



## Community & Home Living

### STAFF HIGHLIGHTS

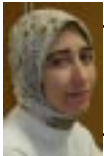
#### William Manzi Freitas To Work on Neighbors Working Together Project



William Manzi Freitas joined the Lancaster Cooperative Extension staff as a UNL graduate student June 3. William will be working with **Neighbors Working Together**, a project designed to promote leadership development in the neighborhoods around UNL's city campus.

He is currently working on his masters degree in Leadership Education focusing in leadership development through the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication. William and his wife, Vivian, are originally from southern Brazil. They have been living in Lincoln since September 1999. He also has lived in South Africa for 2-1/2 years.

## Cultural Insights: Marriage Customs in Iraq



Boshra Rida  
Extension Volunteer In  
Service To America

Marriage is a solemn and sacred social contract between a man and a woman. Both parties mutually agree to enter into this contract. Marriage customs are often a reflection of society's culture, behavioral patterns, thoughts and feelings. In Iraq these customs start when the groom's family visits the bride's home to ask for their daughter. If the response is favorable there will be another visit to get the bride's family approval, to pursue the marriage and reach an agreement. The agreement contains two main items: 1) Mahr (a formal statement specifying the monetary amount the groom will give the bride, it is considered a bride's security and guarantee of freedom within the marriage); and 2) valuable jewelry gift.

The next traditional step is the bride and the groom will go together to buy the rings, jewelry and wedding gifts. They are usually accompanied by members of both families. Meanwhile, the groom will purchase things required for their new home.

The wedding consists of two parts: the religious exchange of vows (the religious wedding ceremony) and the reception party. A Muslim clergy usually officiate the ceremony, he asks the bride if he is authorized to

declare them as a husband and a wife. The bride and the groom demonstrate their free-will by saying I accept. The couple and two witnesses sign the contract making the marriage legal according to civil and religious law. Following is the exchange of rings and the groom presents the jewelry to the bride.

The marriage ceremony may not take place immediately following the engagement, although sometimes it does. This means the couple may be engaged for a number of months before they get married. Similarly, the reception is usually held a few months after the ceremony to give the couple and their families time to prepare for the wedding reception.

The night before the wedding reception the relatives, the friends and neighbors get together to celebrate the Henna Night. The women go the bride's home while the men go the groom house. In the bride house the women dance and sing all night while the bride's hands and feet are painted with Henna.

Most relatives and friends are invited to celebrate the young couple's new life at their wedding reception where the groom holds a banquet.

The last activities on the night of the wedding reception is to cruise the couple around town in a decorated car. It is customary for most participants especially the relatives to follow the couple's car while flashing lights and beeping horns in joy and celebration.

## Healthy Indoor Air: Prevent Mold and Mildew Growth

Healthy indoor air is important. Often indoor air is more polluted because most particulates are generated within the living space. Mold and mildew in the home generates spores that become airborne. Moisture or a high humidity level is required for mold growth. Common places mold grows are walls, floors, carpeting and on stored materials in damp basements and crawl spaces, bathrooms without exhaust fans, laundry areas where dryers are not vented outside or clothes are hung to dry, homes with new construction materials, homes where there have been spills, leaks or other water damage and homes with a humidifier or an unvented combustion heater is used.

Mold thrives on organic material, such as natural fibers (cotton), paper, wood and leather. It grows best in warm temperatures, generally 77 to 86 degrees. Mold also requires moisture. Moisture required for mold growth can come from water leaks, high relative humidity and condensation. Relative humidity levels above 70

percent seem optimal for mold spore growth. Even at low relative humidity levels spores can be released into the air. Oxygen is also required for mold to grow.

Mold can be detected by the musty odor and it is visible on surfaces. Mold can be found wherever moisture or relative humidity levels are high. It may appear in any room in the house. To prevent mold growth: keep it clean; keep it dry—reduce and prevent moisture; disinfect when needed; and increase air movement and light.

Disinfectants kill and reduce mold growth on hard surfaces. Products claiming to be disinfectants, must be registered with the Environmental Protection Agency and have a EPA registration number on the product label. Always read and follow label directions. It is important to choose a product that disinfects and is appropriate for the material being treated. Chlorine-bleach is a effective and inexpensive disinfectant. Use bleach that is 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite, a chlorine releasing material used for disinfection.

Always test before using. Thoroughly clean walls and surfaces with a detergent solution before disinfecting. The general recommendation for disinfecting some hard surfaces is a solution of one cup bleach to one gallon of water. The area should be kept wet with the bleach solution for a least 10 to 15 minutes to kill or reduce mold. On porous surfaces such as wood, the bleach solution should be reapplied to keep the surface wet for the required time. Chlorine, phenolic, pine oil and quaternary ammonia or ammonium chloride compounds are four commonly used disinfectants. Pine oil and phenolic disinfectants can be used on most textiles.

Prevention is the best way to avoid mold. Reduce moisture and the humidity level—increase ventilation, air circulation and cleaning. Fix leaks and drainage. When making new purchases keep in mind items that have antimicrobial additives to guard against mold, mildew, fungal and bacterial organisms. (LB)

## Precautions Necessary Before a Summer Vacation

The Nebraska Crime Commission reports that July, August and September are the most likely months for burglary offenses in Nebraska and most of those involve residential properties. Before going on vacation some basic security precautions should be taken.

Consider the following measures:

- Arrange for a friend or neighbor to bring in the mail, newspapers and other deliveries. Better yet, cancel all deliveries until your return.
- Arrange to have pets fed, watered and cared for at home rather than at a kennel.
- Schedule lawn mowing and care to be done during your absence.
- Arrange for safe storage outside the home for certain

valuables.

- Line a closet with 3/4 inch plywood and install a single deadbolt lock with a one inch throw bolt for added home security for your valuables.
- Make certain that all windows, patio and entrance doors are equipped with adequate locks and security pins.
- If you have an alarm system, make certain it is in working order.
- Use outside and inside lights that turn on and off automatically.
- Consider use of a dependable and trustworthy house sitter.
- Leave a vehicle in the driveway.
- Position shades and drapes as they would normally appear while home.
- Leave a trip itinerary with

someone so that you can be notified in case of an emergency.

- Consider an organized neighborhood watch.
- Notify the police or sheriff of your absence, providing them with names of house sitters and/or neighbors who will be looking in on your property.
- Never hide a key outside the home.
- For added protection, keep an inventory list including serial numbers of all valuable property in a safe deposit box.
- Know and understand your homeowners insurance policy.
- Before your departure, double check to see that all doors, windows and out buildings are secured and that you have taken all necessary keys. (GB)

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