

HEALTH & FITNESS

HEALTH & FITNESS



SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO
THE DAILY HOME

Health fairs serve to inform communities about issues, services related to well-being

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

Two upcoming health fairs are scheduled to help inform local residents about issues and services related to their well-being.

The Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind Senior Services Health Fair and Seminar is scheduled for 8 a.m.-1 p.m. Tuesday, September 22, at the Talladega Family Life Center.

The free event is hosted by AIDB Senior Services, Lakeside Hospice and the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service. James Spann, chief meteorologist for ABC 33/40 will speak, and three free continuing education unit classes for social workers and nurses will be offered by Lakeside Hospice. Lunch will be served.

For more information, call AIDB Senior Services at 334-750-1253.

The St. Clair County Extension Resource Health Council will host its annual health fair from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Thursday, October 29 at the Pell City Civic Center. This year's theme is "Fall Into Good Health!"

The event is free and open to the public.

The health fair is designed to increase awareness and promote healthy lifestyles throughout the community. Organizations from across the St. Clair County and surrounding areas will provide educational information in an effort to help residents become better acquainted with the health care resources in their area.

Free health screenings, including blood pressure and glucose and sleep



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

apnea will be available. Walgreens of Pell City will offer flu and pneumonia shots.

Entertainment will be provided and door prizes will be given away throughout the event.

Individuals and companies that wish to help sponsor the health fair are encouraged to provide monetary donations to cover expenses, including advertisement. Vendor booth space is also available, subject to review and approval by the Health Resource Council and based on space needs, type of service and space available. Each vendor is required to provide a door prize valued at \$25 or more in lieu of a registration fee.

Due to limited space, only the first 80 who register will be able to participate. Registration deadline is Friday, September 25th.

To participate, for more information or to order a

health fair t-shirt, call Lee Ann Clark, county extension coordinator, at the St. Clair County Extension Office at 205-338-9416 or email clarkla@aces.edu.

Registration forms are available for download by visiting the St. Clair County Extension office

The AIDB Senior Services Health Fair is slated for Sept. 22 from 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.

website at www.aces.edu/StClair or by calling or stopping by the extension office.

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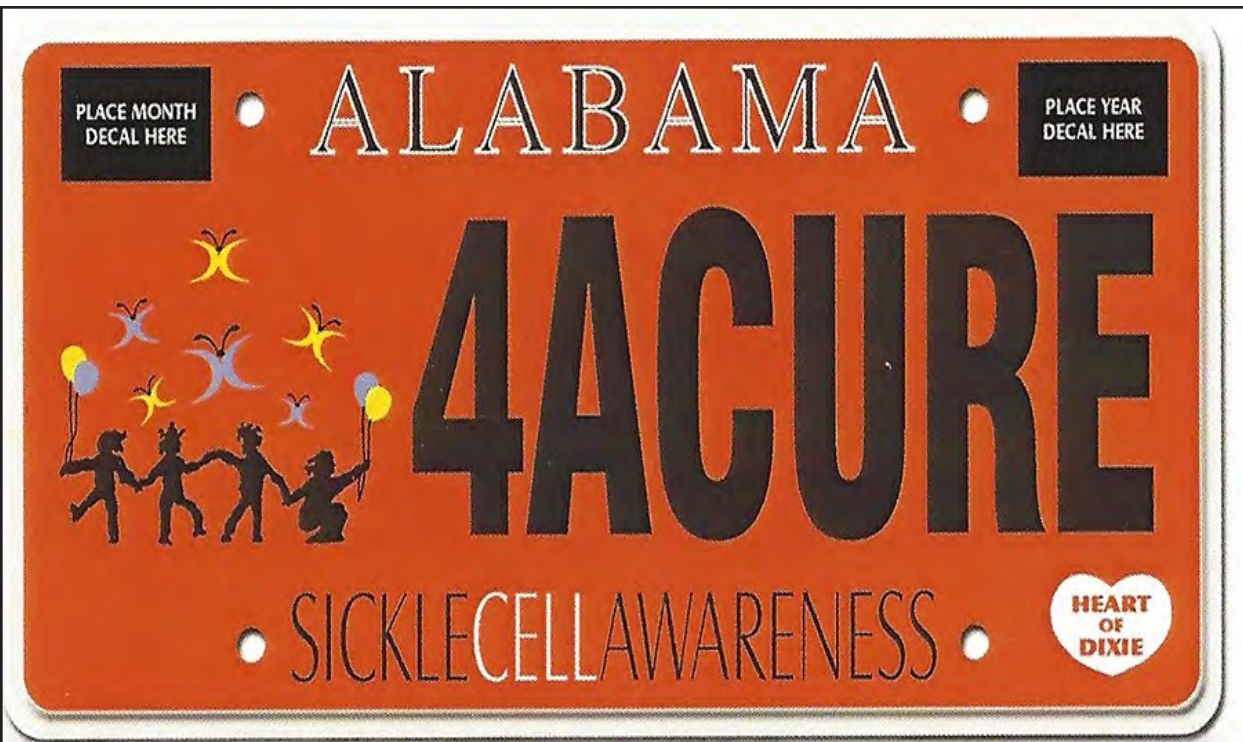
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September is National Sickle Cell Awareness Month



By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

September is National Sickle Cell Awareness Month, and Talladega resident Johnny Harris hopes a new specialty license plate will help raise awareness about the genetic disease.

Harris serves as a member of the board of directors for the Central Alabama Chapter of the Sickle Cell Foundation, which has created the Sickle Cell Awareness vehicle tag. "When you have that tag on your car or truck, you'll help spread awareness everywhere you drive," he said.

The specialty tags cost an extra \$50 more than the

See **Sickle**, Page 5

File photo
Most of the proceeds from sales of the new Sickle Cell Awareness auto tag will be used by the Central Alabama Chapter of the Sickle Cell Foundation to help individuals and families who are affected by the genetic blood disorder.

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Sickle

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price of a motorist's regular car tag, "but the benefit is that \$45 from each tag goes to the foundation to help families and individuals who are affected by sickle cell disease," according to Harris. "That can be in the form of medication, trips to the doctor, scholarships, research and other services."

Sickle cell disease is an inherited disorder in which the body makes sickle-shaped red blood cells that can block blood flow in the blood vessels of the limbs and organs, which can cause pain and organ damage and raise the risk for infection.

Statistically, it occurs in one of every 500 African American births and one of every 36,000 Hispanic American births. One of every 12 African Americans possesses its trait. Still, Harris believes it remains a disease about which many remain unaware.

"We just really hav-

en't advocated for it," he said. "You talk about cancer, there's information everywhere. There's more awareness about genetic diseases that affect fewer people than sickle cell disease. It doesn't seem to get the attention a lot of other conditions get, so we need to be more vocal and spread awareness about it, especially here in east Alabama."

Harris, who does not have the disease, became involved with the foundation after his first son was diagnosed with it. "Relatively little was known about it back then," he said. "I got involved to learn and spread awareness about it."

He participated in his first benefit walk-a-thon in Huntsville in 1993, when his son JJ was three months old. Harris' younger son Joshua also has the condition. The 16-year-old is a student at Talladega High School, where he serves as drum major of the marching band.

Harris is also involved in coordinating a support group luncheon sched-

uled for 11 a.m. at Mount Canaan Missionary Baptist Church in Talladega. Individuals living with

sickle cell disease and their family members and friends are invited. For more information, call

205-493-8407.

To order a specialty awareness license plate, call 205-780-2355, and

visit www.sicklecellbham.org to learn more about sickle cell disease.



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home
"When you have that tag on your car or truck, you'll help spread awareness everywhere you drive,"
 Johnny Harris said of the new Sickle Cell Awareness specialty auto license plate.



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Local hospitals committed to residents' health



Citizens Baptist Medical Center

By **LAURA GADDY**
Special to The Daily Home

Three local hospitals remain committed to meeting the health care needs of Talladega and St. Clair county residents.

Citizens offers Tele-Neurology

Citizens Baptist Medical Center is using "a computer on wheels" to treat stroke victims and other patients who may need neurological care.

With its "Tele-Neurology" program, which began in July, the medical center brings neurologists from other states to local patients by way of web-based video conferencing. In so doing, the medical center plays host to virtual medical appointments, a role that is enabling it to offer specialized medical care patients in Talladega might otherwise have to travel to receive, said Ann McEntire, chief of nursing.

"A lot of times rural and community hospitals don't have the ability to do spe-

ciality care," McEntire said. "This offers us the opportunity to have access to a neurologist."

Patients who suffer from balance problems, those who are recovering from stroke and those who are experiencing a "change in mental status" often need neurological care and may qualify for the medical center's Tele-Neurology program, McEntire said.

During Tele-Neurology appointments the medical center rolls a computer to the patient's bedside, and a doctor appears on the screen for an appointment. Then, the patient, the doctor and a local medical professional work together to select and implement an appropriate treatment plan, according to a written statement from the medical center.

To bring this service to patients, the medical center is partnering with Specialists on Call, a Virginia-based company. McEntire said the hospital made a site visit before agreeing to work with

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Hospitals

From Page 6

Specialists on Call.

She added that the doctors employed by the company are credentialed to work in Alabama.

"They have a team of neurologists that are on call for us," she said of the company.

In a written statement the medical center pointed to more new programs. The new programs include a medical detox center for those who are addicted to drugs or alcohol. For the detox program, the medical center is partnering with Bradford Health Services. Anyone seeking help for addiction can contact the hospital at 800-333-1865.

The medical center also pointed out that it is providing hospice, a service for people needing end-of-life care. Through hospice care the medical center wrote that it provides "physical, emotional, social and spiritual support with a life-limiting illness," its statement states.

Medical center says patient volume drives growth

Coosa Valley Medical Center in Sylacauga recently opened a suite for patients receiving gastrointestinal screenings, including colonoscopies.

The new suite removes patients receiving those screenings from the medical center's surgical unit, where they previously went for the exams. Vanessa Green, chief business development officer, said the changes will improve the gastrointestinal patients' treatment experience, and free up surgical space for more procedures.

"We are proud of the progress," she said.

The seven-bed suite was developed in space that was built in a 2007 expansion, and includes a

waiting area for family, a bay to hold those who are having screening and new equipment.

Green said expansion is the most recent sign of

growth at the hospital. She pointed to Coosa Valley's annual patient volume in the emergency room is up to 30,000, as one example of growth.

She added that the hospital continues to see growing demand for services, especially in treatment areas that serve the aging population. That's

especially true, she said, of the senior behavioral unit, which helps people who are experiencing cognitive

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Look For Our KIDS' MEALS



Coosa Valley Medical Center

Hospitals

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changes associated with age.

That unit, she said, is in such high demand that the hospital can't treat all of the people seeking assistance from it.

She also said that the hospital provides general services, including obstetrics and surgery. Green also said that the hospital recently welcomed Dr. Matthew Dimon, a surgeon who is new to Coosa Valley.

Green said she thinks the growing demand in patient volume, to some degree, reflects the medical center's community outreach activities.

Coosa Valley reaches out into area schools to educate students about careers in the medical field. It provides services for its senior population,

and offers public screenings, she said.

And, on Sept. 29 from 2-4 p.m., it will provide a free skin cancer screening at the hospital. Green said, through events like that one, the residents in Sylacauga and in the communities that surround it are reminded of the services the medical center provides.

"We are your community hospital," she said. "That doesn't mean you have to live right here in our zip code."

St. Vincent's St. Clair accredited Chest Pain Center

St. Vincent's St. Clair wants potential patients to know that the hospital is equipped to provide quality care to people experiencing a heart attack.

The hospital recently received the Society of Cardiovascular Patient Care's Chest Pain Center

accreditation. That's a designation reserved for hospitals who show expertise when treating people in the midsts of a heart attack, the Society's website states.

"If they have chest pain, St. Vincent's St. Clair is the place to go," said Michael Korpel, president of St. Vincent's St. Clair, St. Vincent's Blount, and St. Vincent's East.

Korpel said each of the

hospital system's four campuses, which also includes St. Vincent's Birmingham, received accreditations from the Society of Cardiovascular Patient Care, and that the group is the first system to receive accreditations under the Society's newest standards.

The Society of Cardiovascular Patient Care's website states that

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Hospitals

From Page 8

the organization is an international nonprofit that seeks to improve cardiovascular care. It advocates for standardized examinations, rapid care and support for patients who have suffered from a cardiac event, the site states.

St. Vincent's Birmingham, and St. Vincent's East both received accreditations for atrial fibrillation and heart failure, while St. Vincent's St. Clair and St. Vincent's Blount received accreditations as chest pain centers.

Korpiel said each campus received an accreditation appropriate for its

size, and added that the system's larger hospitals, St. Vincent's East and St. Vincent's Birmingham, are equipped to provide a wider range of cardiovascular care.

Still, he said, St. Vincent's St. Clair should be the first stop for people who are experiencing a heart attack and live near to that hospital. There, he said, doctors can stabilize and treat a patient right away, possibly sparing them from long-term heart damage that can occur when patients wait to get help.

It's also important, he said, that heart attack victims call 911, and arrive at the hospital in an ambulance.

That's because paramedics, who coordinate

treatment with emergency room doctors, can begin administering aid on the way to the hospital, Korpiel said.

To receive the accreditation, he said, the hospital had to demonstrate to the the Society

of Cardiovascular Patient Care that it works with emergency medical services, including paramedics, to provide the best possible care for its patients.

He said the hospital also had to demonstrate that it had an acceptable standard

of care for heart patients. He said the Society examined the hospital's protocols, its staff and the training it provides before awarding the accreditation to St. Vincent's St. Clair.

The hospital system completed the accredita-

tion process in nine or fewer months, though it usually takes at least 18 months to attain the achievement, Korpiel said.

"We pulled this off and we were able to get accredited in a very short time frame," Korpiel said.

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St. Vincent's St. Clair

Seasonal flu vaccinations, other shots now available



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Despite being scared of needles, I got a flu shot at my local Walgreens.

By CATHERINE FOOTE
Home staff writer

As the weather begins to change, local pharmacies are launching their seasonal flu vaccinations program. It had been about a year since I got my last flu shot, so I decided I needed to get one.

Walgreens was the clear winner as to which pharmacy I would choose because of their partnership with the United Nations Foundation's Shot@Life campaign. When you receive any kind of immunization from Walgreens, you're helping a child in a developing country get a vac-

ination, too - simply by protecting yourself from infection.

Being afraid of needles, I was nervous.

The staff at my local Walgreens (the one on Battle Street in Talladega) made sure I was well taken care of.

Most insurances will cover the cost of a flu shot; I did not have a co-pay.

At Walgreens, my flu shot was administered in a private, comfortable room adjacent to the pharmacy. Taking my fear of needles into consideration, the employee who gave me the shot was understanding and kind.

After she applied a bright red Walgreens ban-

dage over the injection site, I was ready to leave.

Following is a list of some of the pharmacies in the area where individuals may receive vaccinations for flu, shingles and pneumonia if they decide to be vaccinated.

Lincoln

Fred's Pharmacy
47950 U.S. 78
205-763-1047

Pharmacy hours:
Weekdays, 9 a.m. - 7 p.m.,
Saturdays, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.,
closed on Sundays.

Flu shots and pneumonia shots are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Shingles shots are offered year-round. Walk-ins for all shots are accepted.

Pell City

CVS/Pharmacy
118 Comer Ave.
205-338-2628

Pharmacy hours:
Weekdays, 8 a.m. - 9 p.m.,
Saturdays 8 a.m. - 9 p.m.,
Sundays 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Flu shots are currently available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Shingles shots and pneumonia shots are available year-round. Walk-ins for all shots are welcome.

Kmart
803 Martin St. S
205-884-2703

Pharmacy hours:
Weekdays, 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.,
Saturdays, 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.,
Sundays, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
The pharmacy is closed for lunch from 1:30 p.m. - 2 p.m. daily.

Standard flu shots and high-dose flu shots are available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Vaccinations for shingles and pneumonia are available year-round along with the t-DAP vaccine (which protects against diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus). Walk-ins for all shots are welcome.

Pell City Pharmacy
107 Highway 234
205-338-6080

Pharmacy hours:
Weekdays, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.,
Saturdays, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.,
closed on Sundays.

Flu shots are currently available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Shingles shots and pneumonia shots are available year-round. Walk-ins for all shots are welcome.

Walgreens

1649 Martin St. N
205-338-2319

Pharmacy hours:
Weekdays, 8 a.m. - 10 p.m.,
Saturdays, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.,
Sundays, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Standard flu shots and high-dose flu shots are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Vaccinations for shingles and pneumonia are available year-round, but the shingles vaccination requires a prescription if you are under the age of 65. Walk-ins for all shots are welcome.

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Saturdays 8 a.m. - 3 p.m.,
closed on Sundays.

Vaccinations for shingles are available. Walk-ins are welcome.

Rite Aid
101 Asbury St.
256-362-9540

Pharmacy hours:
Weekdays, 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.,
Saturdays, 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.,
Sundays, Noon. - 6 p.m.

Flu shots are currently available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Shingles shots and pneumonia

See Flu, Page 11

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Flu

From Page 10

shots are available year-round. Walk-ins for all shots are welcome.

Walgreens
503 E Battle St.
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Pharmacy hours: Weekdays, 8 a.m. - 8 p.m., Saturdays, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m., Sundays, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Standard flu shots and high-dose flu shots are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Vaccinations for shingles and pneumonia are available year-round, but the shingles vaccination requires a prescription if you are under the age of 65.

Sylacauga

Rite Aid
1 N Broadway Ave.
256-245-7474

Pharmacy hours: Weekdays, 8

a.m. - 8 p.m., Saturdays, 8 a.m. - 6 p.m., Sundays, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Flu shots are currently available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Shingles shots and pneumonia shots are available year-round. Walk-ins for all shots are welcome.

Walgreens
100 W Fort
Williams St.
256-249-8646

Pharmacy hours: Weekdays, 8 a.m. - 10 p.m., Saturdays, 9 a.m. - 6 p.m., Sundays, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Standard flu shots and high-dose flu shots are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Vaccinations for shingles and pneumonia are available year-round, but the shingles vaccination requires a prescription if you are under the age of 65.

Fort Williams
Pharmacy
410 W Fort
Williams St.
256-207-2007

Pharmacy hours: Weekdays, 8 a.m. - 6 p.m., Saturdays, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., closed on Sundays.

Flu shots are currently available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Shingles shots and pneumonia shots are available year-round. Walk-ins for all shots are welcome.

Childersburg

J and J Pharmacy
33633 U.S. Hwy 280
256-378-7761

Flu shots are currently available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Shingles shots and pneumonia shots are available year-round. All shots require a prescription.

Winn-Dixie
33404 U.S. Hwy 280
256-378-5727

Flu shots are currently available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Shingles shots and pneumonia shots are available year-round. Walk-ins for all shots are welcome.



Bob Crisp/The Daily Home

Getting a flu shot at Walgreens helps a child in need through the Shot@Life program.

43

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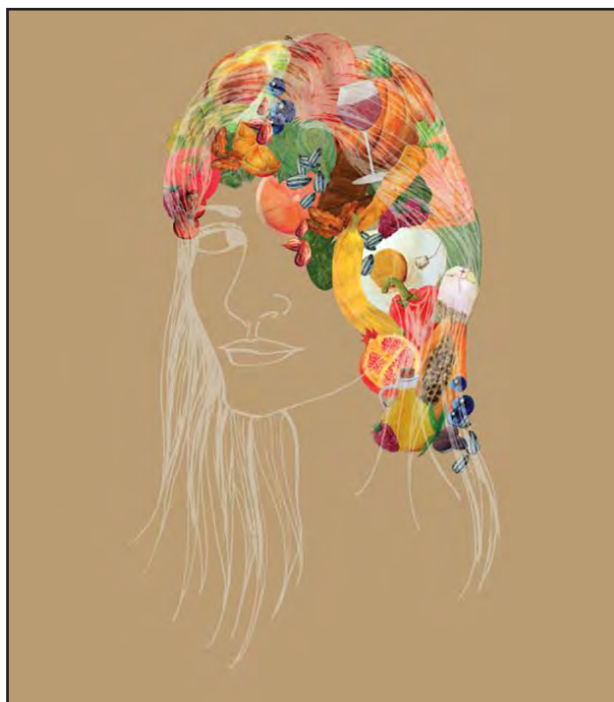
By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

A local artist is using her knowledge of health and nutrition to encourage people to live healthier lives by thinking more about what they put into their bodies.

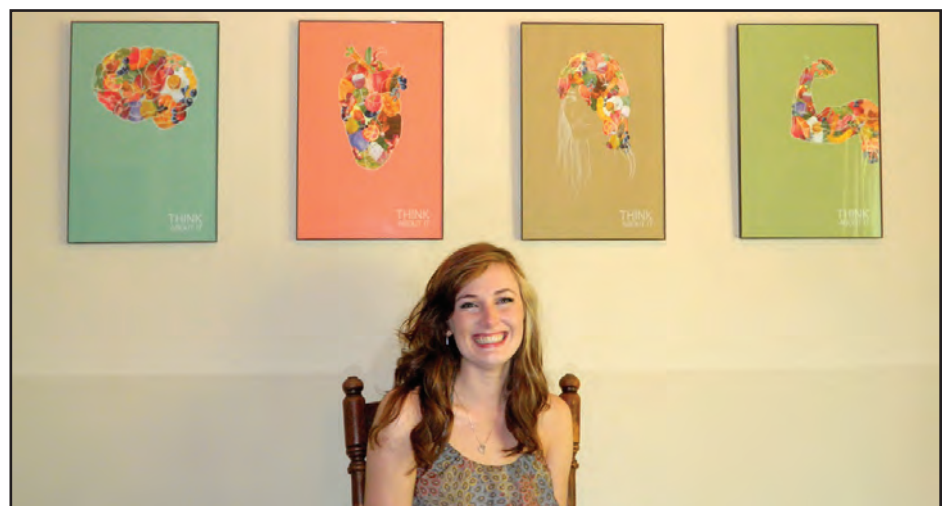
“People choose convenience over really planning their meals,” said Pell City resident Josie Coffman, who has created a series of health-themed watercolors aimed at promoting healthier eating. “That causes problems, especially when they have certain health issues. Taking the time to think about it and do research helps a lot.”

Coffman named the series “Think About It,” an idea that stemmed from her studies at Jacksonville State University. “I was an art major, and I needed a minor my junior year. Most art majors pick marketing, but I wanted to pick something I would enjoy, so I went with nutrition. Growing up, my family was big into working out and eating right.”

The “Think About It” depicts foods that are helpful for a healthy heart as well as good overall physical and mental health. “It directly targets the benefits of consuming the right foods to fuel different parts of the body,” the artist said, “and I wanted it to have an aspect of mental health, which is very important. What you eat can affect how you perform during



Coffman's art depicts foods that are beneficial for muscle, hair, skin, brain and heart health.



Pell City artist Josie Coffman with the four entries in her “Think About It” series of watercolors aimed at encouraging good health through better eating.

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Art

From Page 12

the day and how tired you are.”

Foods depicted in Coffman's art include broccoli, Brussels sprouts, bell peppers, salmon, bananas, olive oil, sunflower seeds, spinach, pumpkin, cherries, grapefruit, beets, eggs, and papaya. Each piece is accompanied by a card explaining how the foods provide beneficial nutrients.

For brain health, vitamins E, B12, B6, and C are highlighted, as are folic acid, calcium, magnesium, zinc and Omega-3 fatty acids. “Consumption of these vitamins and minerals can prevent the brain from neurotoxins, prevent damage from free radicals, slow the progression of Alzheimer's disease, improve focus, aid in the formation of dopamine and serotonin, as well as improve general function and restore memory,” Coffman said.

Fiber, Vitamin D, potassium, mag-

nesium, Omega-3 fatty acids, niacin, Coenzyme Q10 and selenium are all good for the heart. “They can help lower the amount of cholesterol your body soaks up from the food, maintain a healthy communication between nerves and the heart muscle to maintain a steady heartbeat, help lower blood pressure and protect against disease.”

Vitamins E, A, C and K, copper, zinc, Omega-3 fatty acids and Alpha-lipoic acids contribute to skin and hair health, according to Coffman. “They can help protect against sun damage, reduce damage caused by free radicals, prevent against wrinkles and skin cancer, help blood clot correctly and reduce risk of psoriasis. Some B vitamins such as niacin have anti-inflammatory properties.”

Her art promotes Vitamins E, C, A and D, magnesium, calcium, magnesium, potassium, and Omega-3 fatty acids for muscle health. “These vitamins and minerals can help promote a healthy nervous system, help the body break down macronutrients, help maintain healthy connective tissue, maintain the red blood supply, help the cell membrane recover from stress and decrease muscle breakdown. They can also help the body utilize carbs for energy. It's a misconception that carbs are bad for you. You need carbs for energy.”

Coffman, a graphic designer who began her career with Elbit Systems of America in Talladega and now operates her own full-service design company, said her goal with the “Think About It” series is to present information about health and nutrition in an inspiring way.

“It would be neat to have my artwork in medical centers one day. I think it's easier to reinforce to patients what they should be eating if they can see it in a creative context instead of just reading about it or having someone tell them. I want to present a visual representation of what a healthy lifestyle looks like.”

Contributed Photos

Coffman's art “targets the benefits of consuming the right foods to fuel different parts of the body.”



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Many Alabama teens not protected against HPV

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

Alabama teens have a low rate of immunization against the human papilloma virus (HPV), according to a national survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

While state immunization rates were high for tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (t-DAP) and meningitis vaccinations (88.6 percent and 71.6 percent), less than 40 percent of teen girls ages 13 to 17 have received the recommended vaccinations against cancer-causing strains of HPV, and 9 percent of teen boys have been vaccinated, according to the 2014 National Immunization Survey.

"We are very pleased with our t-DAP and meningitis vaccine rates and are working to achieve even higher rates," said Dr. Karen Landers, medical consultant for the Alabama Department of Public Health.

"However, as a physician, I am very concerned about the low rates of HPV vaccine. As we know from medical research, certain HPV viruses can cause cervical and other cancers."

National rates for HPV vaccinations also remain low, with 39 percent of girls vaccinated and 21 percent of boys having received the three-vaccine series.

"Vaccinating adolescents is an important preventative health measure for the future, including

an opportunity to prevent cancer later in life," Landers said.

The HPV vaccine is recommended for children ages 11 and 12. Parents are advised to request it when their children receive the school-required Tdap vaccine from their health care provider or county health department.

HPV is transmitted through genital contact, and while health officials say most HPV infections do not cause serious harm, some will persist and can lead to cancer.

Most infected persons do not realize they are infected or that they are passing HPV on to a sex partner.

For those who have not previously received the HPV vaccination, it is recommended through age 26 for gay and bisexual men, as well as men and women who have compromised immune systems, including those living with HIV/AIDS. Catch-up vaccination is recommended for females ages 13 to 26 who have not been previously vaccinated.

A study published in The Journal of Infectious Diseases showed that cases of HPV have decreased 56 percent among female teenagers 14-19 years of age since the vaccine was introduced in 2006.

For more information, call the Talladega County Health Department at 256-362-2593 or the St. Clair County Health Department at 205-338-3357.



Health officials highly encourage that youngsters ages 11 and 12 be vaccinated against HPV. File Photo

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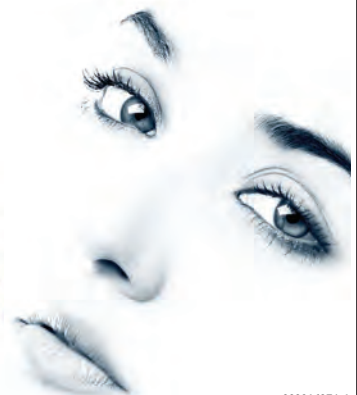
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Quitting fast food: A journey

By CATHERINE FOOTE
Home staff writer

I have a strange relationship with food. There, I said it.

I think for the most part, we all struggle with portion sizes, foods we like and dislike, and overeating or forgetting to eat.

My dad was the cook in our family, and after he passed away last November, my eating habits changed. Instead of enjoying healthy, home-cooked meals, I stayed away from the kitchen and opted for fast food for at least two meals a day, five days a week (or more). It was not healthy, both emotionally and physically.

Several months went by, and I found myself



File photo

Don't let anyone tell you that giving up fast food is easy; it isn't.

feeling fatigued, bloated, and heavier. My skin, normally clear, was now oily and difficult to deal with. I had terrible, chronic headaches, and often felt guilty after eating.

I knew at that point,

it was time to give up fast food and soda. Don't let anyone tell you that giving up greasy, comforting fast food is easy; it isn't. For the first week or so, all I

See Fast Food, Page 30

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Something I could actually do: Clean eating

By **TIANNA MASON**
Daily Home Intern

As a member of a military family, health has always been a big part of my life.

I played soccer for 10 years and spent the next five in color guard, a very dance oriented activity. I was always told to be active, run, eat healthy and watch my weight.

I've always been very aware of my size. I was always bigger than the girls on the soccer team, never mind that I could run faster.

It's strange looking at old pictures now. I realize that I look very different from when I was a senior in high school.

People talk about weight loss being a jour-



Tianna Mason

ney and that it's something you have to work hard at, but I don't completely agree. If you're doing something you love, then it's not a journey at all. It just happens.

We practiced every day in high school for four or more hours on dance and performance. By the end of the summer, I had

gotten slimmer than I'd ever been in years without ever seriously changing my diet.

Now, things are different. For some reason, once you actually take control over your life, things start to fall through the cracks if you don't pay attention. I gained a lot of weight over my first year in college. It snuck up on me in the worst way.

That summer and every summer since, I've tried to make being active and healthy a priority. That summer I was introduced to clean eating.

I've tried a lot of things, most of which I couldn't stick to for long periods of time, but clean eating was something I could actually

See **Clean**, Page 30



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'Clean eating' diet encourages steering clear of processed foods

By **TIANNA MASON**
Daily Home Intern

Recently, a new diet has encouraged people to stay away from processed foods in to get the best nutrients for their bodies and maximize weight loss. It is called the clean eating diet.

For many people who are trying to lose weight, dieting has become a way of life. Many diets can potentially be dangerous because they encourage participants to cut major food groups out of their diet, often leading to nutrient deficiencies or weight loss that is too fast and unhealthy. Clean eating focuses on increasing the nutrients individuals can get from their food, while discouraging consumption of the bad ingredients that are abundant in much processed food.

"Clean eating stresses whole unprocessed natural foods for a balanced diet," said Sheena Gregg, assistant director of the Department of Health and Wellness at the University of Alabama. "People are encouraged to decrease the excess fats, salts and sugars that can be found in processed foods."

Clean eating has joined the ranks of many "trendy" diets that attempt to focus on organic or natural foods as the key to losing weight.

Other diets in this category include gluten-free, vegan, vegetarian, and paleo.

Unlike the Paleo diet, which cuts out such major food groups as dairy and grains as well as processed foods, clean eating encompasses whole natural foods. Both diets con-

tinue to be popular for health and fitness.

"I don't endorse the Paleo diet," Gregg said. "The difference between the two is that Paleo is a lot more restrictive than clean eating. Companies are attempting to capitalize on this trend, even though it can be considered an extreme diet. However, clean eating is something that people can customize to their lifestyle."

Clean eating is a lifestyle that can be possible on any budget.

"You have to be strategic," Gregg said. "Go to your local farmer's market to get the in-season produce. You should also buy in bulk from your local warehouse store like Costco or Sam's Club instead of going to a grocery store."

Although the diet may not be the most convenient, it is a simple approach to nutrition. Foods that are made from scratch and don't come from the store are the focus.

"It's an idea that's worth embracing, but it's not an all or nothing lifestyle," Gregg said. "People use it to remind themselves to eat healthier and not to drink their calories. It's not a good when an idea promotes an unhealthy fear of processed food, though."

However, as with all major dietary changes, research is encouraged before starting a diet.

"I think if anybody is going on any type of diet a healthcare provider should be consulted," Gregg said.

"This is to make sure it won't affect any pre-existing conditions."



Fresh fruits and vegetables are recognized as a simple approach to healthy eating, as opposed to the consumption of processed foods. File Photo

Presbyterian Oaks

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September is World Alzheimer's Month

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

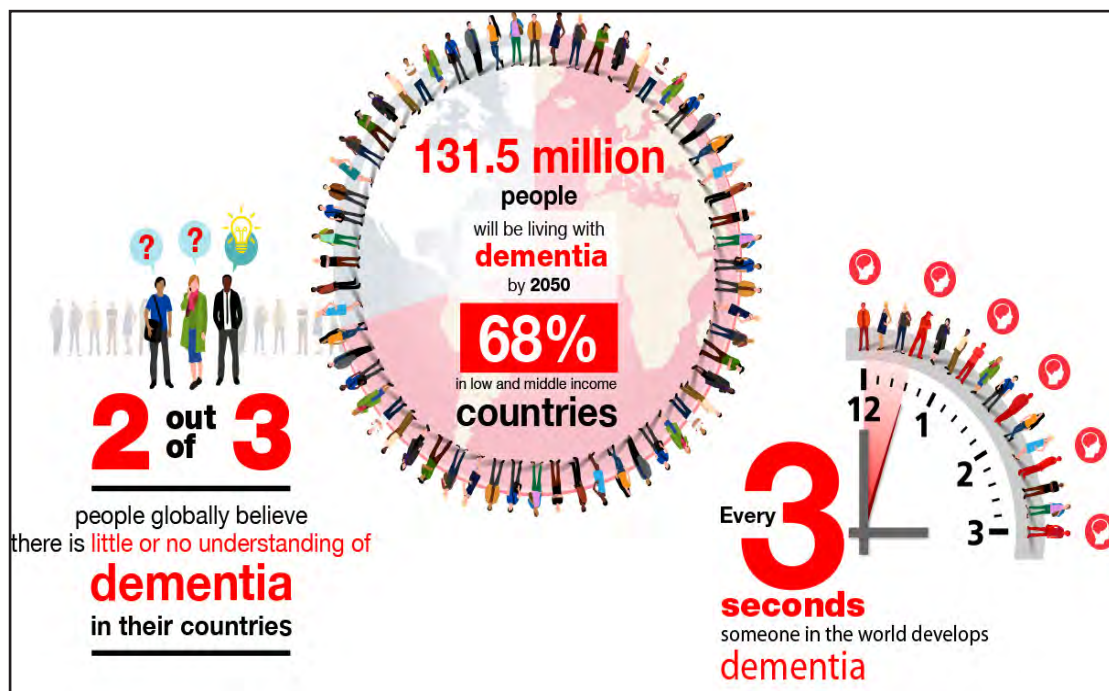
Shea Summerlin's concern for people living with Alzheimer's Disease began at a young age. "My grandfather had two siblings who had it, my great-uncle Rufus and my great-aunt Thelma," she said. "We were very close to them, and I never knew my great-uncle without it. They were the same age as my grandparents, so I realized very early that this was not a normal part of aging."

Her concern eventually led to the development of All in for Alzheimer's, a foundation Summerlin created to promote education, advocacy and funding for research. "It's a community initiative," she said. "I would love to see everyone fully supportive or 'all in' to ending Alzheimer's Disease."

September has been designated as World Alzheimer's Month as part of Alzheimer's Disease International's campaign to increase awareness about the condition. Alzheimer's disease and related dementias have been described as a global epidemic that, according to medical studies, is set to increase in occurrence from a current estimated 44 million people to 135 million by 2050, making it one of the most significant social, health and economic crises of the 21st century.

"It is important for people to get diagnosed early in the course of the illness, as therapies are most beneficial during the early stages of the disease. That is why ADI is calling on all governments to invest in early diagnosis and early intervention strategies," said Marc

See **Alzheimer's**, Page 20



Graphic courtesy worldalzmonth.org

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Get Moving Alabama

Statewide initiative underway to increase residents' physical activity

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

A statewide initiative is underway to encourage Alabama residents to increase their level of physical activity toward better health and fitness.

Get Moving Alabama will officially launch next year, but state health officials are already at work promoting the campaign and asking individuals and communities to get involved.

"This is probably one of the biggest physical activity campaigns we've never had statewide," said Sheena Gregg, secretary of the Alabama Obesity Task Force, which oversees the campaign. "While we'll be getting it off the ground through the end of the year, 2016 will definitely

be the year of Get Moving Alabama."

It is the second of the task force's major campaigns to promote better health. Organized a decade ago as the Alabama Department of Public Health began applying for federal funding for anti-obesity efforts, the 150-member panel comprised of physicians, health care educators and private individuals launched Rethink Your Drink in 2014, which Gregg described as "a nutrition-based initiative encouraging people to think about the contents of the beverage products they choose."

As its follow-up, Get Moving Alabama has a more direct message, she said.

See **Moving**, Page 23

Graphics courtesy www.getmovingalabama.org

Get Moving Alabama will offer several suggestions during the coming to encourage individuals and communities to become more active.



Tailgating is a popular pastime here in the South. Mix it up this season by making sure that your tailgate is an active one!

Chances are your tailgate party might include abundant food and beverages, sitting, and television watching so you don't miss anything. To create a safe and healthy environment for tailgating, mix up sedentary time with active time.

Here are 10 Ways to Get Moving at Your Active Tailgate:

1. Play a game of corn hole
2. Play Bocce ball
3. Play ladder toss, ring toss, or washers
4. Toss a Football
5. Toss a Frisbee
6. Stand or move around to socialize with family and friends
7. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water
8. Cheer, stand, and jump for your favorite team
9. Walk around the campus to explore
10. Challenge someone to a push up contest

We want to see what you come up with!

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Moving

From Page 22

“It’s all about physical activity, a message that all Alabamians can embrace regardless of socio-economic, language or physical barriers. It encourages overall physical activity in whatever way works best for each person. It’s also a good way for people who participated in the Scale Back Alabama weight loss campaign to keep their efforts going.”

Gregg said that initiating a physical fitness regimen can often seem overwhelming, especially to those who may have previously had sedentary lifestyles, but she encourages a slow, simple start.

“Start at a level that works best for you, and choose an activity you enjoy. It could be gardening or exploring nature trails. Add a social aspect to it. Go for a walk or a swim with the family. Get

Moving Alabama has reasonable expectations. We’re not looking to see people go right from the couch to being at the gym five days a week.”

The #getmovingalabama hashtag and a Facebook page have been created to encourage conversation about the campaign via social media. Its official website is www.getmovingalabama.com.

“When you go there, you’ll see that there is opportunity for different communities to showcase what they’re doing to encourage physical activity through monthly themes and initiatives,” Gregg said. “We want to encourage everyone to get active in some capacity and put their own unique spin on getting active. Many Alabama communities have access to bodies of water, nature trails and parks, so we’re looking forward to seeing how this endeavor brings out each community’s unique personality.”

GET GOING

Getting started with physical activity can be challenging but is possible. If you’re not used to being active, talk with your doctor first.

- Find where physical activity fits into your daily routine and make time for it.
- Take small steps towards increasing activity.
- Start slowly. Change one habit at a time.
- Get up and move every hour.
- Physical activity is for *everybody!*

GET ENOUGH

Any amount of physical activity is a good start! As your activity increases, remember:

- Aerobic activity increases your heart rate and gets you breathing harder like brisk walking or rolling, dancing, and swimming.
- Adults need 30 minutes of aerobic activity every day. 10 minutes at a time is fine.
- Work all major muscle groups at least 2 times a week. This includes using a stretch band, weight lifting, push ups, and yoga.
- Household chores, gardening, walking your pet, and taking the stairs all count as physical activity too.

GET TOGETHER

Increasing physical activity is easier and more enjoyable when you’re not alone.

- Find a partner! Whether it’s a friend, co-worker, family member, or someone with similar goals.
- Work with your partner to motivate and cheer each other on.
- Find an activity that you want to do, not have to do. Choose an activity that’s fun!

GET RESULTS

Physical activity improves your health by increasing energy, relieving stress, controlling your weight, building strength, and reducing your risk of heart disease, cancer, and other chronic conditions.

- Track your progress. Log what works best for you using tools like a journal, pedometer, calendar, or phone app.
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Homemade lunches can contribute to a healthy lifestyle

By **TIANNA MASON**
Daily Home Intern



Sheena Gregg

Sheena Gregg believes there might be a way to cost-effectively increase the control you can have over your health and the health of your children.

As a registered dietician and the assistant director for the Department of Health Promotion and Wellness at the University of Alabama, she suggests that bringing a homemade lunch to school or work can be a great way to get people involved in what they put in their bodies.

“Bringing your own lunch is cost effective and allows you to have more control over what you’re eating and the preparation of your food,” said Gregg. “When you’re buying pre-prepared food you don’t really know what is going into your meal.”

Gregg graduated from Alabama in 2008 with a Masters degree in nutrition and hospitality management/dietetics. She spent time working as a registered dietician at the DCH Regional Medical Center in Tuscaloosa and the Compass Group North America in Gadsden before her current job with Alabama.

“I’ve always wanted to be a part of helping people find a healthy lifestyle that works for them,” said Gregg.

Recently, “brown bagging” has grown in popularity as a way for people to be more involved in their diets.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Alabama has one of the highest prevalences of obesity in the country, between 30% and 35% of the state population in 2013.

Gregg has also worked with the Alabama Obesity Task Force, whose mission is working toward “creating a healthier Alabama through obesity reduction and prevention efforts.”

“The state of Alabama is getting better at educating the population about nutrition and the benefits of a healthy lifestyle,” she said. “There has been overall progress when it comes to awareness. Restaurants like McDonald’s now have their calories available on their menus. There is still room for improvement.”

People may complain about the extra work that goes into making your own lunch, but according to Gregg, “everyone needs to understand that bringing your lunch requires a little more pre-planning. It means making up a Sunday grocery list for the meals you want for the rest of the week and making meals the night before to avoid rushing.”

School-provided lunches for students have been criticized for not being nutritious, but with the enactment of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act, this might be changing.

“The act is meant to guarantee nutrition-



“Brown bagging” to school or work can be an economical way to have more control over what you eat and how your food is prepared.

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See **Lunch**, Page 25

Lunch

From Page 24

al choices for the school lunch program," said Gregg. "It has been beneficial in ensuring that meals are more well rounded. Everything is a learning process, and it

requires responding to feedback from the community for anything to get better."

Preparing lunch at home is also beneficial for children, she added.

"It encourages children to participate in the picking of their meals and opens up a platform for parents to have conversations about nutrition and the importance of health with their kids."

How to pack an organic lunch for less than \$5

Deciding what to pack for lunchbox meals is an important part of the back-to-school experience for parents and children.

Health authorities agree that proper nutrition is essential to learning and growth, and many families aim to eat healthfully, while also saving money. But packing a healthy organic lunch might be less expensive than many might think.

Following are five suggestions for building an organic lunch for less than \$5.

- Make a shopping list. Do an audit of your current kitchen inventory and write a shopping list before hitting the store. This will help you stay organized and keep you from buying extra items you don't need.

- Look for store brands. Not every organic brand is pricey. For example, some brands even offer products that are cheaper than the non-organic alternative. Plus, the products are made without artificial colors, flavors, sweeteners, preservatives or hydrogenated fats.

- Shop for ingredients that do more. Such foods as rotisserie chicken can be used for an entire week's worth of school lunches using a different recipe each day. Think sandwich, taco, salad, wrap and casserole.

- Buy in bulk. Buying in bulk is often cheaper than purchasing packaged items, besides the added benefit of controlling how much food you pay for. At some stores, you can even get a discounted price when you buy a full case of packaged products.

- Use coupons. Coupons are a great way to save extra money on purchases you will actually use. Search through coupons online and at the grocery store, too.

Following is a simple lentil mac &

cheese recipe that can be easily and inexpensively prepared for a school or work lunch. It can also be customized by adding your favorite spice or flavor:

Ingredients:

- 1 (6-ounce) box macaroni & cheese
- 1 cup red lentils
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1/4 cup lowfat (1%) milk
- Pinch fine sea salt

Directions:

Bring a large saucepan of water to a boil. Add pasta and lentils and return to a boil. Cook until lentils and pasta are tender, about 10 minutes. Drain well.

Return pasta and lentils to the pan and stir in butter, milk, the contents of the sauce packet and salt. Continue to stir until blended and warmed through.



File Photo

Lentil mac & cheese is a healthy and inexpensive meal.

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Harvest for Health

Year-long gardening program geared toward breast cancer survivors

By **IVY SIBLEY**
Special to The Daily Home

A research partnership between the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the Community Fund of Greater Birmingham, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, and various groups of Master Gardeners of has led to a harvest of health among breast cancer survivors in Alabama.

In 2010, the Comprehensive Cancer Center of UAB partnered with the Jefferson County began a new project, Harvest for Health. This year-long program for breast cancer survivors would encourage healthy lifestyle practices through beginning and maintaining a garden at the home of the participant.

Harvest for Health began with 15 participants who were paired with a Master Gardener mentor and the materials needed for a vegetable garden.

The program studied the effects of gardening intervention in breast cancer survivors in order to learn how gardening impacts diet, exercise and overall health in each survivor.

Home gardens provided an outlet to be outdoors, engaging in physical activity, and growing nutritious vegetables to be eaten.

"Harvest for Health has grown and taken a life of its own," said Kerry Smith, Alabama Extension Master Gardener coordinator. "The gardens are growing and many participants

have added on to the provided starter gardens."

In order to measure the correlations between gardening and health, participant criteria required that the survivor must not have planted a vegetable garden in the past two years, must live in a house or apartment with enough space to grow the garden, have running water, must have been eating less than five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, and must have participated in less than 150 minutes of exercise per week.

Participants who met the required criteria were then paired with a Master Gardener who would help them begin their vegetable garden in a set of four Earthboxes or a raised bed.

Throughout the course of the program, UAB researchers studied participants' ability to complete various exercises and activities. Researchers also use questionnaires to track the changes in their health since beginning gardening.

"The garden has been a real solace to me. It has helped me to get my mind to a better place several times in the last several months," said a participant in the study.

Smith stated that the success of Harvest for Health in the initial years sparked the interest of more Master Gardeners and breast cancer survivors who then joined the study. Many families of the survivors have also joined in developing the home gardens in order to grow more healthy produce.

Alabama Extension recruits Master Gardener volunteers to participate as mentors, provides supplemental training, and coordinates the seasonal supplies needed for the garden.

Master Gardeners were required to contact their participant twice a month: once as a home visit and once by phone or email, but many spent far more time cultivating a friendship with the participant while gardening.

"Many of the Master Gardeners have decided to continue their relationships past the year commitment of the program because they have become good friends and gardening buddies," said Renee Thompson, Harvest for Health Outreach coordi-

nator. "Some of the survivors have come full circle and enrolled in the Master Gardener program to become Master Gardeners themselves."

"She has become a wonderful friend and I will continue to check on her as the program comes to an end," said a Master Gardener mentor. "I truly believe that she has been inspired to continue to grow some of her favorite vegetables. She and her daughter have been busy landscaping the entire garden area and have plans to expand it by adding another raised bed in the near future."

Through additional grants, the program has grown to about 150 participants and has expanded from being centralized in

Birmingham to now 15 other counties in the state.

"We have seen that gardening at home has been beneficial because it allows participants to take ownership over producing these fresh vegetables right outside their door," said Smith.

"I may not always feel up to it, but if I know there's a tomato or something to be picked, you better believe that I am not going to sit here and let them rot," said a participant in the study.

Smith added that the results of Harvest for

Health are showing that survivors who have the gardens at their homes are more likely to spend time outside and are more inclined to eat what they have grown.

The 2014-2016 study will conclude early next fall, but many of the previous participants say they will continue maintaining their gardens because of the many benefits that have come over the course of the past year.

Ivy Sibley is a regional agent with the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service.

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Developing awareness of family health issues

By **SYNTHIA WILLIAMS**
Special to The Daily Home

Are you able to list the health concerns that perhaps older or deceased members of your family endured? Developing an awareness of such illnesses, with the exclusion of a few types, can be eye-opening, particularly in forecasting future family health issues. Optimistically, this knowledge holds a vital key to unlocking better health for current and future family members. Taking a closer at the family health history may reveal that diseases individual members face are not unique, but can be traced through family lineage.

Being at War

In an era where some health issues have reached epidemic proportions, it's not hard to believe statistics that reveal 40 percent of a population at genetic risk to contract at least one known disease. It is important to note that risks don't have to materialize into health conditions. An inherited health risk means an individual is predisposed or has a tendency to develop an illness. Nonetheless, diseases have a greater advantage without knowledge and purposeful action to help prevent them.

The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that 96.3 percent of Americans believe knowing their family's health history is important to their health. In contrast, only 29.8 percent of Americans have tried to gather and organize their family's health history. The former United States Surgeon General Dr. Richard H. Carmona asserts the "bottom line is that knowing your family history can save your life." Individuals with a predisposition to an illness may want to adopt the position of "being at war" to counteract contracting a disease.

The Whole Picture

As one looks into family history, it's important to also pay attention to cultural and similar learned behaviors that play a part in family health issues. While diseases such as sickle cell anemia and cystic fibrosis are purely genetic, many others are related to environment and influenced by ethnicity, culture, and beliefs. Thus, information regarding eating and exercise regimens can be just as important as genetics. Research reflects

that these elements definitely go hand in hand.

When reviewing family health history, avoid letting certain conditions stay under the radar. These conditions could be bone (osteoporosis), stomach, and eye diseases; Alzheimer's, dementia, and other mental illnesses; or even reproductive health problems among others. The major health issues directly tied to the nation's highest percentage of deaths are heart disease, cancer, and strokes. Men also have a unique disposition to prostate cancer, while women encounter breast health issues. Being proactive presents you with the opportunity to take control of you and your family's health.

Solving the Mystery

Many families have a beautiful rich history of attributes that tie them together; however, predispositions to disease and illnesses cannot be forgotten. There is a solution that can give families an upper hand. It involves a little family research and dialogue that leads to pulling together a concrete family medical history record. This task can begin at the next dinner around the kitchen table and lead to fact-gathering exercises at family reunions, which prompt family members to do a little homework. Dialogue and research could include looking at older pictures to detect trends in obesity, reviewing death certificates, or obtaining firsthand accounts from older or more knowledgeable family members.

Once the history is collected into one record, it can empower family members to make informed decisions regarding health and to be aware of any warning signs. Those who have any predispositions will want to alert their physicians. Early health screenings could decrease the risk of suffering from preventable family-related illnesses.

So plan to spark a change in your family that may add years to your life as well as life to your years. One conversation can be a catalyst that leads to healthier and happier families.

Synthia Williams is an agent with the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service. To set up a family medical history record online, to download, or to print a template, visit <https://familyhistory.hhs.gov/>.



File Photo

Family predispositions to disease and illnesses should not be ignored, medical experts say. Open dialogue and research can be helpful in combating them.

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Honey offers many sweet health benefits

By PHILLIP CARTER
Special to The Daily Home

Honey has numerous health benefits, and it would take a long time to list them all. However, there are a few benefits we should consider to improve the quality and the duration of our lives.

Raw honey is about as natural as you can get. Many beekeepers only filter larger particles. However, some companies pasteurize their honey to prevent granulation while it is in a store. There has been much debate as to whether pasteurizing honey reduces some of its beneficial health properties. Virtually, every county in Alabama has beekeepers so most indi-

viduals should be able to locate a local beekeeper and purchase their honey.

Many people are unaware of the numerous minerals, vitamins, and antioxidants that are found in honey. In essence, it's like taking a multivitamin. All you need is a teaspoon before bed and a teaspoon in the morning. The minerals found in honey include calcium, magnesium, potassium, copper, iodine, zinc, and phosphate. The vitamins include A (carotenes), B1 (thiamin), B2 (riboflavin), B3 (nicotinic acid), B5 (panothenic acid), C (ascorbic acid), H (biotin), and P1 (rutin). Without having to go into a chemistry lesson, antioxidants

are substances that help the body reduce the effects of cellular damage and chronic diseases. The concentration of antioxidants varies with the floral source of honey. For example, darker honey most often

has more antioxidants than lighter honey.

Honey also has some amazing antiseptic and skin healing properties. It contains antimicrobial agents that prevent infections by killing bacteria

in and around wounds. Many types of bacteria cannot survive in honey so wounds heal, swelling eases, and tissue can grow back. Medical journals cite more than 600 cases in which honey was used to

treat wounds. It appears that a lot more research is being done on using honey for burn victims. Honey is being used in Iraq to treat burn wounds

See Honey, Page 30



File Photo

Locally-produced honey, such as that made by the Eastaboga Bee Company, has been found to have many health benefits.

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Clean

From Page 17

do. I mostly ate lean meat (chicken, turkey, egg whites, fish) and vegetables. Everything was stuff I made at home. It took a lot of pre-planning, though. Meals had to be scheduled so I knew what I was eating, at what time and on what day. Leaving things up to my stomach wasn't the best way to go because my stomach would steer me toward the local McDonald's.

Clean eating worked for me that summer. I lost 10 pounds and felt a lot better about myself going into the new year. I did exercise a lot during the summer. I would run with my dog every other day and bike in the middle of the night if I

couldn't sleep.

The hardest part about clean eating is consistency. Continually eating whole foods can be hard. Flavors get boring, food looks bland and you really want the Oreos that are hiding in the cabinet.

I'm still struggling with this part of clean eating and hopefully as the new school year is underway I'll be able to take what I've learned about myself since I've been in Alabama and apply it to my life in Florida. The key for me is to never give up completely; even when I don't look as slim as my friends, I know that I feel like a million bucks.

Tianna Mason is a student at Florida State University. She spent the summer as an intern with The Daily Home.

Fast Food

From Page 16

could think about was a double cheeseburger, large order of fries and an even larger sweet tea. It was difficult to work without grazing on some sort of food. And I missed soda so badly.

Instead of fast food, I ate soups, frozen vegetables and sandwiches. I found myself eating more fruit, frozen yogurt and dark chocolate instead of drinking soda.

After the first week, it was like flipping a switch. I didn't miss soda at all and only thought about fast food here and there. I gave up fast food for 60 days total but saw and felt results after 30 days.

My headaches disappeared. I lost 10 pounds. My skin cleared up. I could walk for more than a few minutes without fatigue.

At the end of the 60 days, I could eat without feeling guilty.

I'll never be able to give up fast food completely; there are certain things I can't give up (looking at you, Rolo Blizzard).

But I have managed to cut down my fast food intake to once a week and sometimes only twice a month. I rarely drink soda now, but will occasionally have one here and there. I mostly drink water.

The thing that people forget to tell you about being "healthy" is that it's just as much about your mind as it is about your body, and that food, while delicious, is consumed for fuel.

It's okay to enjoy food (even fast food). It's not okay to eat until you feel guilty, and I'm still learning that.

It's been nearly a year since I lost my dad, and I'm starting to get back into the kitchen and cook for myself more.

Like I said: my relationship with food is a strange one, but I'm working on it all the time.

And that's okay.

Honey

From Page 28

in children. Honey also has a wonderful ability to attract water, which makes it great for re-hydrating dry skin. Most individuals know how bad a sun burn hurts. Honey can ease that pain and speed the healing process.

Bee pollen is another important substance found in honey. Bee pollen in itself is high in protein and contains all the vitamins and minerals previously mentioned. But more importantly it may provide some relief for those who suffer with seasonal allergies. Pollen can be purchased by itself to take separately; however, one can still benefit from taking honey since it already contains trace amounts of pollen. This trace amount of pollen every day may help reduce the symptoms of pollen-related allergies by inoculating yourself. In addition, it is very important that the pollen and honey be purchased locally since that is where the allergens are located. Because every individual is different, one can only try it to determine its effectiveness.

There are numerous books and Web-based resources that have additional information. Try some local honey and start feeling better today.

Phillip Carter is a regional agent with the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service.



File photo

Besides being high in protein, bee pollen contains many important vitamins and minerals.

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Grounding improves well-being by getting in touch with the Earth

By **BUDDY ROBERTS**
Special Projects Editor

For relieving anxiety or inflammation-related pain, the solution may be as simple as taking off your shoes.

"Just connecting with the earth for a few minutes a day will make a difference in your health and well-being," said Jessica Furniss, a certified personal trainer. "There is health in barefoot living."

The activity of walking barefoot or sitting on grass, sand, dirt or concrete as a means of improving health by absorbing the earth's natural electromagnetic energy is called grounding or earthing. Research indicates that electrons from the Earth have antioxidant effects that can protect the body from inflammation.

Studies have shown that earthing or grounding improves blood viscosity, heart rate variability, inflammation, cortisol dynamics, sleep, autonomic nervous system (ANS) balance, and reduces effects of stress.

"People have reported sleeping better after they started grounding, their skin is better and the foods they crave are better," Furniss said. "I can personally attest to it. I deal with a lot of anxiety, but when I take the time to be outside and connect with the earth, a lot of my anxieties are kept at bay. One of the ways grounding is beneficial is that it helps you not live in an anxious state."

Proponents of grounding believe that people lost a direct connection with the earth when they began wearing modern rubber and plastic-soled shoes, which can act as electrical insulators that block the beneficial flow of electrons from the earth to the body.



Buddy Roberts/
The Daily Home

"In college, my friends gave me a hard time about not wearing shoes," said Jessica Furniss. "It's just always been how I enjoyed living. It's healthy. I strongly believe our bodies are connected to the Earth."

"Our bodies are made to connect with the ground," Furniss said. "I strongly believe our bodies and minds are connected to the earth. I believe God created us that way on purpose, but we've now been so long disconnected. Synthetics keep us from connecting and having clarity and peace of mind. I love my Texas, but there is something special and enjoyable about getting out of your shoes and connecting in the moment."

The grounding movement could be considered a throwback to an earlier time, she added.

"It's kind of like the organic movement. It's called organic because in recent years so many foods have been invented that are fake. We're having to go back to natural eating. It's the same with grounding. Kids used to run around barefoot all the time. It was what you did, and it was a less stressful time.

"American society, though, has become obsessed with being busy. People take any opportunity to appear to be as busy as they possible can. There's something unusual

about being aimless for any period of time. People have forgotten the benefits of recharging and getting to know yourself. Western culture is just now getting a

grasp on it again, and we've given it a name: grounding or earthing."

Furniss acknowledges that some may be skeptical about grounding or consider it another passing health trend, but she encourages

"When seeing things that occur in our culture today, it is imperative to ask yourself a question before judging if something is just a trend. How long has this practice been around? Grounding has been around for ages and ages. Our ancestors walked around barefoot every single day. It is also fun to delve into the makeup of our bodies and how energy is conducted from the earth to our bodies. Do your own research before dismissing the practice as a trend."

For those interested in grounding, she said it's easy

to get started.

"Just do it. Before getting ready in the morning, find a small patch of grass and stand still or walk around. It can also be relaxing to incorporate it into your nighttime routine. Spend a few minutes in silence, listen to your breathing, feel the ground beneath your feet."

Even individuals who don't like walking barefoot or should not do so because of such health issues as diabetes can still participate in grounding.

"There are grounding mats and shoes that can

provide great benefits," Furniss said.

"You can also use therapeutic oils that come from plants which occur naturally in the earth. Your body connects with them like it does when you walk barefoot on the ground. Again, do the research, but finding a way to connect with the earth that works best for you will make a difference in your health and well-being. People are coming to appreciate that the only way to be healthy is not necessarily wearing Nikes and Spandex and doing push-ups."



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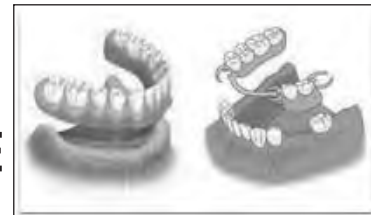
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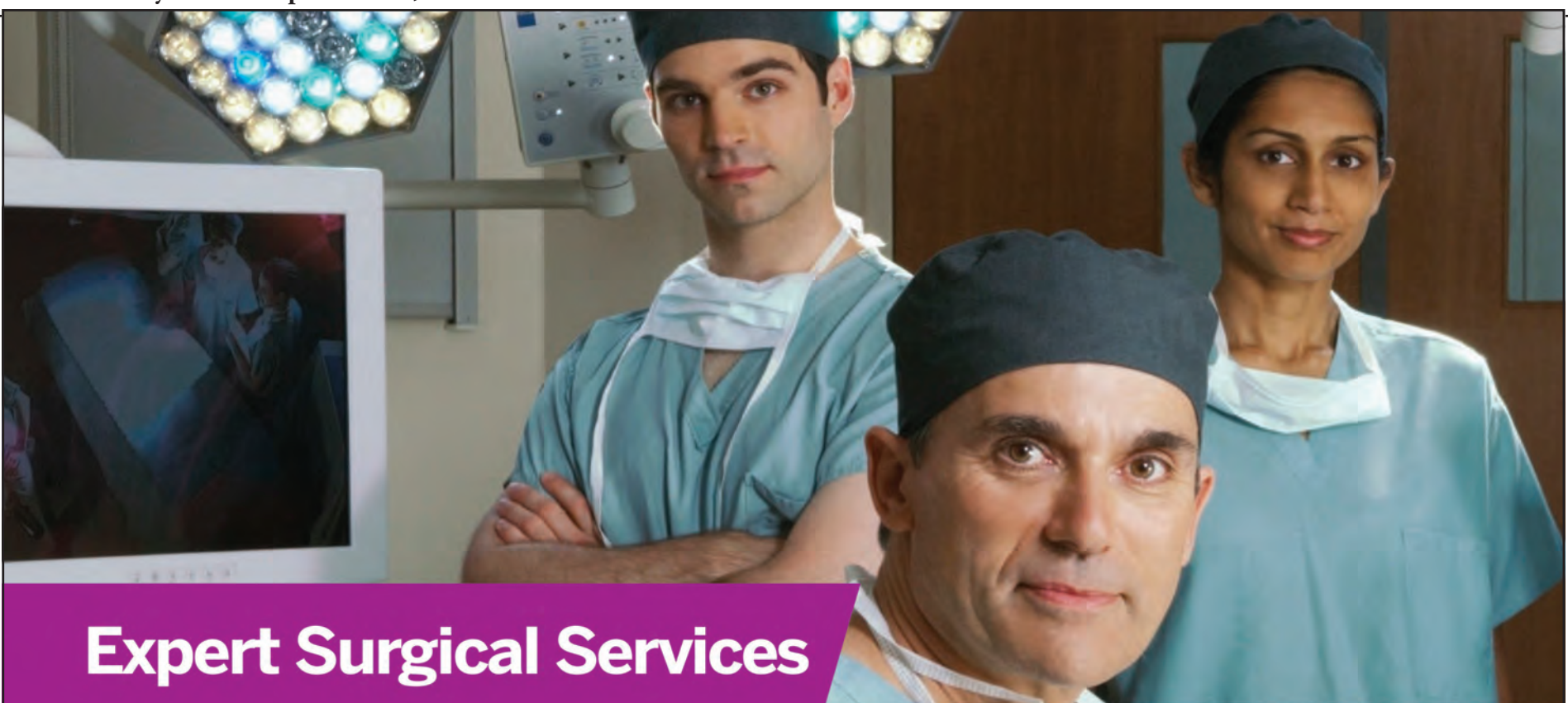
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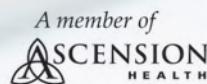


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