

Work and Family



December 2002

COMMUNIQUE

Volume VI Number 3

DATES TO REMEMBER

December 21 – First Day of Winter

December 25 – Christmas Day

December 26 – Kwanzaa

December 31 – New Year's Eve



COOKING WITH THE KIDS

Being a working parent often leaves limited time to spend with your children; therefore, it is important to include them in daily chores whenever possible. During the holidays, for example, we may spend more time than usual in the kitchen. This is the perfect opportunity for quality time, and you will be doing them a great service, too. There are at least four reasons you should teach your kids to cook, starting when they are very young. First, they need to learn this important skill if they hope to eat well as an adult. Second, it's a way to spend time with them while you are accomplishing something else. Third, cooking is a great way to teach various lessons to your kids: Following recipes reinforces their reading ability; measuring ingredients is an easy math lesson, and figuring proportions when you change the size of a recipe is a more advanced one; there are some science lessons in there, too – such as how matter can change when temperature changes and how solids can dissolve in liquids. Fourth, and maybe the most important, your kids eventually can take over some of your work by making their own breakfast, packing their

own lunches, and gradually working up to cooking simple dinners for the whole family. Always be sure to carefully supervise young children in the kitchen and make sure the recipe and utensils are age appropriate.

CHILD-PROOFING ON THE GO

During the holiday season and throughout the year, special attention should be paid when visiting homes that normally do not have children in them. Don't overlook the homes of relatives and friends when it comes to childproofing. If you have crawlers or toddlers, be sure to take along a portable gate to block stairs. Medication is a common hazard in the homes of older relatives. There may be more medicines around these places than at your own home, and these medications may have been purchased without childproof caps. That's something to watch when the grandparents visit you, too. A common cause of child poisoning is the curious toddler who explores Grandma's purse and finds medicine there. TIP: Post at home and carry with you the number for the nearest poison control center. It can give you fast, expert help by phone and may save you an unnecessary trip to the emergency room. Also, do not let children play on home exercise equipment and be sure if there are guns in the home that they are locked and out of a child's reach.

SEASON'S
GREETINGS
TO YOU AND
YOUR FAMILY



ELDERCARE ISSUES

The children of aging parents commonly complain that their elders are frequently angry – for no good reason that they can see. But a little digging can turn up perfectly understandable reasons. First is the simple anger that many elders feel at the sense that the world has passed them by – that their opinions, experience, and concerns don't matter to anyone anymore. Anger is a response to the powerlessness that arises from feeling that life has simply moved on without them. Anger arising from this source is perhaps the easiest to redress – simply taking the time to ask your elder for his or her advice or opinions can go a long way toward making them feel included again. Plus, this is a way to show respect.



YOUR JOB IS GOOD FOR THE CHILDREN

Your children get a lot of good stuff out of your work. Not just the baseball caps with the company logo and the free samples of whatever you bring home. They benefit from the tales you tell over dinner. They learn from the things you explain to them about what you do. They brag about you at school. They learn that work is interesting, that it has dignity, that it is necessary and pleasing, and that it is a perfectly natural thing for both mothers and fathers to do. Because your basic job as a parent is to prepare your children to conduct meaningful adult lives, one of your more valuable gifts to them will be to teach them the value, necessity, and joy of work. Your work enriches your children more than it deprives them.

De-Clutter Your Life – and Brain

We all have piles of paper, and more things to remember than a human brain can hold. Here are some ideas on how to get a grip:

- Catalog pileup – tear out the pages with items you are considering. Also save the back page with the buyer code. Staple together and toss the rest.
- A ready reference – instead of using scraps of paper or stickies, jot down “life data,” such as lock combinations, in a small address book using the alphabet as a filing system. You'll always have your spouse's shirt size, your PIN codes and passwords, favorite website addresses, as well as the name of the color you dye your hair.
- Splattered recipes – slip torn-out recipes into clear protectors and place them in a binder.
- Bounteous bills – if you let paid monthly bills stack up because they're a hassle to file, try organizing by month rather than category. It takes ten seconds to dump the paperwork into this month's folder, compared to 20 minutes of filing the other way. Keep annual contracts in a separate file.



Your home could be making you sick. Synthetic products like carpet and paint emit chemical vapors such as formaldehyde that can pollute indoor air, says environmental scientist

and former NASA researcher Bill Wolverton. They also cost billions in doctor visits for itchy eyes, headaches, and asthma. Houseplants can help you breathe more easily. They suck in carbon dioxide and contaminants, and give off pure oxygen. Two to three houseplants per 100 square feet should remove many airborne chemicals and may even make you feel better, Wolverton says. For the best natural filters, try palms, rubber plants, Boston ferns and ivy.