

OHCE News

NW District Meeting was held in Alva on March 24th. Representing Beaver County were Joyce Bensch, Karen Grose, Virginia Jett, Claudine Knight, Julia Lee, Charlene Marshall, Vickie McBurney, Barbara Patzkowsky, and Educator, Liz Gardner-McBee. Unable to attend were Mary Evans and Linda Moeller.

Congratulations to Barbara Patzkowsky; she won the NW District Heart of OHCE Award! We all know how deserving she is. Barbara will have the chance to compete at the state meeting in July representing the 17 counties of the North West District. Good Luck, Barb.

Beaver County Centennial Cookbook Recipes are still sought. Recipes will still be accepted until April 16th. You may get the recipe forms and return them at the Extension Office. See the March newsletter for full details or go to our website: <http://countyext.okstate.edu/beaver/> and click the link "Newsletters".

Special Thanks are extended to OHCE members Claudine Knight and Emma Zielke for presenting wonderful workshops. Claudine presented the Sweatshirt Jacket Workshop which even attracted some seamstresses from Texas. Emma presented a very informative, hands-on Leaders Lesson on Log Cabin Quilts. Thanks also to those of you who attended.

Welcome new member—Dorothy Cornelson, Balko HCE.

Oklahoma Centennial Quilt

Workers are needed to complete the Road to Oklahoma Centennial Quilt. Please come to the fair-building on Monday, April 9th starting at 9:30am.

Leaders Lesson

The Leaders Lesson is "Eating Locally Grown-Buying from an Oklahoma Farmers' Market". The training will be held at the Extension Office on April 19 at 10:00 am.

Spring HCE County Council

May 9th is HCE County Council Meeting at the Methodist Church in Beaver. Set aside the date and invite a prospective member. Final details will be in the May Newsletter.

OHCE State Meeting

July 8-10 — Clarion Hotel — Oklahoma City

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Liz Gardner-McBee
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BEAVER COUNTY FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

Newsline

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Fruits & Vegetables Require Proper Handling



Fruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet. Most supermarkets and grocery stores carry a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables that are nutritious, as well as tasty.

However, with the *E. coli* outbreak last year, some consumers may be hesitant to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables.

One of the key aspects in food safety is the proper handling of foods in order to reduce the risk of foodborne illness, said Barbara Brown, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service food specialist.

"There is a chance that harmful bacteria may be in the soil or water where produce grows and come in contact with fruits and vegetables," Brown said. "There's also the possibility of fresh produce becoming contaminated after it is harvest, during food preparation or in storage. Eating contaminated produce can lead to foodborne illness, which can cause serious – and sometimes fatal – infections. However, by following a few simple tips, you can help ensure that you and your family are protected."

When selecting fresh produce, purchase items that are not bruised or damaged. Be sure to keep fresh fruits and vegetables separate from meat, poultry and seafood. Choose fresh cut produce such as half a watermelon or bagged mixed salad greens that are refrigerated or surrounded by ice. Do not buy pre-washed salads with a lot of brown-edged pieces or if greens are very wet.

Proper storage affects quality and safety. Some fruits and vegetables retain the highest quality when stored at 40° F or below. Produce that is purchased pre-cut or peeled should be refrigerated to maintain quality and safety.

To reduce risk, all produce should be washed, even those that will be peeled before eating. Wash produce under running water just before eating, cutting or cooking. Scrub firm produce with a clean produce brush. Drying produce with a clean cloth or paper towel may reduce bacteria that may be present.

"Many pre-cut, bagged produced items such as lettuce will indicate on the packaging if they are pre-washed," she said. "As an extra measure of caution, you can wash the produce again just before you use it. Be sure to use bagged produce before the 'Best if used by' date. Raw sprouts may contain bacteria that can cause foodborne illness. Rinsing them is not sufficient. All sprouts should be cooked thoroughly before eating."

It is important for consumers to keep fruits and vegetables that will be eaten raw separate from other foods such as raw meat, poultry or seafood. Cutting boards, dishes, utensils and countertops should be washed with hot water and soap between the preparation of raw meat products and the preparation of produce that will not be cooked.

"All of the safety tips that have been mentioned also include organically grown produce, since the organic label isn't a promise that the food is bacteria-free," Brown said. "A government-approved certifier inspects the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer meets the U.S. Department of Agriculture's organic standard before it receives the 'organic' label. These foods should still be handled properly to ensure quality and safety."

The health benefits of produce still outweigh any food safety risks. Consumers can use selection and handling practices that reduce those risks and be alert for health bulletins and recalls. This is especially important for people in high risk groups.



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Harper County Agri-Quest 2007

"Celebrating Oklahoma Agriculture for 100 Years"
Trade/Health/Safety Show

Agri-Quest is Thursday, April 5th from 10:00am to 3:00pm at the Laverne Ag Barn. This event is to bring farmers and ranchers together to learn about available products while offering health and safety information. Door prizes and a Free Bar-B Q lunch will be provided. The first 120 attending will receive a free Koehn sorting stick (limited 1 per family). The morning registration begins with coffee and cinnamon rolls provided by the OK Wheat Commission. Over 40 exhibitors will be present with safety and health information along with their product or service information.

Presentations will be given on Drought Management, Future of Ethanol in Agriculture, No-Till Farming, and Cedar Removal and Recycling. US Representative Frank Lucas may be able to attend and speak as well. A special "Women in Ag" Tea from 2:00 to 3:00 will be presented by Abby Cash.

The Beaver County OSU Extension Service is teaming with the Harper County Extension Service, Harper Co. Healthy Department, Conservation District, NRCS, FFA, and Laverne Chamber of Commerce to sponsor Agri-Quest Day. Many area businesses have given donations too. Farmers and ranchers are such an important part of what makes this area a great place to live; Agri-Quest 2007 is in appreciation for all they do. Every one interested or involved in agriculture is invited.



Women in Ag Tea

Agri-Quest 2007 Mini-Session

You are invited to a special

"Women in Ag" Tea

Honoring

Women in Agriculture

April 5, 2007

2-3 PM

Laverne Ag Barn

*Abby Cash, OK Agri-Tourism Director,
is speaking.*

Great Door Prizes

RSVP would be appreciated: 580-735-2418

Organizing Your Household Records Is Essential



As the deadline to file federal and state taxes draws near, many Oklahomans may be scrambling to find all the needed documentation to make the most of their tax write-offs.

Keeping track of important receipts and other

financial papers, and making sure they can be accessed when needed, can be challenging, said Sissy Osteen, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service resource management specialist.

"While some people are extremely organized and can find most any document quickly, there are others who struggle each year to find important papers in a timely manner," Osteen said. "Some Oklahomans use the 'shoe box' filing method, while others have a dresser drawer designated to store documents. These haphazard systems can lead to frustration and lost documentation. This could result in a taxpayer not getting full benefits of tax deductions and credits. Easily accessible records mean much less time preparing income tax returns and locating proofs of deductions and other items should the return be audited."

In addition, if a home or apartment is damaged or destroyed by a fire, storm or other peril, having irreplaceable records stored safely, along with an inventory of household possessions, can help get adequate insurance compensation and substantiate uncovered losses for income tax purposes. It also allows family members to locate important papers in case of unforeseen events.

To get started in creating a reliable filing system, pull out all records and papers stored throughout the house and begin sorting them. Be sure to properly discard unnecessary records. Osteen said a general rule to keep in mind is that the more difficult, expensive or time consuming records are to replace, the safer the storage location for those records should be.

Records that need to be kept indefinitely include birth and death certificates, legal papers relating to marriage, and other government- or court-recorded documents. Investment certificates, bonds, deeds, mortgage papers, contracts, insurance policies, automobile titles, appraisals and a household inventory also require safekeeping.

"Important papers that are used frequently and are easily replaceable can be kept in a home file, whether it's a file cabinet, expandable file folder or sturdy box," Osteen said. "Other important papers may need to be stored in a couple of places. Copies of documents such as durable powers of attorney, death certificates and a signed copy of a will or trust should be kept at home as well as by an attorney or in a bank safe deposit box. It's also a good idea to have these documents scanned and burned onto a CD or DVD. Copies can then be stored in several locations, for example home and work."

Developing a well-organized system involves storing records in several locations. To easily locate where documents are stored, a list or directory of these papers is vital. Be sure to make a list of people who act as important family advisers, including physicians, attorneys and insurance agents. In addition, make sure more than one person in the family knows and understands the record-keeping system.

"No matter what system you develop to keep and store important papers and documents, make sure it works for you," Osteen said. "If you don't keep up with your filing system, you won't be able to find needed paperwork when the time comes."