Preschoolers love to go out on errands whether it’s a trip to the bank, post office, grocery store, bakery, dry cleaners or thrift shop. They are happy to come along. Talk about the people who work in each place and what goes on behind the scenes.

**Everyday Places** - Preschool age children love to go places just for the sake of going. Why not turn these everyday errands into learning opportunities?

- **Animal Hospital** - Talk about the job of a veterinarian. Discuss reasons why pets might get sick and ways to prevent illness. Help your child understand why your pet must get shots and sometimes take medicine.

- **Animal Shelter** - Discuss reasons why pets might not have a home. Talk about what kind of pet would be best for your family and how each family member could help care for a pet.

- **Florist** - Discuss the job of a florist. Compare the texture, smell and color of different flowers.

- **Grocery Store** - Discuss the different people who work in a grocery store – bagger, stock boy, cashier and so on. Talk about the basic food groups. Name items and let your child guess which food group each belongs to. Talk about planning a balanced meal.

- **Dry Cleaners** - Discuss what happens to clothes from the time you drop them off dirty until you pick them up again clean.

- **Library** - Discuss the job of a librarian. Look at the different displays. Find out when story time and any special programs are held. Help your child get his own library card.

- **Post Office** - Discuss how mail gets from your post office to grandma’s house. Talk to a postal worker or arrange a personal tour at a less busy time of day.

- **Thrift Shop** - Discuss how a thrift shop works. Talk about the difference between new and used.

continued on page 2
Keep in mind that a tired child isn’t good company, so make sure your child is well rested and don’t try to do too much at one time. Plan carefully and these trips will be a learning adventure for both of you.

**Area Attractions** - There are many places close at hand that a preschool child can visit to increase his understanding of the world and his place in it. Consider the following destinations and the variety of “teachable moments” that they offer.

**Arboretum** - Your child will see how trees and other plants are cultivated for educational or scientific purposes.

**Aquarium** - Your child will learn all sorts of things about aquatic plants and animals native to the region. The NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher has a wonderful array of exhibits and programs for kids and families. Log on to [www.ncaquariums.com](http://www.ncaquariums.com) for details.

**Farm.** Most young children know what a farm is and can name farm animals, but not many of them are fortunate enough to live on or visit a farm. If possible, arrange for your child to visit a farm.

**Pick-Your-Own Berry Farm** - Children love the chance to pick ripe berries from the vine. The timing is perfect for pick-your-own farms located all over the state.

**Go to the Garden** - You and your child can enjoy a trip to the local nursery/garden center.

**Natural History Museum** - Mounted animals and displays of life in times past will help your child have a better understanding of the history of the region.

**Planetarium** - Your child can watch presentations about stars and the night sky. Special children’s programs are usually available throughout the year.

**Local Parks** - Many area parks have special nature programs centering around snakes, local wildlife, trees and more.

Look around your local area to see what is available. If you’re planning a vacation, include some of these places in your trip, whatever town you visit. You and your child are sure to have fun, and learn some new things at the same time.

Source: Katrina Cassel, M.Ed.

---

**Promoting Safe and Healthy Environments**

**Get the Most Out of Your Cooling System This Summer**

Did you know that your heating ventilation and air conditioning ventilation (HVAC) system accounts for a significant portion of the energy use in your home? On average, 56% of our utility bills goes for heating and cooling. Because of this, it is important that we examine our HVAC system to ensure that we are getting maximum efficiency from our unit.

Regardless of the type of system you have, dirt and neglect are the #1 causes of heating and cooling system failure and a contributor to high-energy bills. You can keep your heating and cooling system at peak performance by performing routine maintenance on your unit. It is also important to have your unit inspected and maintained by a licensed HVAC technician. While it isn’t necessary to have an HV service contract in order to have your unit maintained by a professional, it can be a cost-effective way of maintaining your unit.

A service contract allows you to prevent any unforeseen problems and unwanted costs while keeping your heating and cooling system at maximum energy efficiency. A service contract should be performed twice a year. HVAC technicians become extremely busy during the summer and in the fall. One way to remember to schedule an appointment is to call your HVAC technician when the time changes to and from daylight savings time.

continued on page 3
A general maintenance check-up should consist of a few things. Here are the things you can expect during a general service visit.

- During the inspection, the technician will tighten and inspect all electrical connections and measure voltage and current on motors. Faulty electrical connections can cause your unit to be unsafe and will reduce the lifetime of the unit.
- The technician will inspect the motor and inspect the belts for wear and tear and lubricate, if necessary. Parts that are not properly lubricated or are worn will cause your unit to use more electricity.
- Also, in the cooling season the HVAC technician will check and inspect the condensation drain. A clogged drain can cause water damage in the house and affect indoor humidity levels.

While performing maintenance on your system, the HVAC technician can observe flaws in your system and make recommendations to help your unit perform to its maximum efficiency. He/she may recommend that your ducts be sealed if leaks are found.

During a service call or performance of the maintenance contract, your HVAC technician may also recommend replacing your older unit with a more efficient one. Older units are less efficient and cost more to run than today’s newer energy efficient units. Replacing an existing unit can save up to 50% on your heating and cooling bills. This label identifies that the unit meets energy efficiency guidelines set by the US Environmental Protection Agency and US Department of Energy.

Keeping the power bill low - There are also ways that you can help lower your cooling bill by simply changing family behaviors. Reducing your energy demands this summer is easy, and many times, free.

- In the summer, set your thermostat to 78 degrees F, or your highest comfortable setting. For each degree you raise your thermostat, you can reduce your cooling costs by as much as 3 – 5 percent.
- Use ceiling fans and other cooling fans to circulate air. Remember to turn fans off when no one is in the room. Adjust the home’s thermostat higher to take into account the cooling effect of the fans.
- Educate family members about energy conservation – keep doors and windows closed while the air conditioner is on.
- Cook during temperate hours. On hot days, try not to prepare meals that require extensive use of the range or oven.
- Clean or replace HVAC unit filters every month.
- Keep air registers clean and opened in all rooms.
- Keep furniture away from the registers and air returns of your home. Placing furniture on top or against them will cause loss of air circulation.
- Use kitchen and bathroom ventilation fans wisely – use them for short periods to draw moisture and odor out of your home. Running them for extended periods can allow cool air to escape outside.
- Use shade trees and other landscape features and awnings to keep the sun from overheating your home.

For more information on maintaining the efficiency of your HVAC system, see http://www.eere.energy.gov/consumer/yourhome
**Tips to Help You Eat Fruits**

**In General:**
- Keep a bowl of fruit on the table, counter, or in the refrigerator.
- Refrigerate cut-up fruit for later.
- Buy fresh fruits in season when they may be less expensive and at their peak flavor.
- Buy fruits that are dried, frozen, and canned (in water or juice) as well as fresh, so that you always have a supply on hand.
- Consider convenience when shopping. Buy pre-cut packages of fruit (such as melon or pineapple chunks) for a healthy snack in seconds. Choose packaged fruits that do not have added sugars.

**For the Best Nutritional Value:**
- Make the most of your choices, whole or cut-up fruit rather than just juice, for the benefits dietary fiber provides.
- Select fruits with more potassium often, such as bananas, prunes and prune juice, dried peaches and apricots, cantaloupe, honeydew melon and orange juice.
- When choosing canned fruits, select fruit canned in 100% fruit juice or water rather than syrup.
- Vary your fruit choices. Fruits differ in nutrient content.

**At Meals:**
- At breakfast, top your cereal with bananas or peaches; add blueberries to pancakes; drink 100% orange or grapefruit juice. Or, try a fruit mixed with lowfat yogurt.
- At lunch, pack a tangerine, banana, or grapes to eat, or choose fruits from a salad bar. Individual containers of fruits, such as peaches or applesauce are easy and convenient.
- At dinner, add crushed pineapple to coleslaw, or include mandarin oranges or grapes in a tossed salad.
- Make a Waldorf salad with apples, celery, walnuts and dressing.
- Try meat dishes that incorporate fruit, such as chicken with apricots or mango chutney.
- Add fruit like pineapple or peaches, to kabobs as part of a barbecue meal.
- For dessert, have baked apples, pears, or fruit salad.

**As Snacks:**
- Cut-up fruit makes a great snack. Either cut them yourself, or buy precut packages of fruit pieces like pineapples or melons. Or, try whole fresh berries or grapes.
- Dried fruits also make a great snack. They are easy to carry and store well. Because they are dried, 1/4 cup is equivalent to 1/2 cup of other fruits.
- Keep a package of dried fruit in your desk or bag. Some fruits that are available are dried include apricots, apples, pineapple, bananas, cherries, figs, dates, cranberries, blueberries, prunes (dried plums) and raisins (dried grapes).
- As a snack, spread peanut butter or apple slices or top frozen yogurt with berries or slices of kiwi fruit.
- Frozen juice bars (100% juice) make healthy alternatives to high-fat snacks.

**Keep It Safe:**
- Wash fruits before preparing or eating them. Under clean, running water, rub fruits briskly with your hands to remove dirt and surface microorganisms. Dry after washing.
- Keep fruits separate from raw meat, poultry and seafood while shopping, preparing or storing.

Source: [http://mypyramid.gov](http://mypyramid.gov)
DON'T MISS THESE TWO SPECIAL EVENTS

Be Prepared for the 2007 Hurricane Season

Tuesday, July 10th, 5:30 pm

Powell-Melvin Agricultural Center
450 Smith Circle Drive in Elizabethtown

5:30 - 6:30 Free Food and Visit booths
6:30 Presentations on Disaster Kits, Tips when going to a shelter, and Pet First Aid
7:15 George Elliott, WECT-TV Meteorologist
7:45 Visit Sponsor’s booths

“CHRISTMAS IN JULY“ BAZAAR AND SALAD LUNCH
FRIDAY, JULY 13, 2007
10:00 AM TIL 3:00 PM
POWELL-MELVIN AG. CENTER
ELIZABETHTOWN, NC

$5.00 Salad Lunch $10.00 Booth Rental
Tickets & Information Available
From Bladen County ECA Members or County Extension Office
Call 862-4591