Agent’s Corner

We are one month into 2007 already, can you believe it? Time certainly does fly!

The 91st annual Manatee County Fair is currently in full swing as I write this. Fair time is always a fun—but hectic—time of the year. And all the tempting treats make it difficult to stick to those healthy New Year’s resolutions.

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I hope your year has started off on the right track. Keep smiling!

Samantha Kennedy, M.S.
Family & Consumer Sciences Agent

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Consumer Alert: Credit Card Fees

Credit cards. They’re like elbows—everyone’s got a couple of them. Depending on your “creditworthiness,” you may or may not have a reasonable interest rate and you may or may not have to pay an annual fee to keep the card. (A friendly word of advice...avoid cards with annual fees as much as possible. Read on to understand why.)

The September 2006 Government Accountability Office’s report on credit card practices talked about the escalating fees attached to credit cards.

For instance, these days the average late fee is $34, even if your payment is only one day late. That fee is then charged to your credit card. If that fee then pushes you over your credit limit, the company then charges you an over-the-limit fee. So some fees may lead to other fees.

The same thing goes for annual fees. Those charges are added to your existing balance. If it pushes you over the limit, you’re charged for it—which is also added to your balance.

And remember, if the payment due date falls on a Sunday, the actual due date is the previous Friday—that is, of course, unless you want to pay the late fee!
Does Your Immune System Need a Boost?

We take our children to get their booster shots. We even take our pets to get their booster shots. But who takes us to get our booster shots?

Many vaccines do not last forever. Their effects decrease over time. There are four vaccines that become increasingly important as we get older—four vaccines that we may not think we’ll need until we need them.

**Tetanus/Diphtheria:** If you’ve never had this vaccine, you will need to start with the primary series of three shots—an initial vaccination followed by two boosters, one at one month and one at six months. If you’ve had this vaccine before, you need to get a booster every 10 years.

**Hepatitis B:** One-third of all people who acquire this disease suffer from jaundice, nausea, and abdominal pain. This one-time vaccine is a series of three shots as well—an initial shot, followed by one- and six-month boosters.

**Influenza:** Many adults line up to receive this annual vaccine, which is a mix of the three flu strains believed to be the most prevalent that year. You should seek this vaccine every fall, especially if you are over 50, have health complications such as diabetes or heart, lung, or kidney disease, or if you have a suppressed immune system.

**Pneumococcal:** This vaccine does not prevent pneumonia, as its name may imply. It fights against a specific genus of bacteria, *Pneumococcus*, that infects the respiratory system. One dose of this vaccine is recommended for people 65 or older. Younger people need two shots—an initial shot, then another shot after age 65 if more than five years have passed since the first vaccine.

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**Tongue Tips**

Hopefully, most of us do what we can to keep ourselves as healthy as possible. We heed our body’s warning signs and take action to correct the problem. We check our pulse and our blood pressure, our temperature and our cholesterol. But how many of us check our tongue for signs of poor health?

**Color:** Your tongue should be a dark pink color. Pale pink may indicate anemia—low iron in the blood. If your tongue is bright red, that may mean inflammation or possible infection.

**Size and Shape:** A healthy tongue should be “pleasingly plump.” If your tongue is swollen and/or has a red tip, that may reflect inflammation, infection, or an allergic reaction.

**Coating:** A thin white coating on the tongue is normal. However, if your tongue has a thick white or yellow coat, that may mean internal organ problems, indigestion, or a yeast infection.

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**Defensive Foods**

Many foods that boost the immune system are already part of a healthy diet. Fruits and vegetables contain loads of vitamins C and E, antioxidants that boost immune function. Healthful fats like omega-3 fatty acids as well as unsaturated fats like canola oil, olive oil, nuts, and seeds help fight inflammation and free up your immune system to defend against other foreign invaders. Lean protein sources contain the amino acids that help build the cells in your immune system. Skimping on protein can result in fewer white blood cells, which can weaken the immune system. Green tea is rich in immune-boosting antioxidants and can also help relieve inflammation. Regular exercise can help keep your calories balanced and your immune system strong. A multivitamin appropriate for your age and gender may also serve as a boost.
**The Power of Pomegranates**

They were once considered the fruit of the gods. With their tart flavor, rich color, and superior health benefits, pomegranates are a great addition to many dishes.

Don’t be discouraged by their abundance of tiny seeds; unlike many fruits, the seeds are edible. In fact, these fruits have no “flesh” at all. Each seed is surrounded by a dark red juice sac that gives the fruit its tart flavor and beautiful color.

These "seedy" fruits also pack a big nutritional punch. Rich in vitamin C, potassium, and calcium as well as cancer-fighting polyphenols, pomegranates may help prevent fatty deposits from forming on artery walls. A UCLA study suggests that these fruits may also help reduce the risk of prostate cancer.

Take care when extracting the seeds, however. Pomegranate juice is notorious for staining everything it touches. To prevent this, remove the seeds in a bowl of water. As the fruit is broken open, the seeds will sink to the bottom as the bitter, inedible white membrane floats to the top. Simply skim off the membrane and strain the water to get the seeds!

**Salt Sense**

Salt is a mainstay on American dinner tables. We put it on almost anything and most of the processed foods we crave contain salt in abundance. Salt is a flavor enhancer and preservative.

The most widely used type of salt is “table salt.” This type is the most commonly available. Its chemical name is sodium chloride and may be iodized to help prevent iodine deficiency, which can lead to thyroid problems.

There are many different types of salt. Kosher salt is pressed and rolled into flakes and contains no additives. Sea salt is created when ocean waters flood shallow beds along coastlines. When the water evaporates, it leaves behind large salt crystals. The different minerals in the land and water lend their flavors to these salts.

Salt is a flavor enhancer and may be used to impart flavor. Which one should you choose? The structure of Kosher salt’s crystals makes them easy to dissolve, meaning that less can be used for the same result.

Table salt can have a harsh flavor and does not dissolve well, requiring more to be used to impart flavor.

Sea salts can be very expensive and if you’re not used to the taste, may be an unpleasant addition to your meal.

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**Flavor of the Month**

**Peach Iced Tea**

**Ingredients:**

- 3 black tea bags
- 6 cups boiling water
- 4 cups peach nectar
- 1 bunch fresh mint, trimmed
- 2 lemons, washed & thinly sliced

**Directions:**

Steep tea bags in the boiling water to make a strong tea; discard tea bags. Refrigerate tea until well chilled. Stir together tea and peach nectar in a pitcher. Add mint and lemon slices; refrigerate 1 hour. Add ice, and serve.

Makes 2½ quarts.
Volunteer News: HCE & The Guild

HCE News: The next meeting will be February 5, 2007 at 3:00 pm. We will work on the hands for conference and discuss opening ceremonies. So bring your thinking caps.

Upcoming Events: March 5, 2007 —Speaker from the Osteoporosis Foundation.
March 14, 2007 —Field trip to the Southeastern Guide Dogs, Inc.
March 27, 2007 —District Planning meeting

GUILD News: February 12, 2007 we will have our first “Distribution Day” for the year 2007. It is amazing how fast the closets fill up. Please plan on bringing anything you wish to donate on that day.

FAIR WINNERS:
Barbara Horton —Blue Rosette
Sue Daidone — Blue Ribbon

If we missed any other winners please call the office.

February Birthdays
Barbara Waldo February 1
Nancy Sanick February 9
Jeannette Dolbow February 18
Barbara Horton February 22
Shirley Whitaker February 23
Cory Garrison February 27
Marie Vargo February 28

Friday, February 2 is National Wear Red Day.
Show your support for women’s heart disease research by wearing red.

Upcoming Events & Important Dates
February 5, 2007 1:00– 3:00 pm — Guild Birthday Lunch
February 5, 2007 3:00 –4:00 pm — HCE Meeting
February 8–19, 2007 — Florida State Fair
February 12 & 26, 2007 — Guild Meetings
February 12, 2007 — Distribution Day
February 14, 2007 — Happy Valentine’s Day
February 19, 2007 — President’s Day
CES Office Closed

Manatee County Extension Service
Solutions for your life.
Samantha E. Kennedy, M.S.
Family & Consumer Sciences
1303 17th Street West
Palmetto, FL 34221
Phone: 941-722-4524
Fax: 941-721-6608
Email: skennedy@ufl.edu

Check us out on the web!
http://manatee.ifas.ufl.edu

HAPPY VALENTINE’S DAY!