

October 29, 2012

## **Living Well**

Chelsea Richmond, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent  
K-State Research and Extension, Flint Hills District

### **Creating Family Traditions**

Without realizing it, families may be creating traditions that last a lifetime. Everyday routines and favorite activities can be the threads that bind families together.

As children grow into adulthood, it may be surprising to learn of the special moments they cherish from their childhood. It may be as simple as eating Sunday morning breakfast, fixing a special family recipe, or completing that dreaded weekly household chore. Or, it might be going on a special family vacation or the times playing catch in the backyard.

Strong families have a commitment to one another and keep increasing in strength because of the time they spend together. The way that families “do” things often become part of their traditions. One may not find those rituals written down anywhere, but if you ask, one might hear of many memories shared through family stories.

There are three types of traditions that are often recognized – celebrated traditions, family traditions, and patterned family traditions. Celebrated traditions are the activities that are built around special occasions that call for a celebration such as birthdays, anniversaries, or holidays. Family traditions are created within each family to fit their lifestyles such as vacations, weekly movie or game night, or family reunions. Patterned family traditions are those events that are centered on the day to day activities in your family’s life such as dinner time, bedtime, or weekend activities.

Traditions can help strengthen families by helping them develop a sense of belonging, familiarity, and give routine to daily life. Traditions can also provide a sense of continuity, closeness, understanding, and love that can help families create special memories or weather difficult times.

Whether blending families and traditions or creating new ones, here are some ideas to consider as you enrich your family rituals:

**\*Meal Time** – Plan meals so that everyone can gather around the table at the same time. Monitor conversation, if necessary, so that talk remains positive.

**\*Parent/Child Time** – Take time out to spend “alone time” with your spouse and each child doing something that interests them.

**\*Entertainment** – Attend a concert, show, or athletic event as a family. Plan an evening of cards or board games that everyone can enjoy. Or, watch a movie, build a snowman, put together a puzzle, etc.

**\*Service** – Take time as a family to plan how to help another family or someone less fortunate.

**\*Remembering** – Share memories of past holidays and tell stories from your childhood and encourage inter-generational sharing.

With the holiday season approaching, it is a good time to look at how you are building or sustaining traditions in your family. Recognize the strength you and other family members gain from them. Traditions and rituals strengthen family ties and make your family unique. Start by realizing the daily activities you do that make your family special and realize that the “little things” you do together are really memories in the making. For more information, contact the

Flint Hills Extension District office in Cottonwood Falls at (620) 273-6491 or the office in Council Grove at (620) 767-5136.

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