Plug-In To eCycling is a partnership between EPA and leading consumer electronics manufacturers and retailers that fosters opportunities for consumers to donate or recycle their used electronics. In 2008, Plug-In to eCycling partners expanded their electronics recycling programs and collected and recycled more than 66.5 million pounds of used electronics, nearly a 30 percent increase from 2007.

Recycling electronics conserves resources and energy needed to manufacture new materials. In 2008, Plug-In partners prevented the release of greenhouse gases equal to the annual emissions from approximately 15,500 cars.

Plug-In partners have tailored the collection of consumer electronics for reuse and recycling in a variety of ways, such as in-store take back, mail-in recycling, online trade-in, and hosting local collection events.

Manufacturers, Retailers Boost Consumers Electronics Recycling

Notable programs and new partnerships developed in 2008 include:

- Dell/Staples partnership, where consumers can recycle any Dell branded computer product for free at any Staples store in the U.S. There is a Staples store at 1411 Western Boulevard in Jacksonville.

- Best Buy's pilot program at 134 stores to test in-store take back of selected consumer electronics. Best Buy's is at 1116 Western Blvd.

- Sony's expansion of its partnership with Waste Management to more than 160 drop off locations in the US, where consumers can recycle any Sony-branded products, including televisions, at no cost. To find closest drop off site call 1-877-439-2795.

- LG's launch of its partnership with Waster Management, also offering free recycling of LG, Zenith and Goldstar brand. Call 1-877-439-2795.
Samsung's Recycling Direct program, available at more than 170 U.S. locations and its partnership with Walmart, in which Durabrand and Ilo electronic products (two private brands formerly sold by Walmart) can be recycled at Samsung's Recycling Direct locations. Just email recycling@sea.samsung.com for locations.

Toshiba's free online takeback services for any brand of selected consumer electronics. Go to www.toshiba.com for more information.

Since the program's inception in 2003, Plug-In partners have recycled more than 200 million pounds of electronics.

More information about the Plug-In to eCycling program and a list of partners: http://www.epa.gov/plugin/

For more about opportunities for recycling electronics in Onslow County visit Keep Onslow Beautiful at 910-455-4470.

Carpet Care

Carpets get a lot of abuse during the winter months. There's the holiday onslaught of guests, the furniture that gets rearranged for the Christmas tree, the pine needles that leave their trail, and the outdoor debris that wants to come in from the cold.

Don't wait until the spring cleaning bug hits to give your carpets some attention, says Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association. By treating them now with some TLC (that's "tender loving cleaning"), you'll help prolong their beauty and their life.

Regular Maintenance

The first step to good cleaning is frequent and thorough vacuuming. “Frequent” means at least once a week. “Thorough” means going back and forth six to eight times on each section of the carpet. For the most efficient pickup, use an upright vacuum or a canister style with a power nozzle.

If your carpet is left untreated, dusty airborne particles can dull the colors, causing them to appear to change. For example, a soft rose shade might turn to taupe; light blue might take on a dull green hue. Fortunately, the original color is usually there under the soil. But if oily soils are left on the carpet for a long time, they may be absorbed into the fibers, causing the carpet to have a yellow cast that can be difficult, if not impossible, to remove.

Stain Be Gone

Spots and stains should be treated promptly. Many of today's carpets are treated with a stain-resistant finish, which means that with immediate treatment many spots and stains can be removed. Here's what to do:

Blot liquid stains, using a clean white cloth or paper towel.

Scrape up semisolids, using a small spoon.

Break up solids. Go at it gently, using a small spoon, and vacuum up the debris.

No rubbing no scrubbing. It will grind the stain into the carpet.

Pretest the spot-removal agent in an inconspicuous area of the carpet. Wait 10 minutes, and then blot the area with a white cloth to make sure there's no dye transfer to the cloth or color change or damage to the carpet.
Apply cleaning solution to a white cloth and gently blot it onto the carpet. Work from the edges of the spill to the center so the stain doesn't spread. Blot and repeat as necessary until the stain no longer transfers to the cloth. This may take several applications.

Rinse the area with cold water; blot with a dry white cloth until all the solution is removed.

Cover the damp spot with a 1/8' -thick stack of paper towels. Weigh them down with a heavy object, such as a vase or pot, and leave overnight so the paper towels can absorb any remaining moisture in the carpet.

The Big Clean
If a good vacuuming doesn't restore your carpet to its natural tones, or if your carpet has spots or stains that have been left untreated, it's time for a more thorough cleaning. You can choose between a deep extraction cleaning and a heavy-duty professional cleaning. For light soil, a do-it-yourself deep extraction cleaning requires special equipment that is available for sale or rent. The first step is to remove as much furniture as possible from the room. For the pieces that are too heavy to move, you'll need to protect the furniture from rust and stains. To do this, use plastic film. Place it around the legs and, if possible, under them too. Vacuum thoroughly. Then follow the extractor's cleaning instructions, using the recommended cleaning solution. Avoid over-wetting the carpet as shrinkage, discoloration, mildew or separation of the backing or seams may result. Allow about 12 hours for the carpet to dry before returning the furniture to the room.

For deeper soil or for set-in stains, or if your carpet hasn't had an extraction cleaning in the last 12-18 months, a professional carpet cleaner is your best bet. To locate a reliable cleaner, ask your friends for recommendations and/or contact The Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification (800-835-4624 or http://www.iicrc.com) for the name of a certified cleaner near you. Be sure to get a written estimate before the carpet is cleaned.

Red Ahead
How to keep red clothes from turning pink

February presents us with lots of reasons to wear red. February 6th is National Wear Red Day. Sponsored by the American Heart Association, it's a day when everyone is encouraged to wear red as a simple, powerful way to raise awareness of heart disease and stroke in women. Then there's Valentine's Day on February 14th, and President's Day on February 18th, where patriotic red, white and blue prevail.

Laundering red garments, particularly new ones, can present some challenges. That's because, in order to produce a bright, rich color, red fabrics are often overdyed. When laundered, the color may fade or the red dye may transfer to other items. Here are some tips from The Soap and Detergent Association, to prevent this from happening.

- **General laundering**: Launder red items in cold water, either by themselves or with other bright colors.

- For color-blocked garments, such as a red shirt with a white collar, or multicolored items, such as a print on a red background, add a dye-trapping cloth to the wash. It's designed to absorb and trap loose dyes during laundering, locking them away so they can't redeposit onto other clothes.
Few things are more distressing than seeing a child hurt and crying. The natural response for parents and other adults is to hug the child and say, “Hush. Don't cry. Everything will be all right.” Yet this can be exactly the wrong response because these words don't allow children to possess their own emotions. The message they hear is, “Stop now. There's nothing to cry about.” This makes the little one cry even more since his or her inner self needs to prove that there IS something to cry about.

One mom suggested a better reaction in such a situation, Say to the child, “It's okay to cry. I know it hurts (or that you feel badly). Cry until it stops hurting.” She said she found this reply worked better. When her children were given “permission” to cry, it was often all that was needed to stop the flow of tears. And even if it didn't, the children felt they had a right to their own emotions, had the freedom to release them and were consoled.

In helping a child deal with a hurt, the importance of having a right to his or her own feelings cannot be overstressed.

Even the youngest children pick up unspoken ideas from parents and other adults. When they sense that what they are feeling needs to be suppressed or kept inside, the message is also given that these emotions and feelings are unacceptable and unimportant.

Phrases from the past such as “crying is for babies” and “be a big girl” are unfortunately, still used, and not only do they show little empathy for the child's problem, they also do nothing to encourage his or her self-esteem.

If children are to grow up seeing themselves as worthwhile people, they need to know at an early age that feelings are neither good nor bad, they just are, as a result of something that's happened. What's necessary is to express them and deal with them.

So, when your little one is crying, whether it's because she fell as she was learning to walk or because he wasn't chosen to play in a game, stop for a moment before you begin to offer comfort. Then remember that the best way we can help these children handle their emotions is to surround them with love and acceptance, and to say:”It's okay to cry until it stops hurting.”

### Ongoing Diabetes Education Classes

The Onslow County Extension office is currently offering Do Well, Be Well, with Diabetes, a series of monthly classes for individuals with diabetes, their family members, friends or anyone who is interested in learning more. Each class includes a short educational session and provides useful handouts. Some classes include food preparation demonstrations and tasty samples. Classes are held the first Tuesday of each month in the Learning Center at the Extension office (4024 Richlands Highway). Classes are free, however, you do need to call ahead and pre-register. Call Robin Seitz at 910-455-5873 or email robin_seitz@ncsu.edu for more information.
Simple Ways to Lose Weight

When it comes to losing weight and fighting diseases such as diabetes and heart disease, many people don't realize that seemingly difficult behaviors such as eating healthy and exercising regularly can be made easier and attainable through small changes to their everyday lives. There are hundreds of small steps that Americans can incorporate within their busy lifestyles to begin moving themselves and their families toward health. The Department of Health and Human Services Small Steps campaign aims to inspire overweight adult Americans to adopt healthy habits for themselves and their children through healthy eating, portion control, and increased physical activity. The Ad Council has created some very funny ads to promote the campaign. One ad shows a man taking two fleshly-looking blobs to an information desk and saying “I found these by the stairs! What are they? The man at the desk very calmly responds: “They are love-handles, most people lose them by taking the stairs instead of the escalator.” You can see the ads online at www.adcouncil.org. Click on Health and Safety and scroll down to Obesity Prevention. Over the next few months you will get a chance to collect more than 100 of the small steps from the campaign. If you can't wait just visit the website at www.smallstep.gov.

The first ten tips:

1. Walk to work.
2. Use fat-free milk over whole milk.
3. Do sit-ups in front of the TV.
4. Walk during lunch hour.
5. Drink water before a meal.
6. Eat leaner red meat and poultry.
7. Eat half your dessert.
8. Walk instead of driving whenever you can.
9. Take a family walk after dinner.
10. Skate to work instead of driving.

Next month 15 more tips!!!

9 Smart debt strategies in 2009

Now is the time to pay close attention to your debts, why? Because if this credit crunch turns into a credit winter, you could get financial frostbite if you are not prepared.

Here are nine hot debt management moves to keep your personal finances from freezing up.

1. Aggressively pay down debt. Don't pass go and don't collect more problems. This means paying as much as you can each month. If you were wondering when to begin an aggressive pay-down of your debt, the answer is NOW.

2. Set goals and prepare a budget. A plan to keep your spending on track is critical in these trying economic times. Take some time with your spouse, significant other or the cat or dog (if you are single) and set out your short-and long-term financial goals. Then put together a budget or spending plan to ensure that you reach them. Bankrate has plenty of advice on the simple art of budgeting. Go to www.bankrate.com.
3. Save some and spend some. During a credit crunch, the credit you plan to use may not be available, and carrying balances should be avoided. Instead, save for those unexpected expenses and also for regular purchases. Your goal should be to save a minimum of six months of living expenses for emergencies. Also, be sure to save and pay cash for that new iPod or GPS rather than charging it to your credit card. But, since spending drives a big piece of our economy, save according to your plan in No. 2 above, and spend the rest to help keep the economy and jobs going.

4. Switch to automatic or electronic bill payment. This may seem odd, but during a credit crunch, creditors are looking to less their risk. If you miss a payment, you may find a default interest rate of 30 percent-plus, making it that much more difficult to pay down your balances. I suggest you switch to automatic bill pay on every account that offers the option. This will help you avoid the pitfalls of universal default. Choose a bank that ensures your payment will arrive on time. Using automatic bill pay also will help reduce the risk of identity theft.

5. Check your credit reports. Get free copies of your credit reports from all three major bureaus. Check and dispute errors and any inaccurate information with each credit bureau. You usually can do this on the bureau's web site. Contact Transunion 1-800-888-4213, Experian 1-888-397-3742 or Equifax 1-800-685-1111.

6. Use any inactive cards you don't want closed. To keep access to the credit you already have, you may need to begin using any credit cards that you have not used in the past six months or so. Creditors are closing inactive accounts to limit unnecessary and unprofitable risk.

7. Be wary of tapping home equity. The housing market has not yet stabilized, and prices may drop further. Until the economy improves, I recommend not borrowing from the equity in your home because of the risk of unknowingly owing more than your home is worth. Banks are reducing or closing lines of credit. So if you plan on using a check from your home equity line of credit to pay a bill, be sure to see what (if anything) is still available. If you don't, the check could bounce.

8. Never co-sign. Being responsible for your own credit use or misuse is hard enough. Never take on the responsibility of paying someone else's credit obligation. This almost never works out. You can easily lose money, credit standing and a friendship.

9. Protect your identity. Identity theft is just as real as a thief in the night. It is a growing concern now that credit is more difficult to obtain. The tight credit market increases the motive for people who stoop to the level of stealing your identity to gain access to credit. Remember, most identity theft is done by someone you know. Protect your personal financial information by shredding financial documents and paying your bills electronically.
American Heart Month
by Robin Seitz

Cardiovascular diseases, including stroke, are our nation's No. 1 killer. A healthy diet and lifestyle are the best weapons you have to fight heart disease. It is important to remember that it is the overall pattern of the choices you make that counts. As you make daily food choices, base your eating pattern on these recommendations. Choose lean meats and poultry without skin and prepare them without added saturated and trans fat. Select fat-free, 1% fat, and low-fat dairy products. Cut back on foods containing partially hydrogenated vegetable oils to reduce trans fat in your diet. Cut back on foods high in dietary cholesterol. Aim to eat less than 300 mg of cholesterol each day. Cut back on beverages and foods with added sugars. Choose and prepare foods with little or no salt. Aim to eat less than 2,300 mg of sodium daily (less than 1,500 mg if you are in a high risk group for high blood pressure). If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation (no more than one drink per day if you're a woman and two drinks per day if you're a man).

Choosing to add physical activity to your daily life is another important step to preventing heart disease. Current guidelines for adults suggest doing a minimum of 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, or 1 hour and 15 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or combinations of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity. To determine your activity level, try the talk test. If you are be able to carry on a conversation comfortably while still exercising, you are exercising at a moderate intensity. If you cannot carry on a conversation comfortably, you are exercising at a vigorous intensity. Aerobic activity should be performed in episodes of at least 10 minutes, and preferably spread throughout the week. For more information about keeping your heart healthy contact Robin Seitz, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent at 910-455-5873 or robin_seitz@ncsu.edu

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