More than 65 Crittenden Countians representing 12 teams throughout the county including several faith based groups and county employees invested in their health by participating in the spring “Walk Across Arkansas” Program. The eight-week program was designed for all Arkansans to become active through exercise while creating personal goals with team support. Although it’s called Walk Across Arkansas, because walking is an exercise most people can do, any and all exercise was included. The ultimate goal was to encourage county residents to increase their physical activity.

Although there is still a week left until the completion of the program, program participants have walked a total of 3,498 miles which amounts to a total of $6,996 in health care savings. WOW!

Hat’s off to the all of the participants and especially to the following TOP FIVE teams.

- Bethel Steppers
- Trail Hikers
- Living Waters
- River Trace Ramblers
- Delta Deputies

May—Hypertension Education Education Month

When it comes to high blood pressure, make “control your goal”. Having the highest score is good in many things, but not with blood pressure—the higher your numbers, the more serious the condition. High blood pressure can damage your health in many ways, even if you don’t have any symptoms. For instance, it can harden the arteries, decreasing the flow of blood and oxygen to the heart and brain. This reduced flow can cause:

- A heart attack
- A stroke
- Chest pain
- Heart failure
Canning Foods at Home, Do It Safely

There are many reasons why families want to preserve their own food. Preserving it yourself can mean having an abundant supply of a variety of foods when the fresh produce are not readily available or having those specialties preserves or relishes that can’t always be purchased. Whatever your reason is for preserving food, “do it safely” or all of your efforts may be worthless. Below are some basic canning tips, to help you get started.

The **boiling water canning method** is safe for fruits, tomatoes, pickles, jams, jellies and preserves. This method is used to process foods at a boiling temperature 212°F. **Pressure canning** is used to process foods under pressure and is the only safe method of canning vegetables and meats, because the temperature can reach at least 240°F. Failure to properly process low acid foods in a pressure canner can result in botulism which if often fatal.

Regardless of the canning method, each food has its own processing time. These times are based on research that tells how long the produce must be heated so that all of the food in the jar has reached the temperature needed to destroy all dangerous microorganisms. The length of time required will vary with the denseness of the food, and its packing liquid. Because these processing times are researched based, they should be followed exactly.

The best sources of instructions for home canning is your County Extension Office, the US Department of Agriculture or other major manufacturers of home canning equipment.

For more information on “Canning Foods at Home”, contact our office regarding the “Canning Basics” Workshop, to be conducted on June 4, 2013 at 9:30 a.m.

Hypertension Education cont’d

Steps you can take to control your BP include:

* Take your medicine as directed.
* If you smoke, STOP
* Reduce your sodium intake.
* Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.
* Get at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week.
* Eat a healthy diet that is high in fruits and vegetables and low in saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol.
* Manage stress
* Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.

Source: CDC
**Be Food Safe, Prepare and Handle with Care**

Knowing how to handle and prepare food safely can help keep you and your family safe. Bacteria can grow on all protein foods including eggs and dairy products as well as cut-up or cooked fruits and vegetables if they are not handled properly. The following simple rules: Clean, separate, cook and chill can help you fight “BAC” and keep your family safe:

- **Clean**: Wash hands and surfaces often including cutting boards and dishes before and after preparing foods. Rinse fruits and vegetables with cold water before using, however; there is no need to wash meat and poultry.
- **Separate**: Don’t cross contaminate. Separate raw, cooked or ready to eat foods while shopping, preparing or storing.
- **Cook**: Cook foods to the right temperature. The only way to know if meat and poultry has reached the right temperature is to use a food thermometer. Heat leftovers to 165°F.
- **Chill**: Refrigerate promptly at 40°F or below. Use an appliance thermometer to ensure a consistent temperature. Never let raw meat, poultry, eggs, cooked food or cut fresh fruits or vegetables sit at room temperature more than two hours (1 hour when the temperature is above 90°F).

Never defrost food at room temperature.

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**To Improve Your Health and Wealth Kick it Up a Notch**

Want to improve your health and increase your wealth at a faster pace? Try kicking it up a notch. An easy way to change your habits is to focus on taking small steps that are doable for you. Start where you are today and kick it up a notch! Such as:

- **Health:**
  - **Exercise**—Add 10 minutes to your daily exercise routine, or find a new challenge.
  - **Fruits and Vegetables**—Not eating the recommended servings everyday? Kick it up a notch by adding one more.

- **Wealth:**
  - **Savings** - Add an extra 5 or 10% from your paycheck each pay period.
  - **Credit Card Debt**—Add a little more toward your bill each month, starting with the one that has the highest APR. Reducing your debt load can also help improve your credit score which could qualify you for a lower APR.
  - **Home Mortgage**—Add an extra $50 or more toward the principle on your home mortgage.

Find more strategies for success with small steps to health and wealth at www.arfamilies.org
Keep Your Cool in Hot Weather

Periods of extremely hot weather--heat waves--can cause serious health problems for everyone. In fact, among weather-related events, heat waves are a leading cause of death. The most common heat-related conditions are heatstroke, heat exhaustion, heat cramps, sunburn and heat rash. Heatstroke and heat exhaustion are the most serious conditions. Warning signs for heat exhaustion include:

- Heavy sweating
- Dizziness, headache
- Nausea, or vomiting
- If left untreated, may progress to heat stroke.

The following tips can help you keep your cool in hot weather:

- **Limit** outdoor activities to early morning and evening hours.
- **Cut** down on outdoor exercise.
- **Drink** more liquids regardless of activity level, but avoid very cold beverages.
- **Take** frequent breaks in the shade.
- **Protect** yourself from the sun with a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses and sunscreen with a SPF 15 or higher.
- **Choose** lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.

All meetings and activities announced in this newsletter are open to all eligible persons without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (large print, audiotapes, etc.) should notify the county Extension office (or other appropriate office) as soon as possible prior to the activity.