The Lonoke County Extension Office is taking pre-registration for its annual child care provider training. Letters are being sent to child care facilities across the county with detailed information about this year’s classes. The trainings will be held on two Saturdays, January 25 and February 22, 2014. The training is free of charge and is TAPP certified.

Pre-registration by January 10, 2014 is required as there is limited space. Space in the classes will be reserved on a first come, first serve basis. If your center does not receive a letter soon please contact the county extension office for more information and to pre-register.
Winter Tips

Mix It Up

When the holiday season rolls around, many family budgets become strained. To help reduce the stress this holiday season, try making gifts instead of purchasing them.

Make homemade mixes in a jar. Mixes for soups and cookies are popular gift items that are fairly inexpensive to make. The gift recipient will appreciate the attractive and thoughtful gift and also will value the convenience. You can decorate the jar with fabric, a ribbon and attach the recipe on a card to the jar. Try this one for a warm, winter meal.

Taco Bean Chili Mix in a Jar

½ cup dried kidney beans
½ cup dried pinto beans
½ cup dried red beans
1 (1¼ ounce) package taco seasoning mix
1 Tablespoon dried minced onion
½ teaspoon chili powder or chipotle chili pepper seasoning
¾ teaspoon ground cumin
1½ cups tortilla chips, slightly crushed

Layer beans in a 1 quart wide-mouth jar in the order listed. Place next 4 ingredients in a small plastic zip-type bag. Seal bag and place in jar. Add tortilla chips. Seal jar and decorate. Attach the following instructions on a gift tag:

Taco Bean Chili (makes 6 to 8 servings)

1 jar Taco Bean Chili Mix
4 Cups water
1 (14½ ounce) can diced tomatoes with green chilies (Ro*Tel), undrained
1 (8 ounce) can tomato sauce
1 pound ground beef or ground turkey, browned and drained
Shredded cheese, chopped lettuce, sliced black olives (optional)

1. Remove tortilla chips and seasoning packet from jar. Set aside.
2. Place beans in large bowl. Cover with water. Soak 6-8 hours or overnight. Drain beans, discard water.
3. Place soaked beans, water, tomatoes, tomato sauce, ground beef and contents of seasoning packet in Dutch oven. Bring to a boil over high heat. Cover. Reduce heat and simmer 1½ to 2 hours or until beans are tender.
4. Crush tortilla chips. Stir into chili and cook 5-10 minutes to thicken. Serve with cheese, lettuce and olives, if desired.

Carbon Monoxide Poses Winter Risk

Carbon monoxide, an odorless gas produced by furnaces powered by gas and oil, kills hundreds of people each year and sickens thousands more. Portable generators, water heaters, vehicles and other equipment burning fossil fuel may also produce carbon monoxide.

Carbon monoxide poisoning can be hard to spot because many symptoms mimic the flu (without fever) and other illnesses common this time of year. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include headaches, dizziness, weakness, nausea and vomiting. In addition, chest pain, fatigue, impaired vision and coordination, and red skin coloring can indicate carbon monoxide poisoning. Young children, pregnant women, the elderly, smokers, and people with anemia, lung disease, or heart disease are at increased risk.

To reduce risk of carbon monoxide poisoning, install a battery-operated carbon monoxide detector in your home and check it regularly. Be sure that a professional inspects gas furnaces, stoves or ovens, water heaters, and other gas elements each year. Proper ventilation is essential to prevent carbon monoxide buildup. If purchasing new gas equipment, check for a seal from a national testing agency, such as the CSA group.

Use of gas elements for heating increases carbon monoxide risk, so avoid using gas stovetop burners to keep your home warm. Keep portable generators at least 20 feet away and do not use portable generators or gas grills indoors. Because vehicle exhaust can emit carbon monoxide, do not leave a vehicle running in a garage with the garage door closed. A mechanic can check vehicle exhaust for carbon monoxide levels.

If you suspect exposure to carbon monoxide, or if your carbon monoxide detector goes off, leave the home immediately and call 911.
Share the love, not germs, this holiday season

Hand washing is one of the most effective ways to prevent illness. Proper hand washing can protect against the spread of common illnesses, like cold and flu.

Holiday gatherings often put large groups of people close together, increasing the opportunity to snag infectious germs from others. Proper hand washing is easy, and is very important during the holiday season. Illnesses like the cold and flu can spread fast in large groups.

To properly wash your hands follow these simple steps:

1. Wet your hands with warm, clean, running water.
2. Apply soap and continue to rub your hands together for 20 seconds (sing the Happy Birthday song twice or the ABCs once) – make sure you get the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and underneath your fingernails.
3. Rinse your hands completely under running water.
4. Dry your hands completely using a clean towel or air-dry them.

Don’t have soap and water?

Using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer is acceptable in a pinch, but does not substitute for washing with soap and warm water. Hand sanitizers can reduce the number of germs, but does not eliminate all types of germs.

Not sure when you should wash your hands?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the most important times for hands washing are before preparing and eating food; treating wounds, administering medications, or helping someone sick or injured; or putting in or taking out contact lenses. You should also wash your hands after preparing foods or handling raw meat and poultry, using the bathroom, changing a diaper, or touching animals, their toys, or waste. Other key times to wash your hands are after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing into your hands (current recommendations call for coughing or sneezing into the bend of your arm), treating wounds or helping someone who is sick or injured, and after handling garbage or household garden chemicals.

A 20-second hand washing may be the most important thing you do to protect yourself and your family against illness-causing germs this holiday season.

Spread love, not germs!