CELEBRATE YOUR FAMILY

The holiday season is the traditional time to bring our families together and give thanks for our blessings. Each family has its own way of celebrating holidays and special occasions. These differences are what make families unique and help give special identity to members of the family group.

Set a block of time aside this holiday season to share some memories or experiences. Read aloud one of the following unfinished sentences and have each family member complete it. You can add others.

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

☆ I remember the holiday when____________.
☆ My favorite family tradition is____________.
☆ I’d be disappointed if we ever stopped doing ___________.

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

Traditions are family keepsakes that live in your heart. These are memories you can help create for yourself, your children and across generations; so celebrate and enjoy this holiday season.
The color pink in cooked turkey meat raises a "red flag" to many diners and cooks. Conditioned to be wary of cooked fresh pork that looks pink, they question the safety of cooked poultry and other meats that have a rosy blush. To many, it means "unsafe" or "under-done."

The color of cooked poultry is not always a sure sign of its safety. Only by using a food thermometer can one accurately determine that poultry has reached a safe minimum internal temperature of 165°F throughout the product. Turkey can remain pink even after cooking to a safe minimum internal temperature of 165°F. The meat of smoked turkey is always pink.

**Why is Poultry Lighter in Color Than Beef?**
The protein myoglobin is the major pigment found in all vertebrates and can exist in various forms which determine the resulting meat color. The major reason that poultry meat is much lighter in color than beef is that it is dramatically lower in myoglobin. Also, as an animal becomes older, its myoglobin content usually increases. Turkeys today are young — 4 to 5 months old at the time of slaughter.

**Why Are White & Dark Meat of Poultry Different Colors?**
The pink, red or white coloration of meat is due primarily to oxygen-storing myoglobin which is located in the muscle cells and retains the oxygen brought by the blood until the cells need it. To some extent, oxygen use can be related to the bird's general level of activity: muscles that are exercised frequently and strenuously — such as the legs — need more oxygen, and they have a greater storage capacity than muscles needing little oxygen. Turkeys do a lot of standing around, but little if any flying, so their wing and breast muscles are white; their legs, dark.

**What Causes Well-Done Meat to Be Pink?**
1. **Chemical Changes During Cooking.** Scientists have found that pinkness occurs when gases in the atmosphere of a heated gas or electric oven react chemically with hemoglobin in the meat tissues to give poultry a pink tinge. They are the same substances that give red color to smoked hams and other cured meats. The presence of high levels of myoglobin, or some of its redder forms due to incomplete denaturation during heat processing, can account for poultry having a pink to red color similar to that of an undercooked product.

2. **Natural Presence of Nitrites.** Nitrites are commonly used to produce a desired pink color in traditionally cured meats such as ham or bologna. So it follows that the natural presence of nitrates and nitrites, either in the feed or water supply, used in the production of poultry are a factor in nitrite levels in the birds. One study found that during 40 hours of storage at 40°F, naturally occurring microorganisms converted nitrate to nitrite. It also found that the local water supply had nitrate and, thus, it could serve as a nitrate source during processing.

3. **Young Age of Meat.** Often meat of younger birds shows the most pink because their thinner skins permit oven gases to reach the flesh. The amount of fat in the skin also affects the amount of pink color. Young birds or animals also lack the shield of a fat covering.

4. **Grilling.** Meat and poultry grilled or smoked outdoors can also look pink, even when cooked to 165°F. There may be a pink-colored rim about one-half inch wide around the outside of the cooked meat. The meat of commercially smoked turkeys is usually pink because it is prepared with natural smoke and liquid smoke flavor.

*Source: USDA FSIS fact sheet, 12/9/10*
MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

"Saving Energy and Money in the Home"

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) in Herkimer County will be sponsoring free workshops on saving energy and money in the home. These workshops are through the EmPower™ New York program for limited-income families who qualify as well as the general public. Each workshop is roughly two hours in length and will be held at the CCE office in the Scialdo Business Park at 5657 State Route 5, East Herkimer. A free home energy kit will be given to HEAP/EmPower eligible attendees, one per household. Please choose the date which is most convenient for you:

- Wednesday, November 30th, 2011 6:30 pm
- Tuesday, December 6th, 2011 6:30 pm
- Tuesday, December 20th, 2011 1:00 pm

All workshops are the same and are free of charge. However, you must pre-register for the workshop you want to attend by calling the CCE office at 315.866.7920. The registration deadline is two working days before each scheduled workshop.

Holiday Book Tree

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) of Herkimer County will be collecting books again this holiday season for needy children throughout the area. These books will be donated to the Even Start Program, a family literacy program which supports families by providing resources to upgrade basic skills and learn ways of being their child’s first teacher. New or “gently-used” books for young children are requested.

If you have any books that you would be willing to donate, please drop them off at the CCE office at 5657 State Route 5 in East Herkimer during business hours, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday. If needed, other times can be arranged.

Please call CCE of Herkimer County at 315.866.7920 for more information.

Need Help with Food Preparation?

USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline:
1-888-674-6854, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. E.S.T.
Open Thanksgiving day 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.
or ask a food safety question at www.AskKaren.gov

Find the USDA’s “Holiday Food Safety Success Kit” at http://holidayfoodsafety.org/
We snatch up bags of fresh cranberries during the holiday season, but most of us don’t know much about this tart, tasty red berry.

Cranberries are native to North America and were originally called the “craneberry” by Pilgrims because the small pink flowers that bloom in the spring resemble the head and bill of a crane.

Though television commercials have us believing cranberries grow in water, they actually grow on vines in special beds called bogs which are flooded with water prior to harvesting. Because cranberries have pockets of air inside the fruit, they float in water. This makes it much easier to harvest with special equipment that stirs the water, removing the berries from the vines.

Fresh, whole cranberries are available from September through December. They will keep refrigerated for a month or frozen in airtight containers for up to 12 months. For best results in most recipes, use the berries while they are still frozen.

Cranberries can be used chopped or whole in breads, pancakes, muffins and salads. They can be cooked whole and made into a sauce or chopped with other ingredients to make a relish.

Whatever recipe you choose, you will need to add sugar or an alternative sweetener since this red berry is too tart to eat alone. Because it is so tart, 100 percent cranberry juice is not available. Cranberry juice drinks are only about 25 percent juice. Juices are either sweetened with sugar, an alternative sweetener or blended with other naturally sweet juices. Those sweetened with sugar have more calories. A sugar-sweetened juice has about 120 calories per cup while those with alternative sweeteners have about 45 calories per cup. Even dried cranberries have added sweetener. A handful of sugar-sweetened dried cranberries or “craisins” has nearly 100 calories.

Research shows that cranberries have health benefits. Cranberries contain antioxidants which help protect against damage from free radicals. However, the primary healthy action of the cranberry is its ability to prevent bacteria from adhering or sticking and causing an infection. Some benefits of this ability include:

- Urinary tract infections may be prevented by eating cranberries or drinking cranberry juice cocktail. Cranberries have been shown to prevent E. coli bacteria from clinging to urinary tract walls in women who are prone to these infections. The beneficial effect is preventative only and is not a treatment to cure an infection.

continued on page 5
Cranberries...continued from page 4

- Stomach ulcers may be reduced by not permitting H. pylori, the bacteria found in the stomach that causes ulcers, from sticking to the stomach lining.

- Periodontal gum disease and cavities may be inhibited by the protective anti-adhesion substances in cranberries. However, because of the added sugar in cranberry juice, the effect may be neutralized.

- Heart health may be enhanced by cranberries because they may help lower cholesterol levels, offering a natural defense against atherosclerosis resulting from high levels of LDL or “bad cholesterol.”

- Cancer cells in some forms of cancer may be inhibited by compounds in cranberries.

If you are tempted to take cranberry supplements to gain these health benefits, be aware that supplements are not standardized. More research is needed in this area. Research has shown that that the equivalent amount of the following provide similar health benefits:

- 10 ounces of cranberry juice cocktail
- One and a half cups of fresh or frozen cranberries
- One ounce of dried cranberries
- One-half cup of cranberry sauce

For your holiday menu here are a few quick-to-fix ideas using the festive, flavorful cranberry:

- Roll your favorite cheese ball in chopped cranberries and nuts. No time to make a cheese ball? Use a log of goat cheese and you’ve got an instant appetizer.
- When making your favorite quick bread recipe, add whole fresh, frozen or dried cranberries in place of other fruit.

- Dried cranberries are a natural addition to your favorite trail mix or on top of oatmeal or cold cereal.
- Add dried or chopped fresh cranberries with apples or pears to your favorite greens for a colorful salad.

- Making a rice pilaf? Include dried cranberries for holiday color.
- Add fresh or dried cranberries to baked apples, applesauce, or even in your favorite apple pie recipe before adding the top crust.

- Put cranberries in the bottom of a bunt pan, add water and freeze. The result? A decorative floating ice ring to spice up any holiday punch.

- Cranberries, apples and oranges can be made into a raw relish for a perfect side to any meal or even a great topping for sandwiches.

Source: Colorado State University Extension, 11/23/10
HOLIDAY SURVIVAL TIPS

 Enlist the help of a buddy to help keep you on track with exercise habits during the holidays.

 Enjoy the outdoors as much as possible. Bundle up and go for a walk or try skating or sledding. Any extra activity helps.

 Limit holiday baking to just one or two favorites and make those in small quantities. Holiday baked goods can pack a big punch when it comes to fat and calories.

 Only buy enough goodies to fill the recipe, gift box or whatnot. Don’t plan to have any left over in the house to eat. There are enough temptations outside the house; there is no need to make your home a difficult place to maintain control.

 After baking goodies for others, immediately fill the mixing bowl with hot soapy water; sampling packs on extra calories.

 Eat a high-fiber, low-fat breakfast each day. Whole grain cereal, skim milk and fruit provides a good start.

 Choose a low-fat healthful lunch – low-fat soups and salads, baked potatoes with low-fat toppings, low-fat chili and low-fat pasta are all good choices.

 Keep fruit with you for snacking so you do not get tempted by “mall choices.”

 Limit alcohol consumption. Alcoholic drinks can be high in calories, and they can cause you to make poor food judgments. Choose water or club soda with lime at parties.

 Eat a nutritious meal or snack like an apple, pear, or other light snack before you attend events or parties. Try to eat a large low-fat salad before every meal so you will fill up on fewer calories.

 Bring a nutritious dish to parties so you have something you can eat that is healthful. Raw veggies, fruit and salads make great choices.

 Remember that the holidays are truly only 3 real days, Thanksgiving, Christmas (or Kwanzaa or Chanukah) and New Year’s. Which means if you blow it only on 3 days, then you really won’t cause much damage. It’s the vicious cycle of not enough exercise and too many calories on the other days that causes weight gain during this time of year.

 Finally, celebrate and focus on what the holidays are really about – spending time with family and friends. Find creative activities or ways to get your family and friends to play a game or be active instead of eating. Pick a time to get together that does not revolve around a meal.

Source: Communicating Food for Health
HOT SPOT HACKER

You think you're logging into the coffee shop's Wi-Fi network to check your email. But you may actually be connecting to a crook.

Scammers have gone public, invading libraries, airports, hotel lobbies, coffee shops and other spaces that offer public Wi-Fi network connections to the Internet.

With hacking tools that are easily available online, sometimes for free, scammers can create their own parallel wireless networks that mimic the name or look of a bona fide establishment's hot spot. So you think you're on the shop's network, but you're really on the hacker's.

Or you can be specifically targeted after you've connected to a shop's network with your laptop or smartphone. The hacker, perhaps someone sitting at a table just across the room, is able to intercept your transmissions and read them.

The crook knows what you may not, that many Wi-Fi networks are not secure, allowing for easy pickings of your personal data — email addresses, cellphone numbers and passwords. And if you bank or shop online while connected to these networks, your financial account numbers are at risk, too.

So if you use Wi-Fi in public spaces, follow these 10 tips to safeguard your information:

**How to protect yourself**

1. Set your laptop or smart phone so you have to manually select the Wi-Fi network. You may need to change the default setting.

2. Make sure you know the exact name of the establishment's Wi-Fi network and connect only to it. Don't be fooled by look-alikes.

3. Avoid any hot spot that your device lists as "unsecured." Keep in mind that even if a password is required, a hot spot can still be unsecured.

4. If your device shows the site as secured, pay attention to what kind of encryption it lists. WEP (Wired Equivalent Privacy) is an early system, dating from over a decade ago. If it's WEP, treat the network as not secure. WPA (Wi-Fi Protected Access) is better, and WPA2 is best of all.

5. If you send personal data over a Wi-Fi link, do so only to an encrypted website. You can tell a site is encrypted if you see the letters "https" (the "s" stands for "secure") at the beginning of its Web address. Also, look for a lock icon on the top or bottom of pages throughout the site.

6. Before using a public Wi-Fi network, install such software as Force-TLS and HTTPS-Every -where, which are free add-ons to the Firefox browser. They make sure you use encryption features available on websites you visit. Virtual private network software — some of it free, some not — can also add security.

7. As with your home computer, change your passwords frequently and make them hard to crack by including digits and symbols. Use different ones for different websites.

8. Keep your security software up to date and pay attention to on-screen warnings.

9. Turn off Wi-Fi when you're not using it.

10. If you can connect by laptop or smartphone, use the phone. It's generally harder to hack.

Source: AARP Bulletin September 2011, article by Sid Kirchheimer
WHAT ARE YOU CELEBRATING?

Generally, people tend to ask the holidays to do many things for them. We want them to:

• strengthen our family bonds
• give our spirits a lift in the dark days of winter
• stimulate our compassion and generosity
• help us keep tabs on far-flung friends
• confirm our deepest religious beliefs

The list goes on and on. No celebrations can do it all! The result is that often when people take a close look at their celebrations, there seems to be a lack of depth and meaning.

Ask yourself these questions: “What am I celebrating? Why do I spend so much time, energy, and money? What do I want to experience at this time of year?”

This is a basic “values-clarification” exercise which can help you decide which aspects of the holidays are most deserving of your efforts. Then you’ll be able to plan a celebration in harmony with your with your deepest beliefs.

To continue your values clarification, carefully complete the exercise sheet below:

Values Clarification

Read through the ten value statements, cross off those that have no importance to you, and add any equally important ones not included. Then decide which of the remaining statements means the most to you. Put a 1 beside that sentence. Then find the one that ranks next in importance to you and put a 2 beside it. Continue this numbering until each statement has been assigned its own rank in the listing. Remember: 1 is the highest.

___The holidays are times to enjoy being with my immediate family.
___The holidays are times to create a beautiful home environment.
___The holidays are times to celebrate religious truths.
___The holidays are times to exchange gifts with my family and friends.
___The holidays are times for parties, entertaining, and visits with friends.
___The holidays are times to help those who are less fortunate.
___The holidays are times to strengthen bonds with my relatives.
___The holidays are times to strengthen my religious community.
___The holidays are for children.

When we are clear about our values and find meaningful ways to express them, then we have the foundation for a “soul-satisfying” celebration.

Enjoy a holiday celebration in harmony with your deepest beliefs.

Source: CCE Delaware County December 1994


**Five Steps to Create and Keep a Holiday Budget**

Unless you’re among a select group of people, sitting down and creating a budget does not sound like very much holiday fun. Nevertheless, in tough economic times, the Better Business Bureau recommends that mapping out your spending in November will help ease the strain of a financial holiday hangover in January. Creating a budget, and being disciplined enough to follow it, is one of the best ways to avoid overspending during the holidays.

**Step One: Consider your Income.**
The first step is to measure how much money is coming in. Add up your monthly salary along with your spouse’s and any child support payments, dividends or interest payments and other sources of income.

**Step Two: Add up regular monthly expenses.**
Adding up expenses is usually harder than determining your income because there are so many more factors to consider. Start with your rent or mortgage, utilities and credit card payments. Also factor in other expenses for gas and car maintenance, healthcare and groceries. A full list of monthly expenses to consider is available at www.bbb.org/us/article/tips-on-how-to-develop-a-working-budget-6101

**Step Three: Estimate Extra Holiday Expenses**
A lot of little purchases have a way of adding up over the holidays and it’s important to consider all of the expenses of the season including:

- **Gifts** - Make an itemized list of everyone you want to buy presents for and estimate how much you’re willing to spend for each. This includes presents for family, friends and coworkers. Also consider the cost for holiday cards and postage.
- **Entertaining** - Entertaining is big over the holidays. Think about who you’ll be having over and also budget for any food or beverages you might need to bring to someone else’s party. Also consider the costs for eating out and going to the movies—both popular expenses over the holidays.
- **Decorations** - Take stock of what you already own and then consider any additional spending you might need to make for a tree, lights, ornaments, wrapping paper, etc.
- **Travel** - If you’re heading out of town for the holidays, consider the cost of travel including any car maintenance or pet boarding if applicable.
- **Charitable Donations** - The holidays are a time of giving, so budget in how much you plan on donating to a worthy cause. You can learn more about being a savvy donor from the BBB Wise Giving Alliance (www.bbb.org/us/Wise-Giving/)

**Step Four: Revisit, evaluate and revise your budget along the way.**
Once you’ve added up your income and your expenses, it’s time to compare. If more is going out than coming in, it’s time to go back over your budget and pare down expenses. Consider giving fewer gifts or less expensive ways of entertaining. Last year’s decorations are also probably just fine.

Once you’ve balanced your budget, revisit it frequently over the holidays to make sure you’re sticking to it. You might find that you over estimated in some categories and under estimated in others.

**Step Five: Reward yourself.** Work into your budget a small reward that you can earn if you meet your goals.

If you don’t meet your goals, you can guess where that money is going instead: Paying off your credit card bill in January.

More advice on saving money over the holidays is available online at www.bbb.org/us/consumer-tips-holiday/

Source: Adapted from Better Business Bureau News Center 11/2/10 (bbb.com)
AVOID GUESSING ABOUT HOLIDAY FOOD SAFETY

During the coming holidays, thoughts turn to family, food, and finding enough time to fit everything in!

Food safety may take a back seat as we take short cuts, prepare foods ahead, cook late into the night, and host numerous holiday feasts.

Before you cook the turkey, set up the buffet, or start making holiday goodies, see how you do on this holiday food safety quiz, based on information from the USDA and the Food and Drug Administration.

Approximately, how long should you allow for thawing a frozen turkey in the refrigerator?
A) 24 hours per each 1–2 pounds of turkey
B) 24 hours per each 4–5 pounds of turkey
C) 24 hours per each 6–7 pounds of turkey

Answer: B. Place the frozen bird in its original wrapper in the refrigerator (40°F or below). Allow approximately 24 hours per each 4–5 pounds of turkey. A thawed turkey can remain in the refrigerator for 1–2 days.

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<tr>
<td>20–24 pounds</td>
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What is a safe internal temperature for cooking a whole turkey?
A) 145°F
B) 155°F
C) 165°F

Answer: C. Use a food thermometer to check the internal temperature of the turkey. A whole turkey is safe cooked to a minimum internal temperature of 165°F throughout the bird. Check the internal temperature in the innermost part of the thigh and wing and the thickest part of the breast. If you have stuffed your turkey, the center of the stuffing must also reach 165°F.

For reasons of personal preference, you may choose to cook turkey to a higher temperature. All turkey meat, including any that remains pink, is safe to eat as soon as all parts reach at least 165°F. (See page 2 “Answer Corner” for details.)

The stuffing should reach 165°F, whether cooked inside the bird or in a separate dish.

Let turkey stand 20 minutes after removing it from the oven. Remove any stuffing and carve the turkey.

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continued on page 11
Avoid Guessing About Holiday Food Safety...continued from page 10

Which of the following are important practices to follow if stuffing a turkey?
A) Do not mix wet and dry ingredients for a stuffing until just before stuffing the bird
B) Stuff the turkey loosely
C) Cook a stuffed turkey immediately
D) Use a food thermometer
E) b, c, and d
F) All of the above

Answer: F. Cooking a home-stuffed turkey is riskier than cooking one not stuffed. Even if the turkey itself has reached the safe minimum internal temperature of 165°F as measured in the innermost part of the thigh, the wing and the thickest part of the breast, the stuffing may not have reached a temperature high enough to destroy bacteria that may be present.

Stuff it safely with these suggestions from USDA:

1. Prepare Stuffing Safely — If you plan to prepare stuffing using raw meat, poultry, or shellfish, you should cook these ingredients before stuffing the turkey to reduce the risk of foodborne illness from bacteria that may be found in raw ingredients. The wet ingredients for stuffing can be prepared ahead of time and refrigerated. However, do not mix wet and dry ingredients until just before spooning the stuffing mixture into the turkey cavity.

2. Stuff Loosely — Do not cool the stuffing. Spoon it directly into the turkey cavity right after preparation. Stuff the turkey loosely — about 3/4 cup of stuffing per pound. The stuffing should be moist, not dry, because heat destroys bacteria more rapidly in a moist environment. Do not stuff turkeys to be grilled, smoked, fried, or microwaved.

3. Cook Immediately — Immediately place the stuffed, raw turkey in an oven set no lower than 325°F.

4. Use a Food Thermometer — For safety and doneness, check the internal temperature of the turkey and stuffing with a food thermometer. If the temperature of the turkey and the center of the stuffing have not reached a safe minimum internal temperature of 165°F, further cooking will be required. Do not remove the stuffing from the turkey before it reaches 165°F because the undercooked stuffing could contaminate the cooked meat. Continue to cook the turkey until the stuffing is safely cooked.

5. Let It Rest — Let the cooked turkey stand 20 minutes before removing the stuffing and carving.

6. Refrigerate Promptly — Refrigerate the cooked turkey and stuffing within 2 hours after cooking. Place leftovers in shallow containers and use within 3–4 days. Reheat leftovers to a safe minimum internal temperature of 165°F.

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What is the longest that perishable food should sit out at room temperature on a buffet table?

A) 2 hours  
B) 3 hours  
C) 4 hours

Answer: A. Foods should not sit at room temperature for more than two hours. Keep track of how long foods have been sitting on the buffet table and discard anything there two hours or more.

Divide cooked foods into shallow containers to store in the refrigerator or freezer until serving. This encourages rapid, even cooling. Reheat hot foods to 165°F. Arrange and serve food on several small platters rather than on one large platter. Keep the rest of the food hot in the oven (set at 200–250°F) or cold in the refrigerator until serving time. This way foods will be held at a safe temperature for a longer period of time.

REPLACE empty platters rather than adding fresh food to a dish that already had food in it. Many people’s hands may have been taking food from the dish, which has also been sitting out at room temperature.

Hold hot foods at 140°F or warmer. On the buffet table you can keep hot foods hot with chafing dishes, slow cookers, and warming trays. Cold foods should be held at 40°F or colder. Keep foods cold by nesting dishes in bowls of ice. Otherwise, use small serving trays and replace them.

Source: University of Nebraska Lincoln Extension

Vampire Appliances

Most homes have almost two dozen vampire appliances that consume energy even when they are turned off. These appliances cost consumers more than one billion dollars a year in energy costs.

“These appliances aren’t really off but function in a stand-by mode,” says Joe Laquatra, a housing and energy expert at Cornell University. “They continuously use power so their features will continue to work when they are switched off, such as a digital video recorder (DVR) recording programs when no one is home.”

An energy-thirsty TV, for example, may cost more than $14 a year for energy consumed when it’s off. “With many vampire appliances in a typical home, the cost to feed energy-slurping vampires adds up quickly,” Laquatra adds.

To minimize energy consumption by vampire appliances in your home, plug appliances into smart power strips that turn off appliances when they enter stand-by mode. Also, look for appliances with the ENERGY STAR® label; these appliances are guaranteed to use far less energy than standard appliances. Saving energy not only means saving money, but by saving electricity it also helps to prevent air pollution.

For more energy saving ideas, see next page and visit www.getenergysmart.org/resources/tips.aspx

Source: CCE News 9/12/11
Computers
• When you shut down your computer, don’t forget to turn off the monitor - it can use twice as much energy as the computer!
• Use an advanced power strip for convenience; that way all of your computer accessories are turned off by one switch (even in sleep mode, your computer may cost you $105 a year).
• Use the power management feature on your computer monitor; it will turn off the monitor when idle for over 15 minutes when you leave your computer on.
• Consider a laptop computer over a traditional desktop – laptops use less energy.

Copiers, Fax Machines & Mailing Machines
• Turn off electronics when they are not in use.
• Consider a multifunction device, which combines printing, copying, faxing and scanning and look for the ENERGY STAR label to further increase energy savings.
• Plug your copier, fax machine and mailing machine into an advanced power strip so that when you switch off your computer (or put it in sleep mode) all of the peripherals will also turn off.

Battery Charging Systems & External Power Adapters
• Avoid leaving transformers and charging units for appliances and battery-operated devices on (such as cell phones and tools) when they aren’t being used.
• Instead of just turning your electronics off, it is better to unplug them because even when they’re “off,” they still draw electricity from the outlet - something known as a “phantom load.”
• Plug your battery charging system or power adapter into a power strip to enable you to shut off power with the flick of a switch. For even better control, use a power strip with a timer or a programmable power strip.

Cordless Phones
• When buying a cordless phone, look for the ENERGY STAR label. ENERGY STAR phones use only about one-third the energy of standard cordless phones.

DVD Products, Home Audio & Combination Units
• Don’t forget to turn off your DVD player, video game console and television.
• Plug your DVD and home audio products into an advanced power strip so that when you turn off the television, all of the home audio and video components will also turn off.
• Consider combination products to save space, simplify set-up, and save energy in standby mode.

Televisions & VCRs
• Turn televisions off when no-one is watching them. A TV left on for 8 hours a day or while you sleep will cost you about $41-$102 per year.
• When choosing a new television look for the ENERGY STAR label to save energy.
• If considering a flat-panel or large-screen television, consider purchasing an LCD model rather than a plasma model to cut your power usage by approximately 50%.

Printers, Scanners, & All-in-One Devices
• Ink jet printers use as much as 90% less energy than typical laser printers.
• Choose a multifunctional product (printer/copier/scanner) instead of separate products.
• Don’t forget to turn your printer off at night as it still draws power even when not in use.
• Plug your printer, scanner and all-in-one device into an advanced power strip so that when you switch off your computer (or put it in sleep mode) all of the peripherals will also turn off.

Source: http://www.getenergysmart.org/resources/tips.aspx
NEW “PUBLICATIONS.USA.GOV” WEBSITE

Do you need to improve your credit score? Are you looking for ways to lower your auto insurance rates? Did you ever wonder what to do when you have a problem or complaint after you buy something?

Publications.USA.gov offers publications from across government, on topics including cars, consumer protection, education, employment, federal programs, food, health, housing, money, and more. You’ll find hundreds of free publications to read online, download in PDF format, or order in print. There are also a small but growing number of e-books to download to your e-reader, tablet, or smart phone. Many publications are offered in both Spanish and English.

You may have visited the Federal Citizen Information Center (Pueblo.GSA.gov) in the past to order free government consumer-related publications from the Pueblo CO facility. The website has changed to make it easier to remember and use. However, they still provide the same resources you want and need to make life changing decisions.

WEB SITES TO AVOID SCAMS

Fraudulent, or “phishing,” emails try to trick you into replying with information the sender wants, or into visiting a bogus web site. They play on your emotions to try to get you to react without thinking.

❖ Beware of messages where someone is threatening to close an account or take away privileges unless you provide personal information.

❖ If an offer seems too good to be true, it probably is.

❖ Every time you receive a request for personal information (passwords, account numbers, etc.), think about what might happen if you give your information to the wrong person.

These days, with fraud and identity theft such a widespread problem, no reputable institution should be contacting you to solicit personal information in email or over the phone.

You can also protect yourself by not clicking the web link you find in an email, but instead using a search engine to look up the address for the company’s main site, and then navigating to the page you need.

Here are a couple of websites to help you avoid trouble:

Lookstoogoodtobetrue.com was built to educate consumers, and help keep people from becoming victims of Internet fraud. The web site was developed and is maintained by a joint federal law enforcement and industry task force.

Snopes.com attempts to debunk urban legends – including illegitimate emails that commonly circulate. It can be a good source to check to see if an email you have received is real or an attempt to trick you.

Other good sources like banks and credit card companies usually post examples of scams using their name on their web site, so that people know what to watch out for.

Source: Computer Security at Cornell: Secure Your Computer On and Off Campus, Cornell University IT 7/11
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If you would like to receive the “Herkimer County Living” Newsletter for 2012 (6 issues per year for just $5.00), complete the following information. Send a gift subscription to a friend, neighbor, or relative, and we will notify them of your gift. Note that the new subscription will begin with the February/March issue and will continue through December/January 2013.

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5657 State Route 5
Herkimer, NY 13350
“LIVING”
November / December 2011 / January 2012

Editor:
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Production:
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Living is published six times a year by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Herkimer County. Newsletter fee $5.00 to help defray expenses.

Whenever trade names are used herein, it is with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by Cornell Cooperative Extension is implied.

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www.cce.cornell.edu/herkimer/2009/04/02/
herkimer-county-living-newsletter/

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