

Hospice care not just for dying

Some people mistakenly think hospice care is just about dying, that hospice is the place you call when there's nothing more that can be done. Nothing could be further from the truth. Hospice helps patients and families focus on living.

Hospice care brings comfort, dignity and peace to help people with a life-limiting illness live every moment of life to the fullest. It also reaches out to provide support for the family and friends who love and care for them.

Last year, 1.56 million dying Americans were served by the nation's hospice providers. Yet, there are some important facts about hospice that people don't know. And this may be keeping people from getting the best care possible when they need it most.

Here are 10 facts about hospice care you may not know:

- Hospice is not a place; it's high-quality medical and emotional care that helps the patient and family caregivers focus on comfort and quality of life.
- Hospice is paid for by Medicare, Medicaid, most insurance plans, HMOs, and managed care plans. Fear of costs should never prevent a person from calling on hospice.
- Hospice serves anyone with a life-limiting illness, regardless of age or type of illness.
- Hospice serves people of all backgrounds and traditions; the

core values of hospice – allowing the patient to be with family, spiritual and emotional support, treating pain – cut across all cultures.

- Research has shown that the majority of Americans would prefer to be at home at the end of life's journey, and hospice makes this possible for most people.

- Hospice serves people living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

- Hospice patients and families can receive care for six months or longer.

- A person may keep his or her referring physician involved while receiving hospice care.

- Hospice offers grief and bereavement services to family members and the community.

- To get the most out of what hospice offers, it's better to have care for more than just a few days.

If this information about hospice surprises you, take the time to find out more. The best time to learn about hospice is before someone in your family is facing a crisis.

For information in northwest Kansas, contact Hospice Services at (800) 315-5122 or go to www.hospicewks.net. Go to www.caringinfo.org or call the HelpLine at (800) 658-8898 for general information. This information is provided by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and Hospice Services.

Students pass on love of agriculture



COLBY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

The Colby Community College Collegiate Farm Bureau and Block and Bridle chapters have been teaching Agriculture in the Classroom lessons to area kindergartners, focusing on wheat. College students read the book "Celebrate Wheat" and did a lesson about foods we eat made from wheat. A copy of

the book was donated by the Thomas County Farm Bureau Association to each kindergarten classroom. College students pictured are Mindy Anholz, Devon Felts, Jessica Eshbaugh and Rachael Kruse. Organization sponsors are Shanda Mattix and Jim Latoski.

K-State researchers post swine study results

Kansas State University's Department of Animal Sciences and Industry has posted its latest swine research findings on the web.

The results of more than 35 research projects related to nursery and finishing pig nutrition and feed management are available for reading and downloading by click-

ing on Swine Day 2010 at www.KSUswine.org. More information, including economic calculators and research findings from years past, also is on the website.

The latest research findings were presented by K-State animal science faculty at the Swine Day Nov. 18 in Manhattan.

Feds looking for prairie chicken habitat

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is looking for 30,000 acres to be put in cover as habitat for the lesser prairie chicken in designated parts of the state.

Adrian J. Polansky, state executive director of the Farm Service Agency, said the department needs additional acres for an arm of the Conservation Reserve Program called "State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement," or SAFE.

In western Kansas, 30,000 acres have been allocated to an initiative in areas within the range of the lesser prairie chicken, which is a candidate for federal listing as a threatened or endangered species. The most serious habitat threats, he said, are due to the conversion of native rangelands to forage or cultivation and conversion of restored habitat formerly en-

rolled in Conservation Reserve back to cropland.

"Through cooperative efforts like the SAFE initiative, farmers and ranchers can play a key role in protecting wildlife that may be threatened or endangered," said Polansky. "SAFE is a cooperative conservation effort that helps state and regional agencies, nonprofit organizations, farm groups and other conservation partners work with farmers and ranchers to restore wildlife habitats."

Signup began Dec. 1 and will run until the goal of 30,000 acres is met.

Land which has been in Conservation Reserve may be enrolled, Polansky said, but must have suitable wildlife cover. Eligible cropland must have been planted in four of the six years

from 2002 to 2007. Mid-contract management will be specified by the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service or the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks.

The following payments are available:

- A one-time signing incentive payment of \$100 per acre.
 - A one-time practice incentive payment equal to 40 percent of eligible installation costs.
 - Cost-share payments up to 50 percent of eligible cost of establishing permanent cover.
 - Annual rental.
- Landowners should visit the Farm Service county office or go to www.fsa.usda.gov/crp for details.

Nutrition expert says Vitamin D can help strengthen immune system

Vitamin D, often called the "sunshine vitamin," is typically associated with bone health, yet researchers are finding it can fulfill multiple roles in promoting health and preventing disease.

"Nutritionally speaking, Vitamin D is actually a hormone; about 10 percent is typically derived from foods, and about 90 percent is produced within the body as a result of skin coming in contact with direct sunlight," said Sandy Procter, Kansas State University nutrition specialist.

As a hormone, Vitamin D binds to receptor cells in the body that control a wide range of processes, said Procter, who cited research findings highlighting health benefits. Vitamin D:

- Strengthens the immune system to

help the body fend off infections and diseases.

- Helps prevent autoimmunity, an abnormal response of the immune system in which the body attacks its own cells and tissues. Researchers are exploring the connection between Vitamin D deficiency and autoimmune diseases such as multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis.

- Regulates a number of genes in prostate, colon and breast cancer. Studies suggest that a Vitamin D deficiency might affect the outcome of a diagnosis of cancer, and may be a factor causing the cancer.

- Appears to be a factor improving the body's sensitivity to insulin, which, in addition to lowering the risk of diabetes, may prevent or delay onset of the disease

and reduce complications in those who already have it.

Even with health benefits identified and research continuing on Vitamin D, three out of four Americans fall short of the recommended Adequate Intake values identified by the Institute of Medicine, Procter said.

Since 2000, a recurrence of rickets, a disease attributed to a deficiency in Vitamin D characterized by the softening and curving of bones resulting in bowed legs, an enlarged head, rib cage, joints or deformed pelvis particularly noted in African American infants and children, prompted the American Academy of Pediatrics to recommend in 2008 that all infants, children and adolescents need 400

IU of vitamin D a day.

The change doubles the previous recommendation, said Procter, who explained that current knowledge about Vitamin D is being reviewed by an Institute of Medicine Committee and recommendations are expected to be updated this fall.

In the meantime, to make sure Americans are getting enough vitamin D, Procter recommends:

- Talk with your healthcare professional; Vitamin D levels can be checked with a simple lab test.
- Moderate exposure (five to 30 minutes) to direct sunlight, without sunscreen and with some skin exposed (arms, for example) twice a week – should be enough to enable light-skinned persons to

synthesize an adequate supply of Vitamin D; persons with darker skin tones can require up to three times as much exposure to sunlight.

- Choose foods that offer naturally occurring Vitamin D, such as: some yeasts and plants; oily fish such as mackerel, tuna, sardines, and salmon; cod-liver oil; beef liver; egg yolks; and Vitamin D-fortified foods such as milk, butter, some ready-to-eat cereals, bread, yogurt and orange juice.


- Work with your healthcare professional and pharmacist to check drug interaction with Vitamin D. Some medications can impair the absorption of Vitamin D.

Information on choosing healthy foods is available at www.ksre.ksu.edu.

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