Happy New Year and welcome to the newest Extension newsletter that focuses on all aspects of living well including family life. Whether or not you set personal resolutions, the New Year is a time of new beginnings and a time to make changes to improve our lives. Most people want to live healthy, happy lives full of joy and positive experiences, friends and family. This first Family FitNews provides an opportunity to start a new eating plan with the Mediterranean Diet, begin a new fitness program with Extension Get Fit, and find personal happiness in each day with a Blueprint for Happiness.

Each year, the Extension Family and Consumer Science (FCS) Subcommittee decides where programming efforts will be made within the county Extension program. This year the committee voted that Marriage, Parenting, and Family Life would be the first priority for educational efforts followed by Food and Nutrition. This newsletter is one way of sending educational messages to the public to meet the needs in those areas but it will also address other FCS topics within the areas of Health and Aging as well as Family Economics since families are affected by all of these topics. This newsletter will be geared toward all ages from young families to those experiencing the golden years of grand parenting and retirement. We all experience the challenges and joys of family and personal growth, the trials of eating healthfully and exercising enough to live a long, healthy life we can enjoy, and the way in which it is all affected by family economics. I hope you will enjoy this new undertaking and if you have suggestions for topics, please feel free to email them to tmcmanus@uaex.edu or contact 870-741-6168. Remember that the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service is your go-to resource for reliable, research-based, non-biased information you can trust.

EXTENSION GET FIT

We are very excited to get started with our new Extension Get Fit program! Extension Get Fit is the first strength training program designed by the UofA Extension Service. The Extension Get Fit Program is a community-based program, developed based on strength training research, with a focus on mid-life and older adults. However, this program is appropriate and beneficial for adults of all ages. It is designed to increase strength and flexibility.
Are you getting the amount of the right types of exercise?

Current exercise guidelines recommend that adults regularly engage in three types of physical activity:
1. cardiovascular, aerobic or endurance (75–150 minutes per week of walking/ jogging, etc.)
2. strengthening or resistance training (2-3 times per week of weight lifting, stretch bands, resistance machines, etc.)
3. stretching or flexibility (performed every day or at a minimum after completing above exercises). In addition to the general guidelines, older adults should add balance exercises to their fitness routines.

Why strength train?

Strength training improves:

- Muscle mass
- Strength and balance
- Bone density
- Arthritis symptoms
- Metabolism
- Blood sugar and Cholesterol
- Mood and attitude
- Decreases depression
- Allows you to sleep more soundly
- Increases energy level
- Socially, allows you to enjoy others’ company and build a new circle of friends

Why Extension Get Fit?

This research-based program offers a variety of possibilities including the Strong Women and Men program and other routines using equipment such as stretch bands, stability ball, medicine balls, free weights, floor mats, etc. This program reaches all major muscle groups and can also include emphasis on lower back or small joints. Also, safety always comes first. Exercises may be tailored to each individual’s needs and fitness level. Extension Get Fit is safe, structured, and affordable. It is appropriate for all fitness levels, provides a supportive group environment, and its fun!

How do I find out more about Extension Get Fit?

Attend an orientation meeting on January 20th at 9:00 a.m. at St. John’s Episcopal Church in Harrison. You may also call the Extension office at 741-6168 for more information.

The MEDITERRANEAN DIET

It seems that one of the big trends in eating right now is the Mediterranean diet. What is all the fuss about? Numerous studies have linked adherence to the traditional Mediterranean Diet to:

✓ Decreased risk of death from all causes, heart disease.
✓ Reduced risk for cardiovascular disease.
✓ Reduced inflammation that increases risk for heart disease.
✓ Decreased risk for hypertension.
✓ Decreased abdominal obesity.
✓ Decreased risk for metabolic syndrome.
✓ Reduced risk for diabetes.
✓ Improved glycemic control and insulin sensitivity in people with diabetes.
✓ Reduced risk for overall cancer, cancers associated with gastrointestinal tract, and post-menopausal breast cancer.
✓ Reduced risk of stroke, Alzheimer disease and dementia.
✓ Improved cognitive function.
There is not just one Mediterranean Diet. The countries along the Mediterranean basin have different religions, economic and cultural traditions and dietary patterns. But generally, the Mediterranean Diet is characterized by abundant plant foods including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, beans and nuts; olive oil as the primary source of fat; cheese, yogurt, fish, poultry and eggs consumed in low to moderate amounts; red meat in low amounts; and wine in moderation with meals.

Overall, the Mediterranean diet involves simple, fresh food, small portions and leisurely dining. The Mediterranean way of eating is now recognized as the "gold standard" for eating patterns that promote lifelong good health.

In the early 1990’s, scientists at the Harvard School of Public Health teamed up with Oldways, an international coalition of nutrition scientists and culinary experts, to introduce the Mediterranean Diet to Americans.

They developed the Mediterranean Diet Pyramid to help people follow this healthy way of eating. It was introduced shortly after the US Government introduced the Food Guide Pyramid, because they felt there was strong scientific evidence to support this diet over the one represented in the Food Guide Pyramid. The government’s latest version, MyPyramid, is more in line with the Mediterranean diet.

Foods in the bottom section of the pyramid form the foundation of the diet and may be eaten more frequently and in larger amounts.

Portion sizes and frequency of consumption should decrease as you move up the pyramid.

How can we eat Mediterranean?

- Eat plenty of colorful, fresh fruits and vegetables
- Eat whole grains and cereals instead of refined
- Eat more legumes and nuts instead of meats
- Eat more fish and seafood instead of red meats
- Use olive oil instead of other fats
- Season with herbs and spices
- Eat fewer sweets
- Eat smaller portions
- Enjoy meals with family and friends
- Move more

If you would be interested in attending a Mediterranean Cooking School, contact tmcmanus@uaex.edu or call 870-741-6168.

Have you ever wished you had a blueprint for happiness? Many people have wished that there was some single thing they could do to magically transform their lives, making themselves happier and their lives more meaningful. The proposed solutions have ranged from self-esteem programs to nutrition supplements and everything in between. Although these approaches may have some benefits, their effectiveness is often not proven or their benefits have been overstated. Many of them simply can’t deliver on their promises of happiness and well-being.

This year, may you find happiness in all you endeavor. A work book to walk you through this process is available at your local county Extension office.
Family and Consumer Science (FCS) Workshop

You are invited to an educational workshop which will be conducted on Friday, January 23rd at the JPH Center. Lessons will include **Clean and Green** (making your own, safe cleaners), **Brain Games** (keeping your brain fit), **Understanding Personalities**, and **Gluten Free**. Lessons will be taught by County Extension Agents from 4 counties and the workshop will be hosted by Boone County Extension Homemakers Council who will plan fun and games for the event. This is sure to be a fun and exciting day of learning. For more information, contact the Boone County Extension office at 741-6168.

The Boone County Cooperative Extension Services always has educational programs and events available. To find out what is going on, visit our Facebook page at UAEX Boone County.

Sincerely,

Trudy G. McManus
County Extension Agent – Family and Consumer Science

*The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, sex, gender, identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.*