodborne, caused by having animals in close proximity to people, or a combination of those and other factors.” *Food Protection Report* noted that the Lane County officials said plaintiffs could not show what the state could have done to prevent the outbreak. The Oregon

Food Safety

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health officials, who investigated the outbreak, initially ruled out foods and beverages served at the fair as the cause. They suggested that direct exposure to infected sheep, goats or pigs or the inhaling of dirt and dust contaminated with dry fecal material infected with *E. coli* O157:H7 may have been the culprit. The exact cause of the outbreak remains unknown.

After the 2002 Lane County outbreak, Oregon issued recommendations to prevent disease outbreaks at fairs, but it is unclear how many counties have adopted them. “We have 35 fairs in Oregon annually, and some of them have generally, adopted the recommendations, but it’s hard to know how many actually have done so. It’s probably been a mixed bag,” said William Keane, epidemiologist, Oregon Department of Human Services, told *Food Protection Report*. “We don’t have the authority to require fairs to comply with our recommendations,” he said. Lane County did adopt measures to better manage human contact with animals, increase public awareness of risks, and improve sanitation, as recommended by the state, and the county has not had any fair-related illnesses since then.

The Marler Clark law firm has a website to increase awareness of the fair safety issue. An opinion-editorial by William Marler, “*E. coli* and the County Fair,” is reprinted from the website with permission.

“*E. coli* and the County Fair” by William Marler.

There’s nothing more American than the state or county fair. From Washington and California to New York and Texas, countless millions of people visit fairs to ride the rides, feast on cotton candy and hot dogs, and to visit those cute farm animals.

Unfortunately, some fair visitors will get very sick. And the sickest ones, most of them small children, may be close to death before their doctors identify the cause—a deadly strain of bacteria known as *E. coli* O157:H7.

Most people associate this pathogen with undercooked hamburgers from fast food restaurants. But as a lawyer who has represented thousands of victims of *E. coli* poisoning, I have learned that people, especially children, can be infected in a variety of ways—including by attending an agricultural fair or petting zoo.

Any place where people come into contact with farm animals must be considered high risk for exposure to *E. coli* and other pathogens. The track record speaks for itself. Since 1995, thirteen outbreaks of *E. coli* O157:H7 have been reported at fairs and petting zoos in the United States. Thousands have been sickened. Many escape with a bad case of diarrhea and cramps. But some, mostly kids, have suffered permanent damage to their kidneys due to a complication of *E. coli* infection called Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome (HUS).

And some have died.

In 2003, 24 people became sick with *E. coli* O157:H7 infections after attending the Fort Bend, Texas, County Fair. Illness was not linked to food, rather all ill individuals visited animal exhibition areas at the fair. Investigators found that both the rodeo and animal exhibition areas were heavily contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7.

In 2002, in what is believed to be the largest *E. coli* outbreak in Oregon state history, at least 82 people became sick after attending the Lane County Fair in

Eugene, Oregon. Most were young children, and 22 were hospitalized—twelve with kidney failure. Oregon Health Services eventually traced the infections to the goat and sheep exposition hall, and investigators believe the bacteria were possibly transmitted through the ventilation system.

In 1998, at least 781 people became ill after attending a fair in Washington County, near Albany, New York. Of those, 71 were hospitalized and two eventually died from kidney failure. The cause: water contaminated by a neighboring farm.

The list goes on—Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Ohio—each sickening people with a bacterium carried by livestock. In 2001 the CDC warned operators of petting zoos and county fairs to clean up.

Nonetheless, lessons from previous outbreaks are not being learned. Those farm animals may be cute, but they also can carry a deadly pathogen. A recent United States Department of Agriculture study of over 20 County Fairs found *E. coli* O157:H7 in 13.8 percent of beef cattle, 5.9 percent of dairy cattle, and slightly smaller percentages of sheep, pigs and goats—nearly the same percentages found in animals in feed lots.

This toxin, in effect, targets small children, burrowing into their intestines and leading eventually to kidney failure. Most adults recover from the illness caused by *E. coli*, but many children don’t. Imagine how government would respond if the same number of people had been injured from falling off merry-go-rounds. Those wooden horses would grind to a halt and the lawyers would have a field day.

But when people suffer from *E. coli* O157:H7 poisoning, fair and petting zoo-related outbreaks are ignored.

Ignoring the risks involved with human-animal contact and allowing outbreaks to continue makes good business for lawyers like me. But I’ll gladly give up that business if it means not having to see four-year-olds hooked up to kidney dialysis machines.

So what do we do? Banish state and county fairs? Eliminate Petting Zoos? Of course not. But fair or-

ganizers can take some rather simple and inexpensive precautions.

- First, they need to clean up their act. Sanitize walkways and railings, and provide ample hand-washing areas for both employees and visitors.
- Second, stop selling or allowing food in close proximity to areas where animals are on display.
- Third, increase ventilation of buildings to reduce the risk of airborne contamination. Keep livestock areas damp with an approved disinfectant.
- Fourth, test all display animals for *E. coli* O157:H7—or require that exhibitors show proof their animals are pathogen-free.
- Finally, educate visitors. Post signs that explain to parents the importance of hand washing before and after visiting animal exhibition areas and petting zoos. Post warnings at the entrances, emphasizing the risks to small children and of the potential for airborne transmission of disease.

Perhaps these precautions won't eliminate the risk to public health. But, for a minimal investment, organizers can reduce the risk of sending kids to the hospital—or worse. And, at the same time, they can avoid lawsuits and put lawyers like me out of business."

Note. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's "Recommendations: Farm Animal Contact," is available at http://www.cdc.gov/foodborneoutbreaks/pulication/recomm_farm_animal.htm.

Source: Are Fairs, Petting Zoos Just Too Dangerous?" *Food Protection Report* 20(12):1, December 2004; Marler Clark website, <http://www.fair-safety.com>.

Key words: food safety, foodborne disease, health, pets.

Canada's Mrs. Cookwell, Virtual Food Safety Educator Targeting Young Adults



The Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education has developed an internet based "virtual mom" to do food safety education, Mrs. Cookwell—pictured above. The character was created through focus group testing to assist the Canadian Partnership in communicating the food safety messages of cook, clean, separate and chill and to answer consumer food safety questions for young adults (19 to 24 year age range). During Fall 2005, the virtual Mrs. Cookwell will be taken to about 20 Canadian university campuses (as a life size cardboard cutout) and food safety magnets featuring the four food safety messages will be distributed to college students (see below).

The Mrs. Cookwell website (http://www.canfightbac.org/mrs_cookwell/index.shtml) features recipe sources, cooking temperature charts (in degrees Celsius, of course, with Fahrenheit in parentheses), answers to questions posed by website visitors (about 200 Q/As, unfortunately not classified by topic) and a series of fact sheets:

Fact Sheet Topics

- Refreeze fish or meat
- Cool leftovers before refrigerating
- "Best before" date
- Washing meat or poultry
- Leftover pizza
- What is salmonella
- Storing eggs
- Freezer burn
- Cheese mold

It will be interesting to hear more about the success of the Mrs. Cookwell program in reaching young adults with food safety information—a group that really needs the information, but is hard to reach. (My own college-attending son recently called me to ask how long cooked turkey could be stored. It turned out that he still had our Thanksgiving leftovers in his refrigerator—at the end of January!)



Source: Who is Mrs. Cookwell? website http://www.canfightbac.org/mrs_cookwell/index.shtml and "Mrs. Cookwell to Appear at 20 Canadian Universities this Fall," *Farmscape News*, February 4, 2005, http://www.farmscape.ca/redirect.asp?Showpage=http://www.farmscape.ca/FSA_showarchive.asp?id=2391.

Key words: food safety, education, young adults.

relative to their present purchasing practices if the foods were irradiated and labeled. Consumers said they would buy 25 percent more beef, 25 percent more poultry, 24.4 percent more pork, 19.5 percent more fish and 11.9 percent produce. However, consumers were concerned about possible price increases and were only willing to pay a one to five percent premium for irradiated products.

When polled about what foods should be irradiated, the majority of consumers said that irradiation was very necessary for fruits only, somewhat necessary for vegetables and not necessary for meats and seafood. The authors suggested that, "It is possible that educational programs have sufficiently informed consumers about the benefits of fully cooking poultry, pork and beef to the point the consumers view irradiation as not necessary." However, the survey also found approximately 76 percent of consumers would prefer to buy irradiated pork and 68 percent would prefer to buy irradiated poultry to decrease the probability of illness from *Trichinella* and *Salmonella*, respectively.

The majority (66%) of the respondents were aware of irradiation; among these, 71 percent "have heard about irradiation, but do not know much about it." In 1993, one third of respondents believed inaccurately that irradiated foods become radioactive. In the recent survey, that number decreased by half. Consumers in both studies expressed more concern for pesticide and animal residues, growth hormones, food additives, bacteria and naturally occurring toxins than irradiation. Concerns regarding irradiation decreased significantly over the ten-year period.

Source: Johnson, A.M., Reynolds, A. E., Chen, J., & Resurreccion, A.V.A., Consumer Attitudes towards Irradiated Food: 2003 vs. 1993, *Journal of Food Protection* 24(6):408, June 2004.

Key words: food safety, irradiation.



Consumers Increase Willingness to Buy Irradiated Food

A survey by University of Georgia researchers indicates that twice as many consumers in 2003 were willing to buy irradiated foods compared to ten years previous, in order to decrease the their exposure to foodborne illnesses. The researchers surveyed 50 consumers in the metro-Atlanta area about irradiation in 1993 and again in 2003.

The authors found that 69 percent of consumers were willing to buy irradiated foods, compared to 29 percent in 1993. The study asked the consumers how much more of various foods they would buy

Television and Young Children: A Word of Caution

A recent analysis shows that television viewing for young children is associated with later problems in attention span. Researcher Dimitri Christakis and colleagues analyzed data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth to see how young children's TV viewing might influence the development of their attentional capacities.

Results of their analysis show that parents vary tremendously in the amount of TV access they allow their young children. At 1.5 years of age, over 40 percent of children view no TV, while about 40 percent watch 1-4 hours per day. The remaining children saw between 5-16 hours of television each day. By 3.5 years of age, TV viewing had increased considerably, with less than 10 percent viewing no TV, about 75 percent watching 1-4 hours per day, and the remaining children viewing up to 16 hours per day.

Observations of these children as they grew up showed that these viewing patterns at an early age were associated with attentional problems such as ADHD when they were 7 years of age. The relationship is robust and stable over time, even controlling for other potentially important factors, such as maternal depression, family income, maternal age, or prenatal substance abuse.

For years we have been concerned about the negative effects of television content on children's behavior, including aggression and violence, and the influence of TV advertising on children's growing list of wants. Other studies have raised concerns about the lower activity levels of children who watch a lot of TV, with links to childhood obesity. Christakis and colleagues add solid support for another concern about TV: i.e. television viewing in the early years may compromise the growing attentional capacities of children.

This new data underscores the need to give parents clear guidance on their role as television monitor in their home. Viewing should be limited for children of all ages, but especially for children in the early years of development. These are important years for development of the brain and foundational

Family Development

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skills for learning throughout life. Children need the stimulation that comes from conversations and activities with real people, not from passively watching others have those experiences on the television.

Source: Based on D. Christakis, F. Zimmerman, D. DiGuseppe, & C. McCarty, Early television exposure and subsequent attentional problems in children. *Pediatrics*, 113, 708-713.

Key words: early childhood, parenting.

Most Teens Admire Their Parents and Enjoy Spending Time With Them: Really!

A recent Child Trends public opinion poll found that only 28 percent of adults think that parents have a greater influence on teens than teens' friends or peer group. But, apparently, many teens would not agree. As shown in Child Trends' newest research brief, most teens report that they think highly of their parents, want to be like them, and enjoy spending time with them.

The brief, *Parent-Teen Relationships and Interactions: Far More Positive Than Not*, is based on Child Trends' analyses of data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1997, which has been following adolescents who were first interviewed in 1997 when they were between the ages

of 12 and 14. As part of this survey, these youth were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with several statements about their residential mother and their residential father:

“I think highly of him/her”;
“She/He is a person I want to be like”; and
“I really enjoy spending time with him/her.”

Child Trends analyses show that in 1999, when these youth were between the ages of 14 and 17:

- More than four in five (84%) reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that they think highly of their residential mother, and a similar proportion (81%) reported that agreed or strongly agreed that they think highly of their residential father;
- More than one-half (57%) reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that they wanted to be like their residential mother, while slightly under two-thirds (61%) reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that they wanted to be like their residential father; and
- More than three-quarters (79%) reported that they really enjoy spending time with their residential mother, while a similar proportion (76%) reported that they really enjoy spending time with their residential father.

The authors of the brief acknowledge that the data do show a decline in the proportion of teens reporting positive relationships with their parents during the early teen years but that this decline is fairly modest and it levels off by the time teens are 16 and 17.

“Teens aren’t always easy to get along with,” acknowledges Kristin A. Moore, President and Senior Scholar at Child Trends, who was the lead author of the brief. “Yet compelling evidence shows that the majority of US teens continue to report positive relationships with their parents. This good news somehow isn’t reaching a lot of parents. Our polling has shown that many adults think that parents have less influence on their adolescent children than their teens’ friends.”

“If parents hold such mistaken beliefs, there’s a real risk that they will step back from being involved in the lives of their teens,” adds Moore. “Since research consistently shows that adolescents develop better when they feel close to their parents, it would be a serious loss to all if parents acted as if they were no longer important once their children enter adolescence.”

To provide a broader context for the importance of positive parent-teen relationships and interactions, the research brief also includes a roundup of findings from recent rigorous US studies showing the link between quality parent-teen relationships and a wide range of positive outcomes for teens (including better academic performance and less likelihood of engaging in destructive behaviors). In addition, the brief shares results from Child Trends’ analyses of data from a survey of teens in 21 industrialized countries around the world. These results point to a strong association between frequent parent-youth interactions and higher levels of reading, scientific, and mathematical literacy among teens, reinforcing findings from studies based on US data.

Child Trends, founded in 1979, is a nonprofit, non-partisan research center dedicated to improving the lives of children and their families by conducting research and providing science-based information to the public and decision-makers.

Source: <http://www.childtrends.org>, December 8, 2004.

Key words: teenagers, parenting.

Response Inhibition and Self Control: Brain Development in the Teenage Years

They’ve puzzled us for centuries. Mature and thoughtful at one moment, emotional and impetuous the next, teenagers both delight and befuddle the adults around them. The “up” side of adolescence is the energy and spontaneity young people show, but the “down” side is the lack of focus and moodiness of teenagers. Staying up late at night and sleeping late in the morning are integral parts of the package.

Many aspects of teen development have been attributed to the hormonal changes that initiate the process of sexual maturation. Increasing levels of testosterone in males and estrogen/progesterone in females are commonly identified as sources teenager's emotionality, forgetfulness, and aggression. However, more recent research points to another culprit in the teenage behavior "syndrome," i.e. brain development. Intrigued by these ideas, author Barbara Strauch studied research findings as well as the everyday experiences of teenagers and their parents, and summarized her findings in her recent book, *The Primal Teen*.

Brain development has been in the news for the past two decades, with most attention on the early years. Synapses form at a rapid pace in the years after birth, connecting brain cells to each other in an integrated neural network. Evidence shows that the whole process is shaped by the experiences young children have. By the age of four, preschoolers have twice as many synapses as adults, a level they maintain until the teenage years. Over the years of adolescence, unused synapses are "pruned," resulting in a leaner, more efficient thinking machine by young adulthood.

However, recent study of adolescent brain development shows that, while pruning may be the norm in some brain areas, synapses grow rapidly in other areas. Neuroscientist Jay Geid found the most notable changes in the prefrontal cortex, the center for reasoning and decision making. During early adolescence the brain's outer layer thickens, indicating the rapid production of synaptic connections, called "exuberance." Many scientists think the brain is especially receptive to new skills and information during such periods of synaptic expansion. Later in adolescence, the outer layer of the brain thins dramatically, as unused synapses are pruned.

Researcher Chuck Nelson thinks these processes are linked to the development of inhibition over the adolescent years. Dr. Nelson considers maturation to be the process of gaining control over those urges that so often get us in trouble. Inhibitions allow us to slow down and consider the likely consequences before taking action. According to Nelson, frontal lobe development in adolescence allows the growth of response inhibition, as teenagers get older.

Geid agrees with Nelson's assessment, describing teenagers as having "the passion and the strength but no brakes, and they may not get good brakes until they are twenty-five." According to Geid and Nelson, parents should take note: teenagers may look a lot like adults, but they're often quite limited in self-control. Author Barbara Strauch summarizes the brain-behavior link: "The teenage brain fine-tunes its most human part, the prefrontal cortex, the place that helps us cast a wary eye, link cause to effect, decide 'maybe not'—the part, in fact, that acts grown-up."

Medical researcher Peter Jensen recommends that parents take the role of their teenagers "frontal cortex." When teens are facing hard choices, help them think through the consequences of their alternatives. This process can help youth bolster their self control and learn to think ahead for themselves. Jensen suggests that our Western culture has so many alternative messages for young people that it is hard for them to make wise choices in adolescence. As a result, young people in our culture need the several years available in adolescence to develop the internal compass necessary for thoughtful self-guided action. Nelson reinforces the point, "You don't suddenly get perfect synapses. It takes a while to get the right connections working smoothly. This may be the speed bump of adolescence."

Research findings have crystallized in recent years about the key role of frontal lobe development in the teenage years. However, other areas of brain development are beginning to show up as part of the process as well, including development of the cerebellum, a center for processing information about emotions. Other evidence shows that adolescents may be undergoing changes in the receptors for dopamine, a key component in the pleasure-and-reward circuit in the brain. In addition, scientists are finding evidence of myelination of nerve fibers among teenagers in areas important for memory and for emotion. Myelin insulates connections between neurons, promoting greater efficiency in the transmission of messages from one area of the brain to another. All of these findings are in their early stages, when their patterns and implications are too uncertain to draw firm conclusions. Stay tuned as further research clarifies the

story to be told about these aspects of adolescent brain development.

Research findings in these areas have led scholars to look to brain development as a potential source of some of the unique vulnerabilities of teenagers. Periods of brain development are accompanied by great plasticity—a virtue during periods of rapid learning. However, can this same plasticity allow development to go awry? For example, youth are more easily addicted to tobacco, alcohol, and drugs than adults. Could this pattern have its source in the brain development going on at this time, particularly the development of dopamine receptors? Adolescence is also the point of onset for schizophrenia, a mental illness with a characteristic pattern of brain cell organization. Could the normal course of brain development leave some youth at greater risk of schizophrenia as well? Other disorders, including teenage depression and anorexia may also have links to brain development.

Researchers point out the mismatch between these basic processes of brain development and our expectations for youth behavior. According to psychologist Larry Steinberg, “what’s most different for teenagers today is the environment. The level of stress is taxing their emotional and cognitive resources to an extent not true in the past. Puberty is happening sooner. The drugs are stronger and there’s AIDS. And they get less support from adults. Teenagers take their same risk-perception abilities and apply them to situations that are more dangerous and in a context where there is less adult guidance and involvement.” This combination of circumstances, according to Steinberg, can spell trouble for young people.

Some youth psychologists worry that we have narrowed the outlets for normal risk-taking, with a strong push for academic success. In one 16 year old’s words, “It seems like you have to go to Harvard—or you will be a druggie and a dropout. There don’t seem to be any in-between choices. People just talk about getting into a good college all the time; they pound that into you. They never talk about being a nice person or having a good marriage or nice family. It’s all about grades. And there isn’t any room for mistakes.”

These findings of youth brain development may require adults to adjust their expectations for the teenagers in their lives. According to Strauch, “if teenagers are befuddled and on edge—by design—we should take that message to heart.” If we understand youth behavior, we can plan for it as parents and grandparents, teachers, youth program staff, and neighbors. Middle school teacher Ken Mitchell puts brain development findings to use in his classroom: “If you have an adolescent in seventh-grade science class and he or she is having difficulty with abstract concepts, it may have nothing to do with intelligence, but may have to do with brain development and developmental readiness. And if we can get that across, maybe we can diffuse some of the anxiety out there.”

In sum, current neuroscience research shows:

- Rapid growth of synaptic connections in the frontal lobes in early adolescence, connections which are later pruned as teenagers approach adulthood.
- These processes of brain development are linked to teenage patterns of reasoning, decision making and response inhibition.
- The plasticity associated with normal brain development in adolescence may also lead to vulnerability, such as susceptibility to addiction or schizophrenia.
- Adult strategies with teenagers are likely to be more successful if they take into account the natural brain maturation processes going on in adolescence.

Source: Harriet Shaklee, based on Barbara Strauch, *The Primal Teen*, NY:Doubleday, 2003.

Key word: teenagers.

Two of the recommendations discussed in the 2005 Dietary Guidelines were to increase physical activity and whole grain consumption. This month's newsletter discusses some of the recent research on physical activity and a tool that will help people identify whole grain foods.

Increase Physical Activity and Consumption of Whole Grain Foods

Physical Activity

Physical Activity Performance Improves As You Age. Researchers at Yale found that runners over the age of 50 improve their performance more quickly than younger runners. Lead researcher Dr. Peter Jokl states "You can maintain a very high performance standard into the *sixth or seventh decade* of life."

The participants in this 16-year study were 450,000 top runners in the New Year City Marathon. During this study, the average running times of older age groups improved more than the average running times for younger age groups. Women in the 50 to 59 year age group had the greatest improvement, running the marathon as a group more than 2 minutes faster each year from 1983 to 1999. Male runners aged 50 to 59 improved about 8 seconds each year.

This study reinforces the concept that the reason many older people get weaker is not due to aging but instead that they don't use their muscles as much as when they were younger.

What if you're not a marathon runner? What are the benefits to being physically active? Dr. Jokl states, "Regular exercise of any kind will help lower cholesterol, blood sugar and blood pressure, keeps weight down and improves mental outlook."

One of the participants, 58 year-old June Norman trains conservatively. She has found that she feels a lot healthier than her friends and states "there is life after menopause."

Exercise Before A High Fat Meal. Researchers suggest you might want to plan a long walk before eating a high fat meal. Eating a high fat meal can result in an increase in blood lipids,

Nutrition Education

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specifically triglycerides, and cause blood vessels to narrow. Researchers from the University of Glasgow in the UK had subjects eat a high fat meal consisting of whip cream and chocolate and had them either walk the day before for 90 minutes on a treadmill or not walk the day before the high fat meal. The results showed that those individuals who walked prior to eating the high fat meal significantly lowered their triglyceride levels by 25 percent plus their blood vessels did not narrow. It is theorized that physical activity may lower blood fat levels and stop the fat particles from "interacting" with the blood vessel walls thereby preventing them from narrowing.

For many individuals, it may not be feasible to fit in 90 minutes of physical activity. In earlier studies, these researchers found that 30 minutes of physical activity also lowers post-meal fat levels.

Green Tea Increases Exercise Endurance. Drinking green tea may be a natural way to enhance endurance level while exercising. Researchers in Japan fed mice green tea extracts over a 10-week period and found they increased the time mice swam to exhaustion by 24 percent. Lead researcher Takatoshi Murase theorized that substances in green tea enhance breakdown of fat, which muscles can then use as an energy source.

It is estimated that the amount of green tea a person would have to drink to receive the same benefits would be 4 cups a day.

Different Levels of Couch Potatoes. You may not need to go to a gym to burn calories. If you pace, fidget, or are just plain restless, you could burn an extra 350 calories a day. Researchers at the Mayo Clinic worked with thin and overweight subjects who described themselves as couch potatoes to see why some were thin and some were overweight.

Activity was monitored by having subjects wear undergarments that contained sensors that recorded postures and movements every half-second, 24 hours a day, for 10 days. The results showed that overweight subjects sat approximately 2½ hours more a day on average than their thin subjects which resulted in the overweight subjects burning about 350 fewer calories a day.

This study shows that overweight people tend to conserve their movements. However, if the overweight subjects changed their physical activity behaviors to be like those of their thinner counterparts, they would lose approximately 33 pounds a year, and that's without going to a gym.

Why Aren't People More Physically Active? An online survey conducted by the American Council on Exercise in October 2004 revealed the following information on why individuals are not exercising:

- Lack of time.
- Don't know where to begin.
- Gym intimidation. Some individuals stated they were too out of shape to work out and felt they would be the only ones in the gym who weren't physically fit.

Some suggestions to increase level of physical activity were: (1) start slowly; (2) set realistic goals; and (3) plan an exercise regimen. Once people start exercising regularly, they feel better and look better which helps motivate them to continue.

Source: *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, August 2004; *Journal of American College of Cardiology*, December 21, 2004; *American Journal of Physiology-Regulatory, Integrative and Comparative Physiology*, November 2004. *Science*, January 28, 2005, www.acefitness.org.

Key words: exercise, dietary guidelines.

Whole Grains

The 2005 *Dietary Guidelines* recommend that individuals consume three servings of whole grain products a day. Unfortunately most Americans eat less than one serving of whole grains a day. Studies show that 46 percent of adults eat no whole grains at all. Some of the health benefits of consuming whole grains include a decrease in blood pressure; decrease likelihood of developing type 2 diabetes, decrease risk of developing heart disease, and decrease likelihood of gaining weight.

How can consumers determine if a product is a whole grain without having to read the Nutrition Facts label? Some whole grain products will have a "Whole Grain Stamp" on the package. Consumers using the new Whole Grain Stamp won't have to read ingredients or count grams and ounces to meet the whole grain recommendations.

The Whole Grain Stamp was developed by the Whole Grains Council, which is a group of more than 30 food companies, grain producers, and bakeries. The Whole Grain Stamp identifies products at three levels:

1. Good source: at least 8 gm of whole grain per labeled serving.
2. Excellent source: at least 16 grams of whole grain per labeled serving.
3. 100 percent/Excellent: at least 16 grams of whole grain per labeled serving AND not refined grain.

You can expect to see products that contain this stamp as soon as March 2005.

What is a serving of whole grain? One serving is 16 grams of whole grain, which is about 2 tbsp. of flour. Listed below are some examples of 1 serving of whole grain:

- 1 slice of whole grain bread
- ½ a whole-grain English muffin
- ½ cup cooked whole-wheat pasta
- ½ cup cooked brown rice, bulgur, barley or other cooked grain

Source: www.wholegrains.org.

Key words: grain, dietary guidelines.

APRIL IS NATIONAL FINANCIAL LITERACY MONTH



Improving Financial Literacy

Research has shown that many Americans lack the knowledge of basic personal economics they need to make informed financial judgments and manage their money effectively. Yet financial literacy is increasingly important in a world where consumers must choose from an array of complicated financial products and services and employees must take on more responsibility for their retirement savings. The Government Accountability Office, an independent arm of the US Congress, hosted a forum during July 2004, on the role of the federal government in improving financial literacy. Jane Schuchardt, Family Economics National Program Leader, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service-USDA, was among the 23 invited forum participants, which included experts in financial literacy and education from federal and state agencies, the financial industry, nonprofit organizations, and academic institutions. The report "Highlights of a GAO Forum: The Federal Government's Role in Improving Financial Literacy" summarizes forum participants' views on the topics federal financial literacy efforts should cover, populations that should be targeted, methods of delivering information, and the role of program evaluation. Highlights of the report include:

Consumers Need Financial Information on a Broad Range of Topics

Among the most important topics for financial education are basic skills—such as budgeting, planning, and managing money—as well as information

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on saving for retirement, investing, and managing credit.

Financial education should be delivered at "teachable moments" when the information is applicable to a person's life. Participants' views varied on the need to incorporate into financial education broader issues such as the implications to individuals of the budget deficit and long-term fiscal challenges facing the nation.

A Variety of Methods Are Needed to Deliver Financial Education Effectively

Participants said that the federal government should sponsor a major media campaign with a clear and simple message and find ways to ensure that existing financial education materials are more widely disseminated. Participants also emphasized the importance of personal interaction—such as one-on-one counseling—and of including financial education in school curriculums. To this end, they said the U.S. Department of Education needs to deepen its commitment to financial education.

Financial Literacy Programs Need to Be Evaluated

Program evaluation ideally should assess outcomes, such as the impact on participants' personal savings.

The report validates UI Extension's efforts to provide education and resources on a variety of basic financial topics. It provides food for thought about our information delivery methods and emphasizes the need for financial education evaluation to report behavior outcomes.

Source: Government Accounting Office, November 2004, *The Federal Government's Role in Improving Financial Literacy*, GAO-05-93SP, at <http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-93SP>, accessed January 31, 2005.

Key words: financial literacy, financial education, government.



Consumer Information Stolen from National Databanks

Recently reported thefts of consumer information from national databanks show that consumers may have little control over identity theft. The data collection firm, ChoicePoint, had the most highly publicized theft. In February it notified 145,000 U.S. citizens that their personal data was leaked to bogus small businesses. ChoicePoint and similar data collection companies sell consumer data to employers, insurance companies, banks, landlords, other

businesses and government agencies that want information on specific individuals.

The ChoicePoint incident was the first of several data leaks to be disclosed recently. In late February, financial services giant, Bank of America, alerted government workers that backup tapes containing their sensitive data were missing. In early March hackers gained access to personal information on about 32,000 U.S. citizens in databases of a ChoicePoint competitor, Seisint, which is a subsidiary of data broker LexisNexis.

In response to the leaks, legislators and industry watchers are calling for increased scrutiny of the data-aggregation industry's business practices. Atlanta-based ChoicePoint is under investigation by the Federal Trade Commission and a number of state attorneys general. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission and other regulators are investigating data collection business practices. In early March, the Senate Banking Committee held the first in a series of congressional hearings. Legislators and industry experts predict new regulation of information brokers that compile and sell Social Security numbers, driver's license numbers, and financial histories to tens of thousands of customers, including lenders, landlords, and many of the Fortune 500.



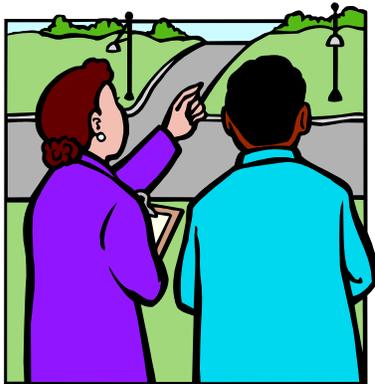
What's a consumer to do? Check for potential identity theft by reviewing your credit report at least quarterly. You may obtain one free copy of your credit report each year from each of the three national reporting companies, Equifax, TransUnion, and Experian by going to:

www.annualcreditreport.com or by calling 1-877-322-8228. If you discover unusual activity in your report, the following resources explain appropriate actions you can take: Federal Trade Commission, <http://www.consumer.gov/idtheft/> and the Identity Theft Resource Center, a nonprofit organization, <http://www.idtheftcenter.org/index.shtml>. Extension

educators who would like to teach a class on identity theft can contact University of Idaho Extension educators Marsha Lockard, mlockard@uidaho.edu and Julia Welch, jwelch@uidaho.edu. They developed a one-session lesson and will share their resources with you. For information on free credit reports, see "Idahoans Can Get Free Copies of their Credit Reports" and "How to Access Your Free Credit Report," *The Communicator*, December 2004, pages 14 & 15.

Source: Adapted from: Lemos, R., March 10, 2005 and Hines, M., March 9, 2005, LexisNexis break-in spurs more calls for reform, CNET News.com. Published on *ZDNet News* http://news.zdnet.com/2100-1009_22-5606911.html.

Key words: identity theft, fraud, financial security.



Public Policy: Share the Ownership

Perhaps a good way to begin debate on President Bush's bold and commendable ideas for an "ownership society" would be to ask, "Who owns America?" After all, if ownership policies further concentrate the ownership of assets for those who already own a lot, while doing little for those who own nothing, what's the point?

According to the Federal Reserve, the bottom 40 percent of the nation owns less than 1 percent of the nation's wealth, while the bottom 60 percent owns less than 5 percent. The top 20 percent of our population commands 83 percent of the wealth. If the president genuinely wants to make everyone an owner of America—if he really wants everyone to save more in tax-benefited accounts so that they

can exercise more personal responsibility, have better control of their futures and their children's futures, and rely less on government—then the starting point of our nation's savings and ownership policies should be the majority of Americans who are asset-poor.

This would be wise for several reasons. First, targeting savings incentives to those who don't save or own much would boost our abysmal national savings rate and reduce our risky and unsustainable reliance on foreign investment. Second, our economy is generating greater returns on assets than on labor—that is, we are earning more from owning assets than from working—a fact that is evident to many homeowners. And, finally, there's recent compelling evidence that owning assets fosters better citizens: Owners take better care of their homes, neighborhoods and schools; they're more likely to plan for their kids' futures; more likely to vote and be engaged in community affairs, and more likely to stay married.

While we shouldn't penalize those who've done well—in fact, we should continue to reward hard work, creativity, and initiative—there's little for our nation to gain by further concentrating wealth. And there is an enormous amount to be gained by broadening it. Wealth begets wealth; the real challenge is to have it in the first place.

The administration has claimed that its ownership policies would indeed benefit lower-income Americans. While we sift through policy details in the president's just-released budget to fully assess those claims, we can offer some promising ideas and guidance for Congress. First, any individual accounts connected to Social Security reform (whether carve-outs or add-ons) should offer large matching deposits to lower-income workers while maintaining a safety net for them in old age. Second, the president's proposals for retirement savings accounts and lifetime savings accounts, which thus far have offered few incentives to low-income savers, should also offer substantial matching deposits to the asset-poor. Third, state-based "529" college savings plans (named for the section of the tax code that exempts them from federal taxation) are flawed in many respects but provide an excellent infrastructure for spawning widespread asset ownership. They could be revised to reach millions

of persons with little or no savings. Finally, and most boldly, Congress should establish a privately owned "KIDS Account" at birth for each of the 4 million children born in this country every year and fund those accounts progressively—thus creating a lifetime platform for saving, asset accumulation, retirement security and wealth that can be bequeathed.

In fact, the forthcoming ASPIRE Act would do exactly that. And the broad, surprisingly bipartisan sponsorship of that bill—led by Senators Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) and Jon Corzine (D-NJ) and Reps. Harold Ford (D-KY), Thomas Petri (R-Wis.), Patrick Kennedy (D-RI), and Phil English (R-Pa.)—suggests that a progressive ownership agenda might be one of the few things our deeply divided Congress can agree on in coming years. Britain is rolling out its bold, and similar, "Child Trust Fund" this year; the United States would be wise to do the same.

Naturally, any policies that build wealth for millions of Americans could cost billions of dollars. But it would be money well spent. The Homestead Act and the GI Bill both rightly cited by the president at his inauguration as great ownership society programs, generated huge financial returns and remains the foundation of our middle class. Fully one-quarter of adults today can trace their legacy of asset ownership to the Homestead Act, and the GI Bill has returned \$7 to the nation for every \$1 invested. Ownership policies directed at kids may merit the greatest support: Already we spend \$8 on a senior citizen for every \$1 we spend on a child. Our national debt rests on our kids' shoulders, and we expect their future earnings to support our retirement. Shouldn't they have the best shot they can at economic success?

With the ownership society squarely on the table, we have a rare opportunity to renegotiate the social contract—to redefine the role of government, not repeal it. If Americans are willing to work and save, then their government should enable them to acquire savings, a home, an education, a small business and a nest-egg for retirement—to accumulate the assets that, in the words of the president, will make "every citizen the agent of his or her own destiny" and "give every American a stake in the promise and future of America." Is that a deal worth

making? Yes, provided our ownership society policies, not just our vision, truly reach all Americans.

Source: Boshara, R., Tuesday, February 8, 2005; Page A23, Share the Ownership, *The Washington Post*.

Key words: government, retirement, savings.

Family Economics Resources

Protecting Yourself from Overdraft and Bounced Check Fees.

In a question and answer format, the brochure explaining overdrafts and how to avoid them. Also, what to do if you have a problem or complaint. Federal Reserve Board, October 13, 2004. <http://www.federalreserve.gov/pubs/bounce/default.htm>.

New Federal Government Website. The Federal Government has a new website dedicated to helping people understand more about their money—how to save it, invest it, and manage it to meet personal goals. Available in both English and Spanish, the website is a collection of more than 100 publications from 20 different agencies organized by topics such as budgeting, credit, home ownership, and retirement planning. A selection of the pubs can also be ordered as part of a free My Money <http://www.mymoney.gov/mymoneyorder.shtml> tool kit. Order online or by calling toll-free 1-888-mymoney (696-6639).

Employment Background Checks. If you've ever wondered why employers use national databases and the kinds of information they seek about potential new hires the following website, the non-profit Privacy Rights Clearinghouse provides information: <http://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs16-bck.htm>.

Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act (FACTA).

The Fair and Accurate Credit Transaction Act of 2003 (FACTA) added new sections to the federal Fair Credit Reporting Act, (FCRA) is intended primarily to help consumers fight the growing crime of identity theft. Accuracy, privacy, limits on information sharing, and new consumer rights are included in FACTA. To learn more, access: <http://www.privacyrights.org/fs/fs6a-facta.htm>.