

'News You Can Use' From the Extension Office



Hall County Cooperative Extension provides information and assistance in the areas of:

- Agriculture and the Environment
- 4-H and Youth Development
- Family & Consumer Sciences
- Expanded Foods & Nutrition
- Radon Education

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UGA Cooperative Extension in Hall County

January is National Radon Action Month By: Ginger Bennett, Radon Educator—Hall & Dawson Counties

Many of you have heard of radon, some of you may have tested your homes for it, and very few who received high radon results for their homes have ever done anything about it. That means that those homeowners who have ignored elevated radon levels in their homes have volunteered for the list of people who die each year of radon-related lung cancer. Sadder still, in Georgia, a majority of homeowners receiving a complimentary 3-day radon test kit at programs and health fairs conducted by the UGA Radon Education Program have never used the test kit. What you don't know may kill you!

In Hall County, radon is present at elevated levels in about 18% of the homes tested through the UGA Radon Education Program. The only way you can find out the level of radon coming into your home is to test for it. If your home has a radon problem, you can take steps to fix it to protect yourself and your family.

The Surgeon General of the U.S., Richard Carmona, has declared that radon, the second leading cause of lung cancer after smoking, kills nearly 22,000 people in the U.S. each year; 600+ of those will die in Georgia.

Exposure to radon causes lung cancer in non-smokers and smokers alike—lung cancer kills thousands of Americans every year. The untimely deaths of Peter Jennings and Dana Reeve have raised public awareness about lung cancer, especially among people who have never smoked. Smoking, radon, and secondhand smoke are the leading causes of lung cancer. Although lung cancer can be treated, the survival rate is one of the lowest for those with cancer. From the time of diagnosis, between 11 and 15 percent of those afflicted will live beyond five years, depending upon demographic factors. In many cases lung cancer can be prevented; this is especially true for radon.

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas released from rock, soil, and water from the natural decay of uranium. While levels in outdoor air pose a relatively low threat to human health, radon coming into your home can be very dangerous if you breathe the higher level often drawn into our homes. You can't see, smell, or taste it, but an elevated radon level in your home may be harming the health of your family. And since it is radioactive, there is virtually no safe level.

Testing your home for radon is as easy as opening a package, placing a radon test device in a designated area, and, after a set number of days, sending the device to a lab for analysis. The lab will then inform you of your radon test results.

If you've tested and received high results, contact Ginger Bennett in the Hall County Extension Office for information on certified radon mitigators in Georgia. If you have a test kit and haven't used it – do it today. For those Georgia homeowners who haven't yet gotten a complimentary radon test kit, come by the Hall County Extension Office and pick one up.

www.hallcounty.org/extension

www.ugaextension.com

Make this Christmas special with a Fresh-Cut Tree



In many households, the holiday season doesn't begin until the entire family loads up for a trip to the local lot or tree farm to pick out their tree. It's estimated that almost 40 million families will celebrate Christmas with a fresh-cut tree. To ensure a safe and happy holiday season, the Georgia Christmas Tree Association has a few tips on care and recycling of fresh Christmas trees.

* If buying from a pre-cut tree lot, do a freshness test. Gently grasp a branch between your thumb and forefinger and pull it toward you. Very few needles should come off in your hand if the tree is fresh. Shake or bounce the tree on its stump. You should not see an excessive amount of green needles fall to the ground. However, some loss of interior brown needles is normal.

* Once you've chosen your tree, keep it in a sheltered, unheated area such as a porch or garage to protect it from the wind and sun until you are ready to set it up and decorate it.

* Make a fresh cut across the base of the trunk, 1/4 inch up from the original cut. When a tree is first cut, a seal of sap occurs naturally over its stump which keeps moisture in the tree. It's important to break that seal to allow the tree to take up water needed to keep it fresh throughout the holidays.

* Keep plenty of water in your stand. A Christmas tree may absorb a gallon of water in the first 24 hours it's up and between two pints to a gallon of water a day thereafter. Check the stand daily and supply fresh water as needed.

* In addition, keep your tree away from heat and draft sources like fireplaces, radiators and television sets. Test your light cords and connections before hanging them on the tree to make sure they're in good working order. Don't use cords with cracked insulation or broken or empty sockets. Also, be sure to unplug the lights before you go to bed or leave the house.

Hall County EFNEP News - Sheri Torres, EFNEP Program Assistant

Hello, everyone! As the year comes to an end, I am writing this update on what has been going on in Hall County with the EFNEP program. The time really goes by very quickly when you are having fun.

I have just started classes again with the Lanier Career Center Night School. Classes are going strong with Lanier Head Start and also with the Hall County Health Department. I will be joining Debbie Wilburn to team up on a cooking school for cancer awareness. The participants will be able to try new recipes and taste them. This is lots of fun when you like to cook and try new things. I have learned from my EFNEP participants that they love to cook and taste the healthy recipes. They are so surprised that healthy food can taste that good.

While things have been very busy, it is very satisfying at the end of the day knowing families are choosing healthier food choices and the children are actually eating less junk food.

I am working hard at recruiting more community agencies that reach out to help the citizens of Hall County offer EFNEP to their clients. I had a meeting with El Puente- the Bridge - in October to reach out to the Hispanic population. I have had much success with these families.

This month, I will meet with Teen Pregnancy Prevention to offer TAMS classes to the teenage mothers-to-be in the High Schools and Middle Schools. I also have a meeting planned soon with The Department of Family and Children's Services.

Until next time, remember to eat healthy over the winter holidays. This is the time of year when we we're most likely to indulge. Holiday foods and cold winters with extra eating can make us grow bigger!!

Hall County 4-H: Coming Events

COUNTY PROJECT ACHEIVEMENT – January 23

ALL Hall County 5th and 6th graders are invited to compete in 4-H County Project Achievement, CPA. The annual speech and performance contest will be held on Tuesday, January 23, 6:00 p.m., at Riverbend Elementary School. Participants should come prepared with a 4-H demonstration or stage performance. This is a GREAT opportunity to “show off” your public speaking or stage skills. There are no costs! Please contact the 4-H office for complete information.

Snakes Alive!

The Hall County 4-H Pet Club will sponsor a special *snake* night on January 25, 6:30 p.m. at the Hall County Extension office. We will learn about venomous and non-venomous Georgia snakes. The folks from “**SNAKES ALIVE**” will have several snakes to show. The cost of the program is \$3.00 and is open to any student age 9-19 years old. Space is **VERY** limited so register EARLY! Call for details.

5th Graders Learn about Poultry

Throughout the month of January, 5th graders will learn what makes Hall County the “Poultry Capitol of the World.” The 4-H leader program will include information about breeder flocks, hatcheries, grow-out farms, processing, rendering, feed mills, and some fun chicken jokes. The 4-H Club will host it’s annual “Spring Chicken Festival” on April 21st at the Chicopee Woods Agricultural Center.

MilkMake Contest

MilkMake is a fun contest sponsored by Hall County 4-H and the Southeastern Dairy Industry Association in which students submit a drink made with milk. The 5th graders at Chestnut Mountain Elementary School will have the opportunity to enter a milk drink recipe with comments from people that have tried the drink. The recipe will include step-by-step instructions as well as the ingredients on it. First, second and third place winners will be announced and will receive prizes. All contestants receive recognition!

Junior and Senior District Project Achievement

7th through 12th grade 4-H’ers will compete at DPA March 9th through the 11th at Rock Eagle 4-H Center. 4-H’ers will present speeches and performances in their project areas, trying to place first in our district. District winners go on to the state contest in July

BB Rifle Team

The BB Rifle Team will sponsor its’ second “Cops & Kids Shoot Out” on Saturday March 3. 4-H BB Rifle Team members will try to “out shoot” some of our local law enforcement officers from Gainesville and the county. The event will be held at the Chicopee Woods Agricultural Center and is FREE to the public. Please come by and cheer on our team!

4-H FUN Farm and Animal Trip – March 19

Hall County students, ages 9-19 years old, can join the 4-H staff for a FUN day of farms and animals! We will visit several local farms to learn about raising crops and animals that provide us with our food. Complete information about the day will be posted to the 4-H website around the beginning of February.

Cloverleaf DPA

5th and 6th grade 4-H’ers will attend District Project Achievement on March 24th in Union County. They will compete against 4-H’ers in the northeast part of our state.

Hall County 4-H Spring Horse Show – March 31

The Hall County 4-H Horse Club will sponsor its’ spring show on Saturday, March 31st, at the Chicopee Woods Agricultural Center. The event is open to youth rides from our area. Please contact the 4-H office for additional information.

www.hallcounty4hclub.org

Hall County 4-H - 2007 Camping Opportunities

Are you looking for some summer fun? Come join us for a fun-filled week at one of our outstanding 4-H centers!

Cloverleaf Camp – June 18-22

5th and 6th graders will attend summer camp at Rock Eagle 4-H Center which is located in the Oconee National Forest and surrounds a 100 acre lake. Activities for the week focus on a Native American theme, the legend of the *mysterious* Rock Eagle and the campers' quest to win the Tribal Shield. Some of the highlights of the week include swimming, nature hikes, dances, Indian Heritage, contests, campfires, sports, fun classes, canoeing and sailing.

Junior 4-H'ers – June 25-29

7th and 8th graders will spend their week of camp at Fortson 4-H Center.

Fortson 4-H Center is situated on 77 acres in Clayton and Henry counties, the Center is about 25 miles south of downtown Atlanta, Georgia.

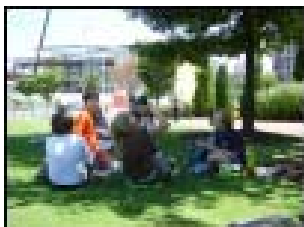
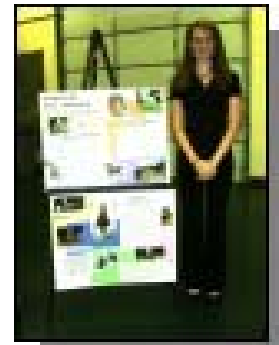
Fortson's cabins all have central heat and air and modern restroom facilities. Additional amenities include short walking trails, a 75,000 gallon pool, two outdoor pavilions, an outdoor amphitheatre, and a 10,000 square foot gymnasium.

Marine Resources Camp – July 16-20,

6th, 7th and 8th graders with a *special* interest in beach ecology and marine animals will enjoy a weeklong experience on Tybee Island which includes classes in beach ecology, marsh and wetlands programs, seining, swimming, crabbing and other related activities.

Camp prices will be available towards the end of December!

* Registration for **ALL** 4-H Summer Camp programs will take place on Friday, February 23, 6:30 until 8:00 p.m. This is our first night-time registration! We expect to be VERY busy.



Healthy Holiday Eating

- Debbie Wilburn, FACS Extension Agent



Holidays and eating special food seem to go hand-in-hand. If you have healthy eating habits most of the year, extra eating for a few days probably doesn't make that much difference. But if "holiday eating" starts on Thanksgiving Day and is the beginning of a six-week eating marathon, then strategies to control your caloric intake may be needed.

To prevent uncontrolled eating during the holidays a little planning can keep diets in balance. Before parties or other events, cut back on calories and increase your physical activity. Practice saying "No thank you" to dishes that are high in fat and calories. Decide what is the most desirable choice to you and enjoy eating that item.

Give yourself permission to eat one or two favorite holiday foods without feeling guilty. Do not feel obligated to try every food that is available. To avoid offending the cook, try saying, "I'd love just a little taste," or "That sounds delicious, maybe I'll try some later." Focus on people, both old and new friends, instead of the food. With eating as a secondary focus, making healthy food choices will be easier.

Trimming calories from holiday food is possible with a few simple adjustments. Some helpful tips include:

- Use lemon juice, garlic, onions and herbs to season food.
- Use skim milk instead of whole milk or cream in mashed potatoes, cream sauces and soups.
- When making pumpkin pie filling, use evaporated skim milk, less sugar and a little more spice.
- Mix sparkling water with fruit juices for a bubbly beverage with fewer calories.
- Use a gravy separator to skim fat from meat drippings before making gravy.
- Baste the turkey with fruit juice rather than meat drippings.
- When baking, replace up to three-quarters of the oil called for in a recipe with pureed fruit, such as applesauce, banana or pumpkin.
- A typical sweet potato recipe calls for sugar, butter and marshmallows. Substitute these ingredients with orange juice and spices.

Planning ahead, making healthy choices and incorporating physical activity into your daily routine are the keys to good health anytime of the year, but can be especially helpful during the holiday season. For more healthy holiday eating tips, contact our office.

Do you have a cell phone?

- Debbie Wilburn, FACS Extension Agent



Did you think because you had a cell phone that telemarketers could not call you? Or have you received an e-mail telling you that your cell phone is about to be assaulted by telemarketing calls as a result of a new cell phone number database? Not so.

Telemarketing to cell phone numbers has always been illegal in most cases and will continue to be so according to the Federal Trade Commission.

What you can do as a consumer to protect yourself is register your cell phone number on the National Do Not Call Registry. You can do that online at www.donotcall.gov or by calling toll-free 1-888-382-1222 from the telephone (land line and cell) numbers you wish to register. Registrations become effective within 31 days of signing up and are active for five years. There is no cut-off date or deadline for registrations.

The FTC does not allow third parties or companies to register consumers for the National Do Not Call Registry. The federal government does not maintain a national cell phone registry. Personal cell phone users have always been able to add their numbers to the National Do Not Call Registry.

Phone calls that you will still receive after signing up for the National Do Not Call Registry is: political organizations, charities, telephone surveys and businesses that you have an existing relationship.



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SEASONS GREETINGS

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