

Be prepared for severe weather

Jamie Rathbun and a team of her colleagues are on a mission to help individuals and families become as prepared as possible for severe weather that might come their way. And there's no better time, she said, than March 3-9, declared Kansas Severe Weather Awareness Week this year by Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback.

By assembling an emergency kit, taking inventory of household possessions, reviewing insurance policies and other steps, the process of recovering from tornadoes, flooding and other severe weather can be eased, said Rathbun, who is a family and consumer sciences agent with K-State Research and Extension in Ellsworth County.

She, along with other extension agents and specialists around the state, produced, "Get Financially Prepared - Take Steps Ahead of Disaster" available free online at: www.ksre.ksu.edu/bookstore. "Last year, Kansas had a fairly quiet year by severe weather

standards, except the deadly tornado that struck Feb. 28 in Harveyville," said Kansas climatologist Mary Knapp. "That storm was still active into Feb. 29 when it spawned a number of lethal tornadoes in states to the east."

Ms. Knapp, who is in charge of the state's Weather Data Library based at K-State, said it's difficult to predict storms more than seven to 10 days in advance, but one place citizens can check is the Storm Prediction Center <http://www.spc.noaa.gov/>, a part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

"Severe Weather Awareness Week is a good reminder that severe weather is a fact of life in Kansas," she said. "It's also a reminder that an emergency kit is a good thing to have not only in case of late winter and spring-time severe weather, but in case there's an emergency any time of year."

Student Essays

A Memorable Teacher

By *Quinton Cravens*
Eighth grade

The teachers you remember are awesome, especially the elementary teachers. You remember them for the parties, extra recesses, and who don't give very much homework. That's how I remember mine anyway.

She was the best math teacher I had in grade school. She made learning fun by making us laugh. She was never angry with us, unless we did not turn something in or we were not listening. Which everyone in our class was listening, so we didn't get in trouble often.

My teacher's name was Mrs. Wolters. At the beginning of the year, we got kindergarten partners for the whole year. We helped them with decorating for holidays and everything else they did. We had parties with them and extra recesses.

For Thanksgiving she let us have our own little feast. For Christmas we got to bring drinks and candy. She brought popcorn and we watched the Polar Express. Then the kindergartners came and watched it with us.

She liked me because most of the time I got my work turned in on time and I always listened to what she was saying. She was my favorite teacher because she taught us you can have fun in school. I really liked that about her.

When I graduated from sixth grade, I got a little upset because I had so much fun. Seventh grade wasn't that bad, though. If I could go back and redo a grade, I would do sixth grade because of the teacher.

Everybody remembers a teacher from their past. Do you?

Jet Skiing

By *JR Landenberger*
Eighth grade

Have you ever ridden a jet ski? I'll tell you, the feeling of that two-stroke engine revving up and quickly taking off is the best feeling in the world to me. I just love riding jet skis; it's my main thing to do when we go to the lake. I hope one day I will be doing crazy flips and jumps at big rallies. Also, I think crashing is one of the best parts of riding because it doesn't hurt!

The first time I ever rode a jet ski was when I was seven. I remember asking my parents if I could just go around the buoy one more time. It was so fun when I was little and it still is! I hope to be as amazing as my

dad. He isn't a pro, but he can do many nifty things on it. He will get big air and then push the front end under the water. I have only done that once on accident; I got too much air and the front end went down. It was probably one of the scariest things I've ever done. I wish my mom had gotten pictures, but she was looking the other way. I know it's kind of odd, but I like watching videos of freestyle professionals to look for technique. It's really scary even thinking about getting as much air as they do; sometimes they get a couple hundred feet in the air. Have you ever ridden a jet ski?



Woolfolk — Finley

Couple planning June 15 wedding

Brendan Finley and Caitlin Woolfolk are planning to be married on June 15 in Pittsburg in an outdoor wedding with a reception and dance to follow.

Brendan is the son of Larry and Terry Finley of St. Francis and Denise and Leighton Davis of

Bartlett. Brendan is a sophomore at Pittsburg State University majoring in elementary education.

Caitlin is the daughter of Brian and Sherri Woolfolk of Edna. She is a sophomore at Pittsburg State University majoring in family and community services.

Free website offers financial tips

Imagine, a free website with the information you need to help overhaul your finances, save enough to replace an aging car, build an emergency fund, add to a retirement account — and stop living paycheck to paycheck.

In today's economy, with a tight job market and rising prices, saving can be difficult, said Elizabeth Kiss, K-State Research and Extension family resource specialist, who is based on the Kansas State University campus in Manhattan.

Almost all of us can have difficulty separating needs from wants, spending unnecessarily, or making quick decisions and later regretting an impulse buy, said Kiss, who explained that saving is the foundation needed to be in a position to cover needs, meet short- and long-term financial goals, and build financial security.

The free financial management site, www.KansasSaves.com, is maintained by K-State Research and

Tips that can help manage stress

Stress is an inevitable part of life, yet the way in which we choose to manage it can mean the difference in resolving the issue at hand — or increasing the stress.

That's why a Kansas State University expert on families suggests that learning to manage stress can improve the quality of life.

"Stress can be associated with changes that are viewed as negative — or disruptive," said Charlotte Shoup Olsen, a K-State Research and Extension family systems specialist, who cited stressors such as a job loss, illness or catastrophic event brought about by weather or other factor over which we have no control.

Such changes can quickly become the focus of our lives, and, as such, increase stress, rather than relieve it, said Olsen, who offered five key strategies in managing and relieving stress:

- Be flexible.

Acknowledging a stressful situation, and saying: "Okay, this is happening, now what can I do about it?" can start the proverbial ball rolling. Look for solutions, consider alternatives or new opportunities and look forward.

If a change in work responsibilities is unpalatable, start looking around to see what other opportunities are available. If a parent's work schedule has changed so the family can no longer have family time or date night Friday night, be grateful for employment and choose another time.

As children get older and more demands are placed on the family due to school, school activities and part-time jobs, re-think time together. Checking with all family members and reserve an hour together on a weekend for a leisurely brunch or evening meal together.

Times change — and we need to change with them, she said.

- Face issues together.

Stress typically generates tension, and family and friends are sure to pick up on it, Olsen said.

If a job loss is imminent and the family begins cutting back on extras, children will notice. If parents are talking and the conversation stops when a child enters the room, he'll be suspect.

The type of issue can dictate how and when to share information. Age and stage of life also must be considered. A parent will have to weigh when to share information about such situations as a parent or grandparent's illness or the family's impending move for employment.

- Nurture trust.

Trust is key to the foundation of successful relationships. It's important to do what you say when you say you will. If scheduled to pick up a child after school, be there on time; after telling a child you'll attend his or her school program, do it.

If a problem comes up that slows you down or prohibits you from honoring the promise, let the other person know as soon as possible.

And, if you've promised to relieve a spouse or parent who needs time off from caregiving or other task, follow through.

- Take responsibility to rebuild and repair relationships when things go wrong.

There is nothing wrong with saying "I'm sorry. I don't know why I said (or did) that," Olsen said.

Listen for cues to talk about the issues at hand, and ask: "Is this a good time to talk about whatever is troubling you?"

If not, wait until a time when the other person is ready to talk about it.

When the time is right, be mindful of body language, the importance of eye contact and tone of voice.

"Listen intently, and allow others involved to share what's troubling them without rushing to judgment," she said.

- Make time for health-promoting physical activity.

Olsen noted that exercise can help relieve stress, but that it generally takes about 20 minutes for an individual's body to settle down from being upset.

"Give yourself time; looking forward does not dismiss — or diminish what has happened, but it might be helpful in reducing stress and recognizing what can be done to diminish a stressful situation," Olsen said.

More information on managing relationships is available at K-State Research and Extension offices throughout the state and online: www.ksre.ksu.edu/families.



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