

## FAMILY &amp; COMMUNITY EDUCATION (FCE) CLUBS

## President's View — Bonnie's Bits

**Bonnie Krueger**  
FCE Council Chair



October is the month nature wears its brightest colors. The sign summer is gone.

The frost is on the pumpkin and autumn weaves a fairyland over our fields and goods.

Oct. 12 is Columbus Day, celebration honoring Christopher Columbus first voyage to America in 1492. Not all states observe this holiday. In 1892, teachers, preachers and politicians used Columbus Day to teach the ideals of patriotism; these were framed around themes such as a support

for war, citizenship boundaries, loyalty to the nation and celebrating social progress.

Halloween, also called All Hallow's Eve or All Saints' Eve, has roots in the Celtic festival of Samhain and the Christian Holy Day, All Saints Day. Halloween is celebrated Oct. 31, the day is often celebrated with the colors of orange and black and is strongly associated with jack-o-lanterns, trick-or-treating and lots of scary stories and carving those pumpkins. Halloween is not celebrated in all countries and regions

of the world and those that do the traditions and importance of the celebration vary significantly. Celebration in the United States has had a significant impact on how the holiday is observed in other nations. May you all have a safe and Happy Halloween.

Hope you are planning to attend our annual Achievement Night on Monday, Oct. 26 at 6:30 p.m. with a dessert followed by our program. We will also recognize our members for years of membership. Remember to bring food or paper products for our annual FCE Food Bank drive.



## FCE News &amp; Events

Council Meeting  
Sept. 28

The September FCE Council meeting will be Monday, Sept. 28, 7 p.m. at the Lancaster Extension Education Center. Attorney Andrew Loudon will present the program on Estates, Wills, Trusts and Medicare. The business meeting, including election of officers, will follow the program. All FCE members are invited to attend.

Reorganizational  
Packets

Presidents of FCE clubs can pick up their packet to reorganize for 2010. There are October deadlines within the packet. If you have questions, call Lorene or Pam at 441-7180. It is time to look forward and plan an exciting and educational year for FCE.

Achievement Night,  
Oct. 26

The 2009 FCE Achievement Night will be Monday, Oct. 26 at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, starting with dessert at 6:30 p.m. Everyone is asked to bring canned food or paper products for the annual FCE Food Bank Campaign. Clubs and members will be recognized for years of membership. If you plan to attend, call the extension office at 441-7180 and leave your name at the front desk.



by Lorene Bartos, UNL Extension Educator

End-of-Summer Cleanup  
Tips for Getting Things Ready for Storage

Spend some end-of-summer time returning items to their best possible state before you store them away. This will prove to be a time saver when you want to use them again next spring.

**Musty beach towels:** Launder, using the hottest water safe for the fabric. Add a small amount of fabric softener to the final rinse. Machine-dry thoroughly.

**Sandy sleeping bag:** Turn the bag inside out. If the sand is damp, let the bag air out until the sand is dry. Shake the bag to remove as much loose sand as possible; then brush or vacuum away the remaining residue. If the bag is soiled, clean according to the sleeping bag's care label instructions.

**Muddy tennis shoes:** Let the mud dry completely. Then take the shoes outside and bang the soles together to remove as much of the dried mud as possible. Using a solution of warm water and hand dishwashing liquid and an old toothbrush, scrub gently to remove the remaining dirt. For stubborn dirt marks, scrub with a nylon pad. Wipe with a damp sponge or damp paper towels. Stuff the tennis shoes with clean paper towels and let them air-dry.

**Grungy plastic tablecloths:** A wipe-down with a soapy sponge may clean the top of the tablecloth, but not the flannel backing. To clean the whole thing, machine-wash, using the gentle cycle. Machine-dry on the delicate cycle for about 15 minutes. This is just enough time to remove the creases caused by machine washing, but not long enough to harm the vinyl. If the cloth is still damp, line-dry.

**Grubby molded-resin outdoor furniture:** Clean with a mild detergent and water. Avoid abrasive powders, chlorine bleaches and silicone cleaners.

**Soiled outdoor cushions:** Acrylic, polyester and cotton fabrics should be spot-cleaned by sponging with a solution of liquid dishwashing detergent and lukewarm water. Rinse with clear water and air-dry.

**Dirty plastic pool toys:** Mix 3/4 cup of chlorine bleach per gallon of warm water. Soak the prewashed toys for five minutes. Rinse and then air-dry. If the toys aren't used during the winter, store them in a closed container so they'll stay clean and dust-free.

## Slow Cookers

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## Thaw Ingredients

Always thaw meat or poultry before putting it into a slow cooker. Choose to make foods with a high moisture content such as chili, soup, stew or spaghetti sauce. If using a commercially frozen slow cooker meal, prepare according to manufacturer's instructions.

Use the Right Amount  
of Food

Fill cooker no less than half full and no more than two-thirds full. Vegetables cook slower than meat and poultry in a slow cooker so if using them, put the vegetables in first. Then add the meat and desired amount of liquid such as broth, water or barbecue sauce. Keep the lid in place, removing only to stir the food or check for doneness.

## Settings

Most cookers have two or more settings. Foods take different times to cook depending upon the setting used. Certainly, foods will cook faster on high than on low. However, for all-day cooking or for less-tender cuts, you may want to use the low setting.

If possible, turn the cooker on the highest setting for the first hour of cooking time and then low or the setting called for in your recipe. However, it's safe to cook foods on low

the entire time — if you're leaving for work, for example, and preparation time is limited.

While food is cooking and once it's done, food will stay safe as long as the cooker is operating.

## Power Out

If you are not at home during the entire slow-cooking process and the power goes out, throw away the food even if it looks done.

If you are at home, finish cooking the ingredients immediately by some other means: on a gas stove, on the outdoor grill or at a house where the power is on.

When you are at home, and if the food was completely cooked before the power went out, the food should remain safe up to two hours in the cooker with the power off.

## Handling Leftovers

Store leftovers in shallow covered containers and refrigerate within two hours after cooking is finished. Reheating leftovers in a slow cooker is not recommended. Cooked food should be reheated on the stove, in a microwave, or in a conventional oven until it reaches 165°F. Then the hot food can be placed in a preheated slow cooker to keep it hot for serving — at least 140°F as measured with a food thermometer.

Source: United States Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service (retrieved Aug. 31, 2009 at [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/Focus\\_On\\_Slow\\_Cooker\\_Safety/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/Focus_On_Slow_Cooker_Safety/index.asp))

10 Tips for Parent-Teacher  
Conferences

It's one call from school that parents dread: "We need to schedule a parent-teacher conference."

"Sometimes these are routine — a teacher wants to offer you a face-to-face assessment of your child's progress and goals," said James Marshall, assistant professor of family life with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. "Sometimes, there are more serious issues at the heart of the call."

Marshall and LaVona Traywick, assistant professor for the division, have 10 pointers for parents to make sure the time spent with teachers is productive and the outcomes will be what are best for the child:

- Ask your child if there is anything he/she would like you to discuss with the teacher. "Even though the child will not be at the conference, it's important he or she not be left out," Marshall said. "Be his or her voice at the table."
- Jot down everything you want to talk about at the conference. "It helps the conversation to be organized from the outset," Traywick said. "Know what issues you'd like to address and write them down."

Other tips from Marshall and Traywick:

- Arrive promptly or a few minutes

- early.
- Begin with positive comments about the teacher or classroom.
- Avoid lengthy discussions of topics not related to the purpose of the conference.
- Be open-minded to suggestions from the teacher.
- Keep your emotions under control.
- Take notes about what has been discussed to share with your child.
- Express appreciation for the conference.
- Do not stay beyond your allotted time.

Traywick said it's important not to expect a quick fix. "If there was a quick fix, the teacher would have already done it and there would not be the need for the phone call," she said. "Take time to think about the concern of the teacher and talk with your child about the issue."

It's also important not to place blame. "Try not to get defensive," she said. "The conversation is to help your child, not blame anyone for the situation. The teacher needs your support to help resolve the situation."

Source: University of Arkansas Extension, Ole Wendroth, 859-257-4768