



BUILDING HEALTHY FAMILIES

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Exploration: An Out-Of-School-Time-Alliance *Exploration Field Trip*

On Friday February 13th, the K-4 Exploration program went on their first field trip. Together with 17 students, Linda Goller, Cindy Diggins, and Crystal Jones (both parent volunteers) boarded a Moffit Brothers bus and headed to the Wallowa Mountain Visitors Center in Enterprise.

The Wallowa Mountain Visitor Center was a great place for the students to explore. The students were able to explore on their own for about a half an hour and then began the scavenger hunt. Students were split into two person teams and given their sheet of paper with a list of items to find with in the center.

The hunt was fun, and the students learned a lot about Wallowa County. Did you know that cactus grows in Hells Canyon? Did you know that the Native Americans use all parts of an animal; we got to see a raccoon scabbard! We saw a Big Horn Sheep skull, my was that thing heavy, we learned about what kinds of snakes are in our area, and where they live. The most amazing thing we saw was the very large tree that is on Display in the middle of the center. If you have not been to the Wallowa Mountain Visitor Center go check it out, or ask your "Exploration" student what they liked the best!

"Exploration" program co-coordinator, Linda Goller, is planning a March field trip. Contact Linda at Building Healthy Families for more information.

Parenting Class Schedule

Toddler Group	March/April Enterprise BHF
Successful Fathering	March Enterprise & Wallowa
Parenting with Positive Discipline	April/May Joseph
Teen/Parent Workshop	May 17th Enterprise

The Soroptimist Club of Wallowa County funds BHF's Exploration program

Building Healthy Families will receive \$3,000 from The Soroptimist Club of Wallowa County to expand our current tutoring and mentoring efforts to all three school districts for 5th-12th grade students. The funding will be used to work with County educators and community partners to target students needing one-on-one academic help benefiting from a positive, adult role-model. If needed, tutoring materials and manipulatives will be purchased to help meet the specific needs of individual students. Funds will also be used towards recruiting and training tutors from the community and helping with program staffing.

Family Mealtime

Family mealtime is much more than something good to eat! It nourishes the body, mind, and soul. Sharing foods in a pleasant, social environment is healthy for families in many ways. The whole family benefits from family mealtime by:

Having better nutrition – Studies show that people eat more balanced meals and a variety of foods when they eat with family or friends.

Improving family communication – Time to share ideas, thoughts, and feelings builds relationships. Research shows that children who often hear adult conversation improve vocabulary, reading test scores, and speaking skills.

Fostering family traditions – Foods and memories created around the family table help shape and give meaning to our cultural heritage.

Teaching life skills – Children learn cooking skills, appreciation for foods, and other important life skills.

Bowen, E. *Family Mealtime*. West Virginia University Extension Service. Retrieved on November 7, 2008 from

<http://www.wvu.edu/~exten/infores/pubs/fypubs/wlg129.pdf>

6 Tips for Better Family Communication

By Stephanie Tallman Smith

1. Create opportunities for talking. It's no secret that Americans are overworked, overcommitted and overscheduled. Parents rush home for work to take children to soccer practice, piano lessons and 4-H meetings, all before a hurried dinner of Mac and cheese. Mix in kinds who'd rather test their friends than chat with Mom or Dad and we have a family communication crisis.

So what can you do? Make time for talking by reducing the number of activities your family is involved in each week—the time it frees up for communication will be invaluable. And if you do find yourself in the car running from place to place, make a point to turn off the radio, the cell phones and the personal game players, and use that opportunity to catch up on the day's activities.

2. Insist on family meals. In addition to bringing everyone together for a wrap-up of the day's activities, insisting on a few standing family meals creates ritual and routine that kids come to expect and look forward to. Use the family dinner table as opportunity to share what's going on in family members' lives.

3. Go on individual dates with you children. Spending time with each of your children lets them know that they matter and aren't getting lost in the hubbub of a busy day or large family. Older teens might enjoy going out for a hamburger or a soda at their favorite place. Younger children often enjoy going to the supermarket, especially when you let them select their favorite cereal or special dessert. Don't forget your spouse or the older family members who live near you. Regular date nights for couples and lunches with aging parents keeps those relationships healthy, as well.

4. Remember the 80/20 rule. When trying to improve any relationship, listening is far more important than talking, so when it comes to family communication, listen four times longer than you speak. Likewise, think twice about what you say before you say it. Sometimes a parent's first reaction is to rant and scream, especially to negative news. Do your best to avoid this, and if you do verbally explode before your child is finished, apologize quickly and assure him or her that you're now ready to listen.

5. Use technology to your advantage. If the family computer's been relegated to homework duties or surfing the Web, why not put it to work by creating a family newsletter that you publish monthly, just for your immediate family? Ask everyone in the family to "articles" and information about themselves, then print out a copy for each person and hand deliver it. Or maybe you could create a family Website or blog. This would be especially helpful to families that find keeping in touch more difficult as the kids grow up and move away. Or put your texting abilities to work to let your loved ones know you're thinking about them. If your son is facing a big test on afternoon, for instance, send him a text message at lunch letting him know you're behind him.

6. Create family traditions. Tucking the kids into bed at night, setting up a family movie night, attending religious services or creating special holiday treats are all examples of family traditions. Family members come to expect and appreciate these traditions, seeing them as opportunities to come together as a unit. If your family is short on traditions, there's no reason you can't start some now. Why not set up a night for family walks? Or grow a family garden? Or visit the same spot every year for a family picnic?

Maintaining positive family communications benefits your family in so many ways. Children feel comfortable sharing their problems with parent, reducing the risk of peers having an undue influence on their lives. Parents remain connected and intimate with each other and their children, strengthening the family bonds. And all family members develop effective communication styles that can improve the quality of their relationships beyond the family home. Why not start talking today?