

# Clarice's Column

Clarice Steffens  
FCE Council Chair



As I write this April column in March, I really wonder what things will be like

by the time you see your April NEBLINE. Right now we are in the midst of the ups and downs of Nebraska weather and the stock market. Is one more predictable than the other? It seems neither can be accurately predicted. Yesterday the temperature was in the 60's and today it is in the 30's. Yesterday the stock market was down,

today it is up!

One sure thing is Spring will be here eventually and it will probably be much more appreciated than the last few! (No stock market predictions!) Mother Nature is already showing some mercy because our crocuses are in bloom and that alone should be enough to cure some cabin fever and wintertime blues.

One third of 2001 will be behind us as we move through April and we wonder where the time has gone. Hopefully, your club is well on its way in accomplishing your yearly goals and having a good time doing it. On the county level

plans for the July 10 Sizzling Summer Sampler are underway and details will follow—watch the NEBLINE. Scholarship applications were due April 1 so I hope we will have good news to report in May.

The next Council meeting will be June 25 hosted by the Home Service, Gateway Gourmet, and Salt Creek Circle clubs. And don't forget the State Convention in Kearney, August 16 and 17.

In the meantime, I hope your Easter was a happy day and you are now enjoying warmer temperatures and good days!

## Spring into Fun Family Activities

With Spring right around the corner, children will be anxious to spend more of their free time outside. After this winter, even 60 degrees will feel like a heat wave. Both children and adults are beginning to look forward to breathing lots of fresh air after spending most of the winter indoors. When spring arrives be prepared with a variety of fun family activities to enjoy outdoors. The newness of the season helps families to re-focus time and energy. Start thinking about outside activities appropriate for each of the members in your family. Fun outdoor activities might include: going to parks; playing volleyball; having a barbeque;

planning a picnic; going on walks; hiking/biking on trails; or planning a treasure hunt in your backyard. These activities encourage family interaction and get you out into the spring weather away from the television and computer.

Young school age children enjoy running, jumping, and throwing. They also enjoy activities such as racing in relays or playing "red light, green light." This age child may enjoy a nature walk where they can use their senses to observe things around them. Middle school age children use more complex physical skills. They enjoy team sports, such as baseball, soccer, and basketball. Children this age also like

spending more time with their friends, so a neighborhood barbeque with other families is a good way to enjoy the outdoors and encourage social interaction. Older school aged children enjoy structured adult activities. This is a good age to begin horseback lessons or have them help develop a treasure hunt for younger siblings. They are also interested in a variety of people, places, and cultures. They may enjoy attending a diversity fair as a family.

There are many opportunities and activities for families that enable them to spend time together and enjoy the new season. (SS)

## Teens and Tobacco Use

The teen use of tobacco products in Nebraska is worrisome and extension is joining forces with other agencies to discourage early use. Research has shown 90 percent of smokers begin smoking by the age of 19 and nicotine is considered the number one entrance into other substance abuse. Adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 who smoke daily are 15 times more likely to use illicit drugs than their peers. The earlier youth begin using tobacco, the more likely they will continue use into adulthood.

As part of a two-day leadership program "Leading with Character Counts!" middle school youth are encouraged to use the six pillars of character to resist the temptation to smoke. Respect yourself by respecting what you put in your body, exhibit responsible behavior by using self-restraint and pursuing excellence, care about the example you set for others, earn trust by following parent's admonitions to refrain from tobacco use, and show citizenship by following rules and laws about underage smoking. These are just a few of the ideas solicited from youth about how to apply the pillars.

All participants in the program view a highly provocative video, "Smoking, Truth or

Dare." Comments from youth include: "That is the best movie I have ever seen—I'll never want to smoke!"; "I can't believe how smoking affects the way you look—I don't want to look like that."; and "I don't want a "hairy tongue."

Teens who are addicted to tobacco have several common experiences. A number of them tried their first cigarette in the sixth or seventh grade. Smokers often do not perform well at school. They do not feel they are a part of school and are isolated from those students who are active in sports. Most of the smokers feel they have little hope of going to college or getting a good job after high school. They also report addictions to other substances, such as alcohol. Some teens experience pressure from home and school, and use tobacco as a form of relief. In addition, teen smokers often enjoy trying to hide their smoking or outwit school administration.

Both cigarette smoking and smokeless tobacco use have direct health consequences. Even though people are aware of the health hazards, many find it difficult to stop using tobacco. According to a 1993 Nebraska study, rural youth are not exempt from drug use. In fact, these youth were at a greater risk of alcohol and tobacco use than their national peers.

### Why Teens Begin Smoking

The initiation of smoking is influenced by having a friend, particularly a best friend, who smokes. Peers are not the only influence on teen tobacco use. Parental smoking establishes nicotine use as normal. Mass media presentation of smoking, whether in television, movie, or sporting events, makes tobacco use attractive and downplays the negative health consequences.

### Decreasing Tobacco Use Among Teens

Parents and family members can promote a tobacco-free norm by establishing a hard-line disapproval of tobacco use. Even parents who smoke can express their regrets about becoming addicted to nicotine. It is important to develop clear policies of abstinence to include behavior expectations, a supportive atmosphere, and natural consequences for use.

We need to help teens develop skills that recognize and refute pro-tobacco use messages from the media, adults, and peers. Personal and social skills such as assertiveness, communication, goal setting, and problem-solving help teens avoid tobacco use and other risky behaviors. Communities can

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## Family Living



by Lorene Bartos, Extension Educator

Think RECYCLE as you do the spring cleaning. Take glass, plastic jugs, magazines and newspapers to a recycling site. Clothes that are no longer used can be given to a charity. Hazardous household waste should be disposed of properly. Reduce Reuse Recycle (LB)

## Have Your Children had Their Shots?

### National Infant Immunization Week April 22-28

For immunization information contact the Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Department, 441-6247. (LB)

## Building Family Strengths International Symposium

Building stronger families worldwide will be the focus of the "Building Family Strengths International Symposium," May 8-10, at the Clifford Hardin Center for Continuing Education on the UNL campus.

The goal of the conference is to bring together participants from academic research, human services agencies, government, health care, business, education, religious institutions, and the lay public to strengthen families. The symposium offers an opportunity to hear about research, the impact of public policy on families, effective teaching, and programs that work for families.

Speakers include: Jawanza Kunjufu, executive director, African American Images, Talent Center, Chicago; Liu Dalin, professor, Shanghai University; David Olson, past president of the National Council on Family Relations; Pat Locke, member of the Lakota Tribe; Lois Mberengwa, Department of Technical Education, University of Zimbabwe; Francisco Villarruel, Michigan State University; Yoav Lavee, professor of social work, University of Haifa, Israel; and Zolinda Stoneman, professor, University of Georgia and Director of the Institute on Human Development and Disabilities..

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## CHARACTER COUNTS! Corner Integrity

The third of four characteristics in the series of being a trustworthy person is integrity. This simply means you walk your talk. If you share your values or beliefs with someone, but behave in ways that contradict them, you are not showing integrity. Integrity is standing behind what you believe. It's being yourself and showing commitment, courage, and strength by doing the right thing no matter what you lose in the process. Giving into something you know is wrong and pretending to be someone you're not will show others you can't be trusted. People of integrity are highly respected and valued in families and business communities. A person of integrity is often seen as an honest person and a leader. It's important for parents to show they value integrity. Their children will learn they are dependable, stand behind what they believe in and are trustworthy. A final thought for integrity is to protect and promote the interests of people and organizations that are important to you. (SS)

