

The Communicator

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Contact

Debra Rumford drumford@uidaho.edu
to be on *The Communicator* email listserve
or submit a change of address.

School of Family & Consumer Sciences



University of Idaho
Extension



Idaho FCS Faculty Honored at Annual NEAFCS Conference

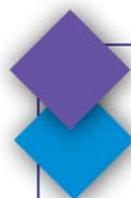
Idaho was well represented at the 2006 NEAFCS conference in Denver and garnered several national and western regional awards. Members of the four-state Medicare Prescription Drug Card Education team received the **NEAFCS Community Partnership Award**. Idaho members included Audrey Liddil, Barbara Petty, Carol Hampton, Marsha Lockard, Becky Dahl, Beverly Healy, Kathee Tiff, Sharlene Woffinden, and Marilyn Bischoff.

A Program Excellence through Research Award (national and western region) went to the Idaho team for "The Healthy Diabetes Plate." Members included Martha Raidl, Audrey Liddil, Marnie Spencer, Marsha Lockard, Rhea Lanting, and Shelly Johnson.

Barbara Petty received a 2nd Place **Communication Award** in the television category for "Married and Loving It!" Rhea Lanting and Martha Raidl received a 3rd Place **Educational Curriculum Package Award** for "Osteoporosis, Prevention and Treatment: Your Bones, Your Body" as well as a first place Western Region Award.

"Steps to a New You" also garnered a Western Region Program Excellence through Research Award. Team members included: Joey Peutz, Katie Nelson-Miner, Linda Gossett, Marnie Spencer, Marsha Lockard, Martha Raidl, and Rhea Lanting.

Laura Sant completed her term as Vice-President of Professional Development for NEAFCS and Barbara Petty is the Chair-Elect of the Program Development Task Force Committee for NEAFCS. Linda Gossett was elected as Director of the Western Region.



Director



Nancy Wanamaker
Director
Family and Consumer Sciences
University of Idaho
Moscow, ID 83844-3183
nancyw@uidaho.edu

Congratulations to all FCS Specialists and Educators. Your work makes a difference in the state of Idaho; it's great to see your efforts recognized by your national professional organization.

SAVE THE DATE **UI Extension Annual Conference** **and FCS Inservice**

Dates have been set for the annual UI Extension Conference in Moscow for April 10-12, 2007. FCS will also hold an Inservice on Thursday, April 12 and Friday, April 13 from 8:30 to 2 pm. Educators and specialists have indicated that they value this time to meet face to face with colleagues and be involved in updates. If your budget is beginning to look thin, remember that Haberly awards are available for professional development. Mark your calendars to submit by deadlines (March 1) and plan to attend. Award application criteria and process can be found on the FCS website <http://www.agls.uidaho.edu/fcs/resources.htm>.



FCS Provides Leadership to Academic War on Hunger Effort

FCS Participates in Implementation of UI Strategic Plan

The Strategic Action Plan includes five goals www.uihome.uidaho.edu/strategicactionplan. The Goal I Implementation Team has refined a set of five Learning Outcomes which were approved by the UI Faculty Council on October 3. FCS will be involved in aligning learning outcomes for four undergraduate degree programs with those of the University.

The University Learning Outcomes provide a description of the desired and expected attributes and skills students must gain to become educated citizens through coherent, integrated and intentional educational experiences in and out of the classroom. Within the category of "Learning Matters," students should be able to:

- Learn and integrate information across disciplines;
- Use multiple thinking strategies;
- Explore creative expression;
- Solve problems;
- Communicate with respect and understanding in a complex society;
- Explore one's own life purpose and meaning; and
- Practice the principles of citizenship.

Next steps include development of assessment plans for each degree program. The deadline to complete program learning outcomes is March 1, 2007. On December 6, Goal III of the UI Strategic Plan: Outreach and Engagement will be discussed in the University Matters seminar series.

Several FCS students have been involved in the leadership effort for the UI academic War on Hunger. The UI group is co-chaired by CALS undergraduates Chris Chandler, FCS Dietetics major and Mary Barstow, PSES major. FCS faculty member Maddy Houghton advises the student organization.

The Academic War on Hunger is comprised of 29 universities across the nation in partnership with the World Food Programme. They are united in a four-pronged effort:

1. Hunger Awareness and Consciousness-Raising
2. Fundraising
3. Advocacy
4. Academic Initiatives

Though still in the beginning stages, the UI War on Hunger is gaining momentum. The official kickoff on campus occurred during the week of October 16. FCS students monitored the World Food Day teleconference in Ag 62 from 9 am-12 pm. Five students traveled to Washington, DC to participate with national leaders in the kickoff. A full week of events marked the kickoff on the UI Moscow campus. Students collected \$1,300 for the War on Hunger, and along with Boise State students collected 6,000 pounds of food for local food banks.

For more detail, please visit the group's website at <http://www.uidaho.edu/waronthunger>.

"We have the means, we have the capacity to end hunger from the face of the earth in our lifetime. We need only the will."

John F. Kennedy

Emerging Ingredients

A recent article in *Food Technology* highlighted some new, interesting ingredients for the food industry. Three are described below.

- A **red-fleshed apple** has been developed by a New Zealand based research company. The rosy red coloring that extends throughout the flesh is due to a high concentration of anthocyanins. Studies conducted by the company indicate that consumers are willing to pay significantly more for fruit with novel color and tastes or added health benefits.



- Common salt has cube-shaped crystals which allow it to cake easily in humid conditions and retard its free flowing in food production situations. Researchers in India have recently developed a process to produce nearly spherical salt granules. The new salt crystals have superior free-flow characteristics compared to normal salt.

- Honey is sticky and can be difficult to use both by consumers and the food industry. The National Honey Board (NHB) has developed a solid honey wafer, by removing a portion of the 17 percent water in regular honey. The wafer, launched under the name Simply Honey, is about the size and thickness of a quarter and dissolves quickly in hot liquid. The NHB is hoping a food company will manufacture and market the honey wafer.



Source: Pszczola, DE, "Reaping a New Crop of Emerging Ingredients," *Food Technology* 60(7):51-60, July 2006.

Key words: food industry, new products.



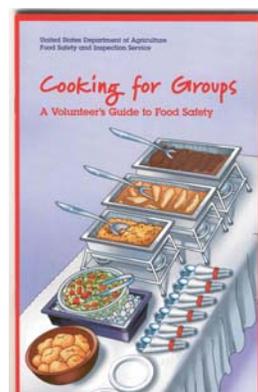
Food Safety

Sandra M. McCurdy
Extension Food Safety Specialist
Family and Consumer Sciences
University of Idaho
Moscow, ID 83844-3183
smccurdy@uidaho.edu



Changes to Cooking for Groups

The FSIS publication, *Cooking for Groups—A Volunteer's Guide to Food Safety*, has been revised slightly to update the poultry safe internal cook temperatures as well as a few other items. Significant changes were:



- Page 4: The wording of the fourth paragraph was modified slightly.
- Page 5: The Meat and Poultry Hotline phone number was added.
- Page 9: The bleach solution was changed to 1T of unscented, liquid chlorine bleach in 1 gallon of water.
- Page 15: The poultry safe minimum internal temperature was changed to 165°F.
- Page 15: The temperature of 145°F was added to the seafood column.
- Page 18: The thermometer graphic was updated to reflect temperature changes.
- Page 37: The "Ask Karen," FSIS' web-based automated response system information was added.

You can see the revised publication at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/PDF/Cooking_for_Groups.pdf.
Educational Communications (Kristin Johnson)

expects to get copies of the revised publication from FSIS soon.

Source: Katherine H. Bernard, Technical Information Specialist, USDA/FSIS Food Safety Education Staff, 5601 Sunnyside Avenue, Mail Drop 5269, Beltsville, MD 20705.

Key words: food safety, food productions, resources.



Improved Cooking Instructions for Frozen, Stuffed Raw Chicken Products

The following situation provides a good example of how introduction of relatively new food products and consumer expectations about food products can misconnect, resulting in foodborne illness. It also illustrates how the government can intervene when a problem is noted.

In July 2006, USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) issued a public health alert about frozen, stuffed, raw chicken products (for example, products such as Chicken Cordon Bleu, Chicken Kiev, and Chicken with Mushrooms and Wine Sauce). The alert was issued because there had been more than 48 cases of salmonellosis associated with the consumption of undercooked chicken entrees.

The pre-browned breading on these raw, stuffed products makes them appear fully cooked. The products were often labeled with phrases such as "Cook and Serve," "Ready to Cook," and "Oven Ready." Public health authorities believed that consumers may not have realized the products were raw and may not have been following the cooking instructions, by only heating them, when cooking was required.

In addition to the public health alert, FSIS ordered the manufacturers of uncooked, breaded, boneless poultry products to re-evaluate product labels to make sure instructions would be understood and followed by consumers. Directing consumers to cook the product to 165°F is only acceptable as long as the accompanying cooking method has been validated to actually achieve this endpoint temperature in the product. Compliance was re-

quired by November 1, 2006 or label approval would be withdrawn.

I recently reviewed some of these frozen, stuffed, raw chicken products available in Moscow grocery stores. The products were clearly labeled as not precooked, but products varied concerning whether a microwave was recommended to cook the product. Relevant portions of the front panel and cooking instructions from the back panel of two frozen chicken breast products (*Chicken Breast Cordon Bleu* and *Breaded and Boneless Stuffed Chicken Breasts*) are pictured below. The *Breaded, Boneless Stuffed Chicken Breasts* gives consumers a clearer message about how to prepare the product, stating that it is "uncooked," to use a meat thermometer, and not to use a microwave oven (which may heat unevenly).

Chicken Breast Cordon Bleu

COOKING INSTRUCTIONS

NOT PRE-COOKED • COOK THOROUGHLY

For All Methods: Cook from frozen. Remove breast from protective pouch. Place in a shallow microwave or oven safe dish. Let stand 2 minutes before serving.

Conventional Oven (Recommended Method of Preparation)

Bake in a 375°F preheated oven for 30 minutes.
Cook to an internal temperature of 165°F.

Microwave Oven

For one portion: Cook upside down on HIGH POWER for 2 minutes. Turn over, rotate and cook on HIGH POWER for an additional 1 3/4 minutes. Cook to an internal temperature of 165°F. Microwave cooking times will vary.
For two portions: Cook upside down on HIGH POWER for 2 3/4 minutes. Turn over, rotate and cook on HIGH POWER for an additional 2 1/2 minutes. Cook to an internal temperature of 165°F. Microwave cooking times will vary.



Breaded, Boneless Stuffed Chicken Breasts



Cooking Instructions:*
This product is UNCOOKED.
For Food Safety, cook to a minimum internal temperature of 165°F measured by a meat thermometer.

Conventional Oven:*

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Remove frozen breast(s) from pouch and place on baking sheet.
3. Bake in preheated oven for a minimum of 32 minutes (Cook to a minimum internal temperature of 165°F measured by a meat thermometer).
4. CAUTION: Filling will be hot and may splatter; let stand approximately 2 minutes to cool before serving.



* Due to variations in ovens, cooking times may vary.

We do not recommend microwaving this product.

Source: "FSIS Issues Public Health Alert for Frozen, Stuffed, Raw Chicken Products," http://www.fsis.usda.gov/New_s_Events/NR_070306_01/index.asp; Shaffer, D., "Salmonella cases in state raise alarm," <http://www.startribune.com/462/v-print/story/65765.html>.

Key words: food safety, foodborne disease, meat and poultry.

Romance Blossoms on the Internet: Concern's about Online Dating

There is now broad public awareness of the online dating world, and the internet users who are actively seeking dates have found a variety of ways to pursue their romantic interests online.

Some 31 percent of American adults say they know someone who has used a dating website and 15 percent of American adults—about 30 million people—say they know someone who has been in a long-term relationship or married someone he or she met online.

While online dating is becoming more commonplace, there are strong concerns in the wider public about the dangers of posting personal information on dating sites and about the honesty of those who pursue online dating. Some 66 percent of internet users agree with the statement that online dating is dangerous because it puts personal information online. And 57 percent of internet users agree with the statement that a lot of people who use online dating sites lie about their marital status.

These are some of the main findings in a new report from the Pew Internet & American Life Project entitled, "Online Dating."

The survey found that those who describe themselves as single and looking for a partner comprise about 7 percent of the online adult population. Among this cohort of about 10 million internet-using adults, 74 percent have done at least one dating-related activity online—ranging from using dating websites, to searching for information about prospective dates, to flirting via email and instant messaging, to browsing for information about the local singles scene.

"Those who are looking for dates have learned to use the internet both as a roadmap for the offline world and as a destination to meet people," said Mary Madden, Research Specialist at the Pew Internet Project and co-author of the report.

Some 11 percent of internet users, about 16 million people, say they have gone to dating websites and



*Family
Development*

Harriet Shaklee
Extension Family Development Specialist
Family and Consumer Sciences
University of Idaho—Boise
322 E Front St., Suite 180
Boise, ID 83702-7364
hshaklee@uidaho.edu



a majority of them say they have had positive experiences and believe their use of such sites helps them to find a better match. A notable number of these online daters have found firsthand that lasting romance can be forged online; 17 percent of them, or roughly 3 million people, say they have entered long-term relationships or married someone they met through the services.

Another distinguishing feature of the dating scene in the digital age is the newfound ability for singles to "Google" each other or search online for information relating to a potential date before they meet or even agree to meet. Of those internet users who are single and looking for romantic partners, 17 percent have searched for information about someone they were currently dating or were about to meet for a first date.

"Whether you meet someone offline or online, email and other forms of online communication now play host to some of the most crucial interactions in the early stages of a relationship," said Amanda Lenhart, Senior Research Specialist and co-author of the report. Indeed, a substantial segment of single and looking internet users, 40 percent, say they flirt online, and 28 percent have used the internet or email to ask someone out on a date.

However, many who use the websites don't take that extra step to follow through with an in-person meeting. Just 43 percent of the online daters in our

sample, about 7 million, said they had gone on a date with someone they met through the sites.

These findings are based on a national survey of 3,215 adults conducted last fall by the Pew Internet & American Life Project looking at the place of online dating in the larger picture of romance on the internet and relationships in America. The margin of error for responses based on all adults is ± 2 percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level.

Source: Pew Research Center, www.pewinternet.org, March 5, 2006.

Key words: internet, dating.

Few Frail Older Americans Receive Paid Help; Families Forced to Pick Up Slack

A recent report from the Urban Institute shows that frail older adults are one of the nation's most vulnerable groups. About 8.7 million people age 65 and older who live at home reported some type of disability in 2002 that limited how well they could perform basic personal activities or live independently, according to "A Profile of Frail Older Americans and Their Caregivers," by Richard W. Johnson, a principal research associate at the Urban Institute and Joshua M. Wiener, a senior fellow at RTI International.

Few people in this at-risk population—disproportionately female, widowed, and in their 80s and 90s—qualify for public benefits or purchase long-term care insurance, and many are forced to rely on assistance from family and friends. Only 14.3 percent of frail older adults received paid home care services in 2002. And only 36.6 percent of the most severely disabled older adults received such service.

Other key findings:

- Providing help can be a major burden to caregivers, who are generally spouses or daughters. Those who assume primary responsibility for frail older adults average 201 hours of help per month, more than a full-time job.

- In 2001, the median income for older people with severe disabilities living at home was only \$14,160. Nearly one-quarter had incomes below the federal poverty level.
- In 2002, 35 percent of older adults with severe disabilities and 57.2 percent of unmarried older adults with severe disabilities lived alone. Only 53.1 percent of frail older people living alone received regular care in 2002.
- About 31 percent of frail older adults and 45 percent of those with severe disabilities suffer from depression.
- In 2002, 15.5 percent of frail older adults and 27.3 percent of those with severe disabilities had Medicaid coverage. Only 6.8 percent of frail older adults had long-term care insurance.
- Long-term care is largely a women's issue: Nearly two-thirds of older people with severe disabilities are female, women account for about two-thirds of all unpaid caregivers, and daughters account for about 7 of every 10 adult children who help their frail parents.

Between 2000 and 2050, the number of adults age 85 and older will soar from 4.3 million to 20.9 million.

"The problem is only going to get worse in the future, when the baby boomers start entering their 80s and many will develop long-term care needs," Johnson said. "Family caregivers are also likely to become more scarce as more married women work outside the home, families become smaller, and more people choose to have no children at all. We need to start planning now for ways to provide and pay for future long-term care services."

Source: Report is available online at <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=311284>.

Key words: seniors, health care.

Nutrition Facts		
Serving Size 1 cup (59g)		
Servings Per Container about 7		
Amount Per Serving	Cereal	Cereal with 1/2 cup Fat Free Milk
Calories	240	280
Calories from Fat	60	60
% Daily Value**		
Total Fat 6g*	9%	9%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%	5%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%	0%
Sodium 240mg	10%	13%
Potassium 200mg	6%	11%
Total Carbohydrate 44g	15%	17%
Dietary Fiber 4g	16%	16%
Sugars 12g		
Other Carbohydrate 28g		
Protein 5g		

Food Labels

In September 2006, a *Wall Street Journal*/Harris Interactive health-care poll found that half of Americans regularly read food labels. The nutrition facts they check most frequently are fat, calorie, and sugar content.

But do they understand the information on the food label? When it comes to serving size, there is a lot of confusion. The American Dietetic Association believes this may be due to the fact that most marketplace portions (those portions served by restaurants and commercial food providers) exceed standard serving sizes by at least a factor of two and sometimes eight-fold. Many fast food chains serve portions that are two to five times larger than a standard serving size. As a result, there is confusion over what constitutes a “sensible” portion.

This confusion was reflected in a study published in the November 2006 issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. Researchers had 200 participants of varying educational backgrounds complete a questionnaire on food labels. The most common mistake made by individuals of all educational backgrounds involved serving sizes, with many individuals either not looking at the serving size number or miscalculating the number of servings in a package. For example, a pint of ice cream has four half-cup servings but most subjects answered that one serving was half the container. Lead researcher, Dr. Russell Rothman stated “It might be wishful thinking, but mostly it’s just people reading too quickly.”

Source: *Wall Street Journal*, “Most Americans Read Labels When Choosing Food, Poll Finds,” September 26, 2006. *American Dietetic Association*, “Expanding Portion Sizes in the U.S. Marketplace, Implications for Nutrition Counseling.” Rothman, “Patient Understanding of Food Labels: The Role of Literacy and Numeracy,” *AJPM* 2006; 331(5):391-398.

Key words: foods, labels.

Nutrition Education

Martha Raidl
 Extension Nutrition Education Specialist
 Family and Consumer Sciences
 University of Idaho—Boise
 322 E Front St., Suite 180
 Boise, ID 83702-7364
 mraidl@uidaho.edu



Eat a Whole Grain, Fruit, and Protein Breakfast

How many of you think breakfast is an important meal? A survey conducted in June 2006 by the Impulse Research Service on 1,500 adults across the US showed that 85 percent of Americans agree that eating breakfast is important.

Now how many of you actually ate breakfast this morning? This same survey revealed that more than 60 percent of respondents stated it was “too hard” to find time to eat breakfast as a family. Approximately 40 percent of families never prepare hot breakfast during the week and half of all families surveyed skipped breakfast on the weekends.

There are benefits to eating breakfast and these benefits are related to the type of food that is eaten. In children, adolescents, and adults, those who eat breakfast are less likely to be overweight because they tend to eat less as the day progresses. In youth and adolescents, those who eat breakfast have a better memory and test grades. But eating chocolate donuts or a stack of refined grain pancakes may not result in the same benefits.

Eating breakfast foods that slowly release carbohydrate into the blood improve memory and concentration more than those that rapidly release large amounts. This slow release of carbohydrate occurs when whole grains and solid fruit are eaten rather than refined grains (items made from white flour) and fruit juice or soft drinks.

To make this breakfast even more nutritious, add a protein food that is low in fat, such as skim milk or low fat yogurt, or a protein that contains a heart-healthy fat, such as peanut butter or walnuts.

Here are several sample breakfasts that contain a whole grain, solid fruit, and protein source:

- Oatmeal made with milk, and topped with sliced apples and walnuts.
- Whole wheat toast plus peanut butter and sliced bananas.
- Low-fat yogurt mixed with bran cereal and blueberries.

See if eating one of these breakfasts improves your memory or helps you concentrate better.

Source: <http://www.foodnavigator-usa.com/news/ng.asp?n=71221-breakfast-convenience-cereal>, www.msnbc.com; What you eat for breakfast sets a tone for the day, October 13, 2006.

Key word: breakfast.

Do Microwaves Destroy Nutrients In Food?

There has been a long-standing belief by some individuals that the radiation emitted by microwaves destroys nutrients in food. Is it true?

Keep in mind that all cooking methods can destroy vitamins and other nutrients in food. The length of time the food is cooked, the amount of liquid that is used, and the cooking temperature all affect the final nutrient content of the cooked food.

Microwave cooking destroys fewer nutrients since the food is exposed to less heat and has a shorter cooking time. For example, when spinach was cooked on a stove, it lost 77 percent of its folate (a water-soluble nutrient) content. But, when it was cooked in the microwave, it retained most of its folate content. In addition, bacon cooked in the microwave has significantly lower levels of cancer-causing compounds (nitrosamines) than conventionally cooked bacon.

Immersing the vegetables in water and then cooking them in the microwave can destroy a large percentage of the nutrients. Broccoli immersed in wa-

ter and cooked in the microwave lost about 74-97 percent of its antioxidants. But when it was steamed or cooked without water, the broccoli retained most of its nutrients.

In summary, to retain the nutrient content of vegetables, prepare them in the microwave either without water or steam them.

Source: *Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture*, November 2003.

Key words: vegetables, nutrients.

Does Enviga Burn Calories?

Coca-Cola Company claims that their new green tea-based drink called Enviga will burn calories by speeding up a person's metabolic rate and help them lose weight. This product will be sold nationally starting in February 2007.

It contains green tea extracts, calcium, and caffeine. The University of Lausanne in Switzerland tested this product and found that healthy subjects, in the lean to normal weight range, who consumed three 12-ounce cans over 24 hours burned off between 60 to 100 calories a day. There are two factors to keep in mind. The first is that none of this research has been publicly released or formally reviewed by other scientists. The second is that all of the subjects in the study were eating a healthy diet and exercising plus none were overweight.

Let's estimate how much it would cost to burn 100 calories per day. If three cans of Enviga burn 60 calories, then each can burns 20 calories. The estimated cost of one can is \$1.29. Therefore, to burn 100 calories would require five cans or $\$1.29 \times 5 = \6.45 . A brisk 15 minute walk, which is free, would also burn off 100 calories. And to burn off the 570 calories of a McDonalds Big Mac, a person would have to consume 9.3 cans of Enviga which would cost about \$12.00. According to the research done by Coca-Cola, there wasn't any evidence that drinking more than three cans a day burned more than 60 calories a day.

Source: *Scientific American.com*, Medical experts doubt calorie burning drink, October 13, 2006.

Key word: soda.

Avoid the Holiday (Over) Spending Blues

The holiday season is a favorite time of year for millions of Americans—and understandably so. It is a time for celebration, spending time with family and friends, and demonstrating appreciation and love by giving gifts. Unfortunately, it is often not until the holidays are over that many people begin focusing on the fact that it is also a time for overspending.

In recent years, US households have spent an average of \$1,000 per year on holiday purchases. Many adults admit that they do not plan ahead for the additional holiday expense related to celebrations and gift giving. Consequently, this lack of planning often leads to overspending and credit card purchases. On average, Americans spend the first six months of every year paying off the holiday debt from the previous year. In many cases, the bills far outlast the gifts.

Controlling Your Holiday Debt

To avoid holiday spending that leads to future debt, it's important to be reminded of how responsible planning prior to the holidays can help you avoid the Holiday Overspending Blues. Keeping your expenses under control can actually result in stronger relationships, better emotional, spiritual and physical health, and greater financial savings! Here are tips to avoid overspending while at the same time making your holidays even more meaningful and joyous.

Develop a Spending Plan

This is more than just a holiday list. It should include everyone who will receive a gift. It should also reflect an attempt to compare the amount of money available for holiday shopping with the number of people for whom you must purchase gifts. This will help you to allocate your resources wisely and prevent last minute spending splurges that ruin a holiday budget. A helpful holiday spending worksheet is available at Bankrate.com, <http://www.bankrate.com/brm/calc/holidaySpending.asp>. A holiday spending plan is located at www.afsaef.org/images/ACF5761.pdf.



Family Economics

Marilyn Bischoff
Extension Family Economics Specialist
Family and Consumer Sciences
University of Idaho—Boise
322 E Front St., Suite 180
Boise, ID 83702-7364
mbischof@uidaho.edu



Avoid Credit

To really keep your holiday spending under control, GO FOR THE GREEN! Pay cash. Research has proven that people who shop with a credit card are willing to spend as much as 30 percent more for an item than if they pay cash for that same item. Paying cash will also help you to avoid interest charges.

Lend a Hand to People in Need

As you plan your holiday spending, remember the less fortunate around you. One family has decided that after they determine how much they can afford to spend on Christmas each year, they will give one-half of that amount to less fortunate people in their community.

Give Thought to Your Gifts

The most thoughtful gifts are those that truly communicate your love for someone and they are usually not the most expensive ones. The secret to thoughtful gifts is to be observant all year long to determine something very special for the people on your list. Thoughtful gift giving also helps to decrease impulse buying.

Maintain the Right Attitude

Remember, Christmas and Hanukkah are religious holidays. The celebration of Christ's birth was not designed as a marketing bonanza for merchants

and retailers. It was meant to be a time of worship and reflection. Share time and simple celebrations with loved ones and friends this holiday season instead of frenzied spending.

Source: Adapted from: Linaman, T., 2005, Family Life Communications, Inc., accessed 10/29/06 at <http://www.flc.org/hfl/flf01.htm>. Following sites accessed 10/26/06: American Financial Services Education Association www.afsaef.org/images/ACF5761.pdf; Bankrate.com <http://www.bankrate.com/brm/calc/holidaySpending.asp>.

Key words: holidays, spending, debt.

Money Woes Worry People

A majority of Americans, asked to choose from 14 possible recently experienced problems causing stress, pointed to “rising prices,” according to a study conducted by Harris Interactive. Seventy-four percent of those surveyed said rising prices are an issue in their lives, followed by 56 percent who said “too much to do” and 53 percent who said they had trouble sleeping, according to the online survey of 2,747 adults in September. Fourth on the list is “concerns about money for emergencies,” a recent problem for 53 percent of respondents.

The fact that money woes were a key concern for many respondents didn’t surprise stress management experts. “Money concerns are certainly a huge stressor for people. People are working long hours, there are two-income families—and yet people are struggling to make ends meet,” said Stephanie Marston, practicing family therapist and stress management expert. Sometimes stress causes money woes, she said. “When people are stressed they, rather than thinking about what they can do to reduce their stress, they often overeat, overdrink, or go shopping. They feel that if they buy something nice, it’s going to make them feel better. It may for a very brief period of time, but then the bills start coming in and it just adds to the already overextended lifestyle they’re living.”

Tips for Coping

So, we’re all feeling some stress. What to do? First, figure out your priorities, Marston said. “The notion

that you can have it all is a myth. You simply can’t have it all. Many people are simply living like rats on a treadmill. We’re going through the motions of living.” To overcome that feeling, list your top priorities in life, she said. “It’s important for people to slow down enough to ask themselves, ‘What’s important in my life? Is it my friends, my family, my faith, my finances, my physical well-being?’” Then every morning before starting your day, figure out which of your top priorities matter most—and then focus on that priority that day.

For instance, you may have a huge report due, for that day completing the report at work is your major priority. On another day, focusing on investments for your retirement plan may be your top priority. List your top priority on a daily basis. You have to be selective.

Attitude Shift Stops List of Worries

Another strategy is to change your attitude towards stressful events. While that’s not easy to do, with practice you can shift your thinking from negative thoughts to strategies for action. For instance, when faced with a financial setback, say to yourself, “OK. This is the way it is. I don’t have the money. There are two things I can do: how do I cut back on spending or increase my income? What are some strategies to do that?”

Training your mind to react to stressful situations is similar to going on a diet to lose weight. First you need to eat less fattening food. This is like reducing the thoughts in your brain that make it worse, such as, “I’m an idiot, I’m no good, life is no good.” The less of that the better. Then, along with cutting back on negative thoughts, think about strategies to improve the situation. It’s just like, the more you exercise, the greater the chance that you’ll lose weight. The more you do things that take you in a positive direction, the better. You start planning. You start writing down strategies. Finally, focus on the power you have to make choices. Too often, people forget there are options.

Source: Adapted from Coombes, A., October 8, 2006. “Rising prices” Top List of Worries. Market-Watch.

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