Fourth Annual Radon Calendar Contest Winners Announced

By Heather Robbins, Kentucky Radon Program

Congratulations are in order to the winners of the 2008-09 Kentucky Radon Calendar Contest. The winner of the fourth annual contest was Jalen Cage of Kenton County. Jalen received a new home computer system as a prize. His poster, "Radon is a Monster," will be made into a calendar poster that will be distributed throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky to alert citizens to the dangers of radon gas. The contest is funded through a partnership between the Department for Public Health (DPH) and the University of Kentucky.
Radon is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas that comes from the breakdown of uranium in the soil. There is an abundance of this gas throughout the bluegrass. Radon gets into our homes, schools and offices, and we breathe in this deadly gas, known as the second leading cause of lung cancer. If you smoke and have high levels of radon gas in your home, you double your chances of getting lung cancer. But there is hope. You can test your home to see if you and your family are at risk, and radon test kits are free in Kentucky.

"Children can be an outlet to help get the message out about radon gas. This poster contest is a great way of doing that," said Clay Hardwick, Kentucky Radon Program coordinator with the Division of Public Health Protection and Safety. "We plan to continue the contest for next year and through this, hopefully increase the number of homes tested and fixed in the commonwealth."

Along with Jalen, second and third-place winners were announced. Morgan Cloe of Grant County received a $200 Best Buy gift card for second place, and Lemikka Williams of Magoffin County received a $100 Best Buy gift card for third place. All three posters were sent to Washington, D.C., to be entered into the National Radon Poster Contest sponsored by the National Safety Council. The winner of the National Poster contest will win a trip for two to Washington, D.C., and the winner's poster will be displayed nationwide.

An awards ceremony was held Oct. 22 at the Lexington-Fayette County Health Department. Among the children and their parents were many state health department officials and UK officials and extension agents. Award presenters and speakers at the event were Guy Delius, director, Division of Public Health Protection and Safety, and Scott Shearer, UK Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering Department.

To find out more about radon gas or to receive a free radon test kit, contact your local health department or county extension office. You can also contact the Kentucky Radon Program at (502) 564-4856.

UK Offers Social Work Classes

By Anya Armes Weber

The University of Kentucky College of Social Work is offering several classes for continuing education credit this fall.

Register or learn more about courses offered through UK's College of Social Work online here.

"Bereavement Theories: What Social Workers Need to Know" will be led by Sherri Weisenfluh. The class is from 1 to 2:30 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 7, at Lexington's Hospice of the Bluegrass Center for Grief, 2312 Alexandria Drive. Directions to the center can be found here.

Cost is $20, and social work credit for Kentucky social workers is pending.

Weisenfluh has been with Hospice of the Bluegrass for 16 years and is currently associate vice president of counseling. She is a licensed clinical social worker with the state of Kentucky and has more than 25 years of clinical experience.

"The ABCs of Using Writing as a Therapeutic Tool" will be led by Susan Reynolds and is scheduled for 9 a.m. to noon on Friday, Dec. 5, at Lexington's Hospice of the Bluegrass Center for Grief, 2312 Alexandria Drive. Directions to the center can be found here.

Cost is $25, and CEUs for Kentucky social workers are pending.

This workshop will focus on ways social workers can utilize writing within their practice to assist their clients in positive growth.

Reynolds is a social worker with the Passport Health Plan program who has been in the social services field for more than 20 years. An author of two books, she has conducted trainings throughout the United States on a variety of topics and specializes in the use of writing as a tool for personal awareness and growth.

"Adolescent Suicide: What Every Therapist Should Know and Do" will be led by Michael McFarland. The class will be from 1 to 4 p.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 9, at Florence's Hospice of the Bluegrass, 7388 Turfway Road. Directions to the center can be found here.

Cost is $25, and CEUs for Kentucky social workers and psychologists are pending.

McFarland is a social worker and the Kentucky suicide prevention coordinator. His workshop will review hands-on skills to use with adolescent clients.

Living Well: Eating Healthy

Are you being tempted by tasty Halloween treats? If you haven't encountered them yet, you have done a great job of avoiding the holiday festivities. The holiday season, when healthy eating seems impossible for most people, is usually associated with Thanksgiving and ends with ringing in the New Year. However, others believe that the downward spiral actually starts with Halloween candy. Even though the treats are small and individually packaged, they can still cause real damage.
Last week we discussed moving more and recommended going for a brisk walk as many days of the week as possible. Now that the weather is changing and the temperatures are dropping,

physical activity outdoors might not be an option. So let's shift the focus to eating healthier. This takes effort and planning, but yields many benefits.

In terms of prevention, some risks cannot be changed or controlled, such as age, genetic makeup or family history. However, eating healthy and limiting alcohol consumption are identified as preventive behaviors. Eating healthy not only provides the body with powerful antioxidants, but it also helps to maintain a healthy body weight - a key factor in disease prevention. Research has shown a strong correlation between alcohol consumption and women in terms of breast cancer risk.

Nutrition plays a key role in staying healthy. The old saying of "you are what you eat" might make people think twice about the types and amounts of food consumed. It is recommended to eat as many fruits and vegetables as possible, aiming for seven or more servings daily. Vegetables like broccoli, cabbage, brussels sprouts, cauliflower, carrots, tomatoes, dark leafy greens (collards, kale and spinach) and fruits (especially citrus, berries and cherries) provide good sources of essential antioxidants, vitamins and nutrients. In addition to fruits and vegetables, selecting the right carbohydrates minimizes the consumption of the high glycemic index otherwise referred to as the "Great White Hazards." These foods include white flour, white rice, white potatoes, sugar and any products containing them. Eating large quantities of these foods can trigger hormonal changes in the body, which can lead to disease. Whole grains and beans/legumes are a good source of dietary fiber and natural nutrients.

Here are some tips on how to meet your fruits and vegetable goals as well as tips for determining serving sizes.

- Dip apple slices or your favorite veggies in low-fat yogurt or fat-free dressing.
- Add leafy greens, tomato slices, cucumbers or sprouts to your sandwich.
- Add berries, apple chunks, or mashed bananas to pancake batter and cereal, or eat them alone for breakfast and/or snacks.
- Mix veggies into scrambled eggs or omelets.
- Eat a soup loaded with vegetables.

Serving size equivalents:

- One medium piece of fruit or 15 grapes = tennis ball
- One cup of raw, leafy green vegetables = your fist
- One-half cup cereal, cooked pasta, rice, cooked or raw chopped vegetables = your fist
- One ounce of nuts = one handful
- Pretzels = two handfuls
- One teaspoon of high-fat foods = a thumb tip

If you are struggling now or if you anticipate Thanksgiving as being your trigger holiday, try to follow some of these quick tips to maintain healthy nutrition levels. The CHFS Wellness committee will be promoting the "Holiday Weigh to Maintain" program again during the holiday season. Participants will receive a pledge form and healthy tips to assist in maintaining their weight over the holidays. The signed pledge form states that each person will maintain a regular

physical activity routine and eat healthy between Thanksgiving and New Year's. Watch for more details in the CHFS Focus.

Fiscal War
Campfire Calling

Some very dear people in my life love the Clash. No doubt those of you who are fans of the punk genre are nodding your heads about now. After all, it's rare – especially in a world where Britney Spears is allowed to be a celebrity for over a decade – that a voice of a generation comes along with both something powerful to say and musical talent to burn. You're probably also wondering what any of this has to do with saving money.
I'll get to that in a minute.
We're in the time of year when it's become fairly obvious that it's just not summer anymore. Though it may seem counterintuitive, the urge to stay inside and hibernate can lead to a botched household budget. Disagree? I bet you all have been turning up that thermostat these past few days and it's going to show in your heating bill. Which brings me back to the Clash.
I learned recently in a documentary about the late Joe Strumer, Clash frontman, that he was a great fan of the campfire. He loved to light a bonfire and invite friends and loved ones over for hours at a time, talking about the world, writing and, of course, playing what surely must have been the greatest impromptu rock shows ever. For him, the fire was metaphor for life and harmony and a bunch of other things that I probably don't quite grasp. But I did come away feeling inspired to get out of my living room and to spend a little time outdoors despite the impending cold. Not only did it sound romantic and mind-expanding, it's completely free entertainment.
Since then, we've found that spending a few hours in front of a fire is the absolute best place to let the stress of the day melt away and let the conversation flow. The best thing, of course, is that it doesn't cost a dime and, since we're not inside, there's no need to turn up the thermostat.
Not a bad lesson coming from a rocker.

Focus Money Saving Tip of the Week – If outdoor campfires just aren't your cup of tea, you can still save money on your heating bill. One of the easiest and most cost-efficient things you can do is check the air filters on furnaces and heat pumps once a month. Built up dust makes them blow harder, using more energy and causing your bill to spike.
Got a money-saving tip? From investing wisely to making your own toothpaste, the Focus welcomes all sorts of money saving advice from our readers. To share, email Beth Crace Fisher at Beth.Crace@ky.gov.

Employee Enrichment

By Anya Armes Weber

What would you do if you made a mistake at work? No matter the size of the mistake, coming clean is the best first step to handling it. Here are a few other tips from Greg Ross, a writer for TechRepublic.com.

Tell the people who need to know. And tell them right away. The sooner you do, the more understanding they will be. It will bode better for you if they hear about the mistake from you rather than from someone else.

Stay calm. By not panicking, you can figure out the best way to recover from your mistake. Offer to make changes that will alleviate the problem or ensure it won't happen again. That is one of the characteristics of a good leader.

Follow through. Don't just talk about it -- do what needs to be done to make up for the error. We all make mistakes. Learning the right way to deal with them will help you through all your professional life.