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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2012

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Hello and welcome to Midwestern Family's Fall Issue!

Hello, and welcome to fall! As I've mentioned in years past, fall is my favorite season, and with the summer heat we had this year, I've been looking forward to it even more than usual.

And rest assured, there's always something to look forward to when it comes to fall. In this issue we have a story that covers the entire state of Illinois when it comes to fall activities, and I must say, I'm looking forward to capitalizing on more than few ideas in it!

Getting out and about is another great way to deal with a pressing issue dealt with in another of our stories: obesity. It really has gotten distressing how many young Americans are dealing with obesity. I remember reading a New York Times article a few years ago that predicted some 30% of Americans would be at risk for diabetes in coming years. At the time, it seemed an unlikely result, but we appear to be on our way. It's very important everyone (including you, parents!) gets a bit more exercise these days. Plus, it's fun!

Enjoy however your family decides to spend your Autumn. Much of mine will be outdoors!

Jenny

midwestern Family

A Guide To Family Living In Central Illinois

September/October 2012

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*How beautifully leaves grow old.
How full of light and color are
their last days.*

~ John Burroughs



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Energy Audits & Your Home's Performance:



USING BUILDING SCIENCE TO PROVIDE SOLUTIONS TO COMFORT, EFFICIENCY, HEALTH, AND SAFETY IN THE HOME

BY: TODD ABERCROMBIE

When homeowners decide to take steps to make their home energy efficient, they can begin their quest in any number of directions. Some begin with replacing windows or adding more insulation. Others look to upgrading their furnace or air conditioner with Energy Star models. Still other homeowners look at the low hanging fruit by installing energy efficient light bulbs, using smart strips on appliances, and caulking gaps and cracks around the house. While these are smart steps to achieve the goals of reducing energy usage, some changes to improve energy efficiency in the home can result in negative health impacts for those who live there. A home's energy efficiency plan must include strategies that manage or eliminate the dangerous impact of contaminants such as carbon monoxide, mold, and radon.

Concerns such as these are addressed in an energy audit when performed by a certified professional by either the Building Performance Institute or the Residential Energy Services Network. These professionals have received the training in the concepts of building science that incorporates concepts such as thermal barriers, moisture dynamics, and ventilation into a whole house perspective. A comprehensive energy audit goes beyond energy usage and evaluates the home's overall performance that bridges multiple disciplines including insulation and HVAC. It looks at systems that directly and indirectly impact energy usage and evaluates how to maintain comfort, health, and safety for the homeowner.

A professional energy auditor can solve problems that lead to high utility bills, uneven temperatures in the home, and identify safety and health issues. While the term "energy audit" is the most commonly used term to describe this type of inspection around the country, the phrase "home performance assessment" can be a more accurate description. Using the principals of building science, the auditor will work to find smart solutions that help the home become more efficient, solve comfort problems, improve the durability of the home, and ensure safety through indoor air quality.

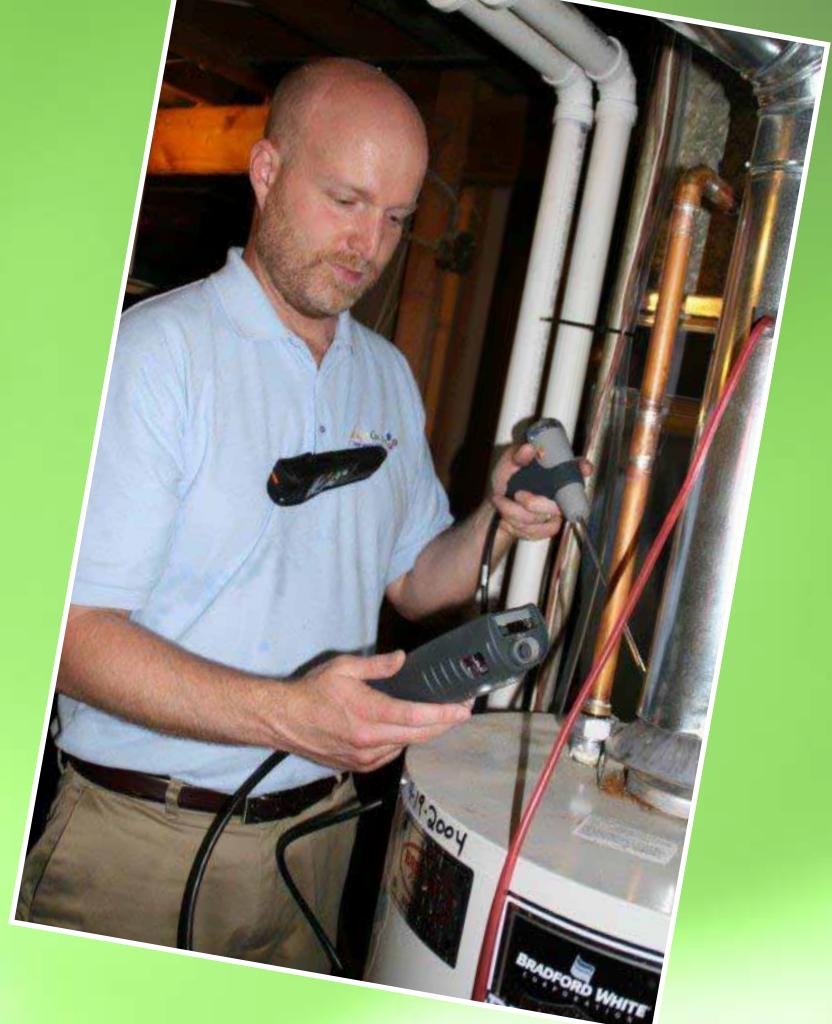
The relationship between insulation, heating, cooling, and ventilation are particularly important in building science. For example, a homeowner who replaces a furnace and then follows it with an insulation upgrade may have wasted money and performance on the new furnace. Before installing a new furnace, a heating and cooling technician will perform load calculations that determine how powerful the furnace must be to meet the demand of the home. These calculations include the insulation levels of the attic, walls, and basement. With an energy efficient home, it may be the case that the furnace can be downsized to save fuel and energy but still maintain the same level of comfort. These units generally cost less than a more powerful furnace.

A whole house approach becomes even more critical when it involves the health of the home's occupants. If there are appliances in the home that produce carbon monoxide, it is important that they are vented correctly outdoors. Any gas-fired appliance such as a water heater, furnace, or stove will produce by-products such



as carbon monoxide or nitrogen oxide. If these gases are vented correctly to the outdoors, they do not have a negative effect on the health of the home's occupants. However, if they are backdrafting, these gases enter the home's indoor air and can lead to negative health impacts.

Without thinking through the impacts of changes in the home's systems, solutions to one health problem can unintentionally create another health problem. Consider the following hypothetical scenario: a homeowner discovers mold in the bathroom and decides to install a bath fan to help remove the excess moisture and heat from the shower. He likes to perform his own repairs and heads down to the hardware store to purchase a bath exhaust fan. He really wants to prevent the buildup of mold, so he decides to purchase the most powerful fan available. A few days after he installs the fan, the carbon monoxide alarm goes off. After an investigation from a technician is concluded, it is found that his natural draft water heater had been releasing high levels of carbon monoxide. Because the new exhaust fan was so powerful, it caused the water heater to backdraft and spill dangerous levels of CO in the home.



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“The results of the audit will be prioritized and provide a road map for an energy upgrade to the home.”

Getting Started With an Energy Audit

For the homeowner, having a professional to perform an energy audit on the home has many benefits. The auditor will be able to determine what is wrong, how it can be fixed, and what is the most cost effective solution. The results of the audit will be prioritized and provide a road map for an energy upgrade to the home. An energy audit tests and evaluates all of the systems that impact the use of energy in the home. For a flat fee that is generally based on the size of the home, a professional energy auditor will spend several hours using diagnostic equipment to measure and evaluate the home. Some homeowners will decide to hire a contractor right away to tackle the recommendations while others will decide to phase in the upgrade recommendations into their already existing remodeling plan.

Some homeowners call for an energy audit to solve the problem of high energy bills. What is considered a high utility bill will vary from home to home depending on its size, how many live in the home, what type of fuel is available, and how it is used. Generally speaking, \$200-\$400 a month in utilities will have some opportunity for improvement, and anything from \$400 to \$1000 a month will have a large opportunity for a quick payback from an energy upgrade investment. While a rise in the price of energy can be a factor, the cause is often rooted in one of the energy systems in the home such as inadequate insulation, equipment failure, or even changes in occupant behavior patterns.

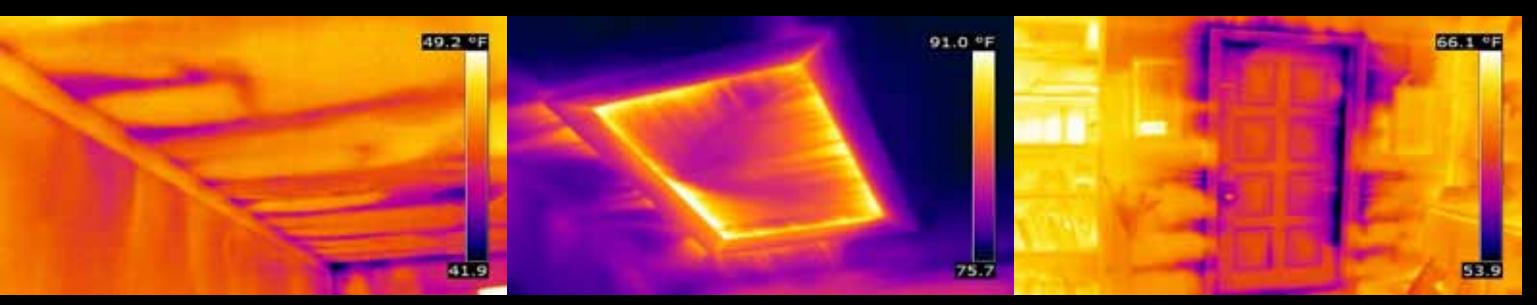
More often than not, the main reason a homeowner calls for an energy audit is that they cannot solve a comfort problem in the home. They may want to know why one bedroom never cools in the summer or stays warm in the winter. They may also find that the 2nd floor of the home is stuffy or unbearably hot in the summer. Are the solutions in the insulation, heating & cooling system, or something else? With equipment such as an infrared camera and a blower door, an energy auditor has the tools to solve these problems.

Homeowners may also look to energy efficiency to prepare a home for the real estate market in the future, to lower their environmental or carbon footprint, or to prepare the home for the installation of renewable energy such as solar panels or wind turbines.

Testing and Evaluating the Home

THE BLOWER DOOR TEST:

The blower door is one of the major components of an energy auditor's toolkit. It is composed of canvas and a cam lock frame that is inserted in the doorway of a main entrance. The auditor sets a fan inside the canvas that is used to depressurize the home. When turned on, the fan has the effect of mimicking a 20 mph wind hitting all sides of the home at the same time. This is a great opportunity for the auditor to search for air leaks around the home with an infrared camera, smoke device, or simply a bare hand. The results of the blower door test provide a quantifiable leakage rate of the building that aid in the prioritizing of energy recommendations. For example, if the blower door calculations determine the home is very leaky, then you can reasonably assume a nice payback from performing air sealing work. If the home is found to be very air tight, then performing air sealing work won't be cost effective and the discussion may need to move to the importance of ventilation.



THE INFRARED INSPECTION

Using an infrared camera is an effective way of evaluating the impact of insulation and locating certain air leaks. The camera can find hot and cold spots along exterior walls, windows, recessed lights, and the ceiling between the attic and the home. It is a great tool for educating homeowners and contractors about setting priorities in the energy upgrade plan for the home.

SAFETY TESTING

There are a number of safety tests an auditor will perform to make sure safety and health is not a problem for occupants of the home. This includes any gas-fired appliance such as a furnace, water heater, oven, or space heater. One of the potentially dangerous by-products of a gas appliance is carbon monoxide, the odorless and tasteless gas that can cause a range of mild to potentially fatal impacts. The auditor will test the appliance for higher than normal levels of CO. They will also test to make sure that the appliance is venting correctly so the contaminants are going outdoors. As we build homes more efficient, they are also tighter and have less indoor air exchanging with outdoor air. While the presence of carbon monoxide is a concern for any home, a tight home will have higher concentrations and require solutions such as maintenance of the device, improved ventilation, or even replacement.

In order to perform the safety test on the gas appliances, the auditor will need a host of tools including a personal carbon monoxide detector, a gas flue analyzer, a gas leak detector, and a manometer to test draft pressure. All accessible gas lines should also be tested for leaks.

There are other health-related concerns that an auditor will address that result from the presence of moisture in the home from water leaks, condensation on windows, and even mold. The auditor will perform an inspection of the water diversion systems on the exterior including the roof, gutters, and downspouts. They will also look for the presence of water infiltration inside the home in such locations as attics, basements, and crawl spaces. Using building science concepts, an energy auditor can diagnose and solve the conditions that lead to mold in the home and prevent unnecessary expenses down the road from doctor visits, mold mitigation, and building repairs.

MORE PROBLEM SOLVING

Depending on where the investigation leads, an energy auditor will use a host of other equipment to evaluate the performance of the home including an exhaust fan flow meter to measure the performance of the bath exhaust fans, an anemometer to measure air flow at registers, and a moisture meter to test moisture content of building materials. A visual inspection will also incorporate opportunities to reduce electric usage with lighting, electronics, and appliances.

WRAPPING UP

At the end of the energy audit process, the home owner will receive a report of findings and recommendations that usually includes a utility bill analysis, infrared pictures, and priorities for making upgrades. The auditor can also be a resource to find a recommended contractor to perform the work. Many utility companies offer financial incentives for insulation and air sealing work if performed by a program contractor, and an energy audit is usually incorporated in that process to provide data to the utility and ensure safety to the homeowners. ☺

Todd Abercrombie works as an energy consultant for homes and businesses and is president of EverGreen Home Energy Consultants, Inc. based in Peoria. He is a certified professional by the Building Performance Institute and is credentialed by the U.S. Green Building Council as a LEED Green Associate.

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Battling Today's Health Threat Against Children – Obesity

Tips from the American Heart Association

A number of unhealthy habits can lead a person to our nation's number one killer, heart disease. Smoking, lack of physical activity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes are all major risk factors, but there is one factor that is affecting families at an alarming rate. Obesity negatively impacts every organ system in the body, and is now regarded as more damaging to the body than smoking or excessive drinking. Today, one in 3 children is obese, leading to a number of health problems doctors used to only see in adults – Type 2 diabetes and elevated blood cholesterol levels.

The good news is that it doesn't take expensive medications or procedures to combat obesity. Making healthy lifestyle changes can drastically improve the overall health of your family members, leading to healthier weight, blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

So what can you do to keep your children at a healthy weight?

First, learn if your child actually has a weight problem. You can calculate your child's BMI (Body Mass Index) at the Centers for Disease control website – www.cdc.gov. Your child's BMI is going to be calculated using his weight, height and the percentile he falls in compared to other kids his age.

Walk to Fight Heart Disease at a central Illinois heart walk!

McLean County Heart Walk:
September 22 at the Chateau Hotel & Conference Center in Bloomington

Tri-County Heart Walk:
October 13 at Liberty Park in Peoria

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www.mcleancountyheartwalk.org
www.peoriaaheartwalk.org

Talk to your pediatrician about your child's weight.

Each child is different, and your doctor should know if your child is at a healthy weight for his/her height, and will factor in his/her medical history.

Evaluate what your family is eating.

Americans today are suffering from a modern-day form of malnutrition. They are consuming foods with no nutritional value, full of empty calories that do nothing to contribute to the health of their bodies. A diet full of fruits and vegetables (at least 5 per day!), lean meats such as chicken and fish, low-fat dairy and whole grains provide the most fuel your body needs to run properly. Also cut down on sugar-sweetened drinks and buy products labeled low-sodium. Sugary drinks like soda are full of empty calories, and high-sodium foods significantly add to the risk of high blood pressure. Check the labels when you shop to see what you are consuming!

Get moving as a family!

After a long day at work, the idea of doing anything but sitting on the couch can be exhausting, but it is important for children to get at least 60 minutes of exercise every day. And what better way to have some quality family time than with a game of tag, a long walk or an evening playing at the park?

Turn off the TV!

Today's kids are getting in much more than the recommended 2 hours per day of screen time. Sitting at a computer or while playing video games adds to a sedentary lifestyle. We are much more likely to snack watching TV too.

Get plenty of sleep.

Kids need at least 9 hours per night. Getting more sleep actually helps a child's body to repair itself and even can increase metabolism.

All of these changes can make a huge difference in the health of your family. For more ideas visit www.heart.org/healthykids. ◊

Photo courtesy of the American Heart Association

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After School Activities

Is Your Child Involved in Too Much?

By Rachael Moshman

Back to school means a return to extracurricular activities for many children. Some children are out of the house nearly every night of the week. I have worked with children and families as a resource coordinator and mentor for many years. When parents come to me with academic or behavioral concerns regarding their children, I quickly ask what they are involved in after school. If the list is long, my advice is usually to scale back and see if things turn around.

Most schools and communities have an abundance of choices for children to be involved in after school. Football, cheerleading, dance, gymnastics, lacrosse, horseback riding, art, drama, Scouting, ecology clubs and language lessons are just a few of the options available to children in my small town. My daughter brings home a flier for a new activity every day. We all want our children to be well rounded, successful and enjoy their brief time as school children.

Enrolling them in enrichment activities seems harmless and it usually is. However, moderation is key. Children also need time to focus on their homework, socialize with friends informally, spend time with family and just relax.

So how do you know if your child is doing too much? Here are five signs that it's time to cut back on after school activities.

You see a change in your child's behavior or emotions

Overwhelmed children often show they are stressed through their behavior. Is your usually compliant child suddenly defiant? Does your formerly happy-go-lucky child now burst into tears for seemingly no reason? Take a week off from activities and spend quiet evenings at home instead. Does the situation improve? If so, too many activities are probably the culprit.

They don't seem to be enjoying the activity

Kerrie's eight-year-old daughter was rude and argumentative on the days she had dance lessons. She realized that her daughter didn't enjoy the twice a week, two hour lessons and didn't know how to tell her. She was relieved when Kerrie gave her permission to stop.



to figure out how to balance their new schedule. Don't allow so much time that they get into a pit they can't dig out of, though.

They are visibly worried

Stephanie's son decided to play soccer in addition to participating in the marching band when he entered high school. He maintained his honor roll status, but he was always panicked about having enough time to study and do homework. The next school year, Stephanie told him he could do either band or soccer, but not both. He opted for band and was much more relaxed.

It begins to impact the rest of the family

Are *you* exhausted and overwhelmed? Mom and Dad often do a lot of running around to various practices, meetings and activities during the school year, especially when they have more than one child. If you find yourself cranky and bitter that you never have time to accomplish tasks or spend quality time with your kids, reevaluate your family's activities. Everyone needs to be comfortable with the schedule, including you.

So what do you do if you determine your child is doing too much? Sit down with your child and prioritize their activities. I had to do this with my daughter. She was involved in gymnastics, Girl Scouts and guitar lessons. We were out of the house four evenings a week, plus Saturday morning. It was too much. I told her something had to go. She was reluctant at first, but after a lengthy discussion she admitted that she didn't really enjoy guitar lessons and found the social aspects of Girl Scouts to be overwhelming. She asked if she could drop both activities and add a second session of gymnastics instead. Now she has gymnastics one evening a week and on Saturday mornings. This schedule is much more relaxing and enjoyable for both of us. ♦

Your child seems exhausted

Signs that their activities are getting in the way of their rest include:

- Falling asleep at mealtime
- Difficulty waking up in the morning
- Napping on the way to activities
- Nodding off in class
- General sluggishness

Their grades drop

I always advise parents to take a look at what has changed whenever grades plummet. An increase in after school activities is a frequent contributor. Sometimes a child simply needs time

Rachael Moshman is a freelance writer, educator and family advocate. She loves watching her daughter twist and turn through the air in gymnastics lessons. Find her at:

www.rachaelmoshman.com.



6 PARENTING SURVIVAL TOOLS

SIX SURVIVAL TOOLS FOR PARENTING TEENS

By Kim Seidel

Power struggles, misunderstandings, arguments and lack of control may rule in households with teens, but Amy McCready, a nationally recognized parenting expert, offers powerful ideas for overcoming these challenges.

The author of "If I Have To Tell You One More Time...The Revolutionary Program That Gets Your Kids To Listen Without Nagging, Reminding, or Yelling" (Penguin Group, 2011), McCready gives advice to help parents increase an emotional connection with their teens while decreasing power struggles. If you're not parenting a teen yet, it pays to start early with these tools. Most of the following ideas will work well with children of any age.

1 Mind, Body and, Soul Time

If parents use one tool, McCready wants it to be this most important one – sharing mind, body, and soul time. It's "spent with each child individually, when we are emotionally available, and doing what he wants to do."

Taking these moments together helps to combat what many teens feel about their parents: "They just don't get me." While your teen may act like they don't care if you're around, the reality is they love and need you, and want to make an emotional connection. Mind, body, and soul time will fulfill those teen desires.

The prescription: 10 minutes; one to two times a day; one-on-one time; doing what your teen wants to do; and no distractions.

Ideas include shooting hoops on the driveway, listening to their favorite music, or playing a video game. "Your teen will think this is the greatest thing in the world when you spend that time with him," says McCready, mom of two teen sons. "It will take some time and effort but this will build your relationship."

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2 When-Then

Think about morning, after school, and evening hours with your family. Now consider how many reminders you give your teen about eating breakfast, doing homework, and getting to bed at a decent hour. This is the nagging, reminding, and yelling cycle many parents often fall in to. "Teen priorities are not the same as adult priorities," McCready says. "Every request and reminder is an opportunity for a power struggle."

Pull the plug on struggling by using "when-then." "It's hailed as 'magical' in its effectiveness," says McCready, founder of Positive Parenting Solutions. Taking this action delays or denies a privilege until a responsibility is completed.

Example: "When you pick up your dirty clothes from your room, then you can call your friend."

Emphasize "when" and "then." The privilege must be something the teen

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cares about, such as calling friends.

Although your "when" and "then" may be met with a melt-down, especially the first few times, you must walk away and ignore it. This action says: "I'm not going to argue or negotiate" and "I have complete faith you'll get it done." It also "allows the child to 'save face' and still do what you've asked."

Other tips: Don't give second chances, or reminders. Stay firm. Follow through with dignity. Communicate with your teen: "I see you chose to lose your phone privileges. I have confidence that you'll make a better choice next time."

3 Control Your Environment

It's a fact: You can't control another person, including your teen. All you can control is yourself and your environment. Inform your child about your expectations and the consequences for not following-through.

If your teen drives you crazy, for instance, asking every morning why a particular shirt or pants isn't clean, make a decision about laundry. "This will show your teen that you are not a door mat," McCready says.

Be clear with your teen about your plan and stick to it: "Tuesdays and Fridays are my laundry days. If you want something washed, make sure it's in the proper laundry basket. If you miss laundry day, you will have to wait until next time to wear that."

"You can't control another person, including your teen. All you can control is yourself and your environment."

4 Invite Cooperation

To help your teen feel like they're part of the family, rather than constantly ordered around, invite their cooperation. It helps them to gain a sense of belonging. Use phrases such as, "I'm having a busy week at work. Anything you can do to clean up the kitchen after dinner would be really appreciated," or "What's your plan for getting your school project done?"

These types of phrases empower your child to work on her terms, but still get the job done. Invite cooperation any time you're asking your child to complete a task or adopt a certain behavior, such as cleaning up after meals.

5 Withdraw from Conflict

Did you know that your teen is getting their way when you argue, battle, or negotiate with her? As the parent, you need to withdraw completely from these situations.

To begin to use this tool, reveal to her in advance that you will no longer respond to their negative behaviors. "I expect us to speak to each other in calm and respectful voices. When you talk back to me, I will walk away from you. When you're able to speak calmly to me again, I will be here for you."

Your teen may throw a fit, especially the first few times you use this tool. Be assured, you are withdrawing from their behavior, not your teen.

6 Use 'I Feel' Statements

Many people learn about the value of using "I feel" statements in a difficult

situation for the workplace and as a married couple. But using "I feel" sentences with your children is just as effective.

Often a parent's first reaction in frustration is to yell something like, "You never pick up your shoes by the door." Starting with "you," immediately puts a teen on the defensive. By using "I statements," McCready says, parents can begin a respectful conversation and solve a problem. An effective "I statement," McCready says, has three parts: 1) I feel; 2) When you; 3) I wish.

An example: "I feel upset when you don't put away your shoes by the door. I wish you would put them in the closet as soon as you come home. I worry that your little sister will trip over your shoes."

Now you can invite your teen to share her feelings, and work out an agreement using a conversation instead of a shouting match this fall and beyond.◊



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Escape
To Illinois This Fall

A fall trip to Illinois is the perfect way to re-energize and take in the changing seasons. Now is the time to explore Illinois' picturesque regions, bursting with fall events and experiences. As the seasons change, there's no better time to escape for a weekend and discover something new. With so many choices of cultural attractions, fine dining and great nightlife, Illinois is a truly magnificent destination for the fall traveler.

Escape



To Illinois This Fall

In addition to the highlights listed below, travelers can plan their trip at enjoyillinois.com, where they can also download the Enjoy Illinois travel app or request a free 2012 Illinois Travel Guide.

CHICAGO & BEYOND

The Chicago & Beyond region boasts a plethora of festivals and happenings to enjoy this fall. In the heart of Chicago's Loop, the Berghoff Oktoberfest runs from September 11-14. Modeled after the world's largest festival in Munich, Germany, the event features live music, food and the Berghoff Restaurant's own special lager beer. Last year, the festival boasted over 80,000 attendees, making it the largest Oktoberfest celebration in Chicago. For more information, visit Theberghoff.com.

For a relaxing weekend without the kids, head to the Vintage Illinois Wine Festival, from September 15-16 at Matthiessen State Park. Located minutes away from Starved Rock State Park, twenty-eight wineries will participate in the state's largest wine festival. Enjoy wine tasting from the state's premier wine producers, live music and more. For more information, visit vintageillinois.com.

Any way you slice it, the Long Grove Apple Festival, from September 28-30 in Long Grove, is sure to be a joy for all ages. A short drive from Chicago, the Long Grove Apple Festival will delight guests with a wide range of apple-inspired treats, live music, upscale shopping and childrens' activities along the historic buildings and cobblestone paths of this quaint town. For more information, visit visitlonggrove.com. Six

Flags Great America Frightfest in Gurnee returns this year every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from September 29- October 28. In addition to world-class thrill rides, the park will transform into a Halloween playground complete with spooky shows, haunted houses and a special trick-or-treat trail just for kids. For more information, visit sixflags.com/greatamerica.

LAND OF LINCOLN

Step back in time this fall in the Land of Lincoln region. The 42nd Annual Abraham Lincoln National Railsplitting Contest and Crafts Festival, from September 14-16 in Lincoln, offers something for everyone. Visitors can participate in the railsplitting contest, corn shucking and tomahawk throwing. The festival also includes a pioneer village, historical displays, a quilt show, flea market and countless other activities. For more information, visit railsplitting.com.

From September 15 to October 23, Illinois travelers can see over 300 varieties of pumpkins, squash and gourds from around the world at The Great Pumpkin Patch in Arthur. The Great Pumpkin Patch, located on the Cucurbit family farm, also features over 5,000 hardy mums, various mazes and tranquil gardens in addition to goats, pigs, exotic chickens, rabbits, a llama and an alpaca. There are several places to eat and drink on the farm and lots of entertainment on the weekends. For more information, visit the200acres.com.

Explore vintage cars and re-live the golden age of Historic Route 66 at the 11th Annual International Route 66 Mother Road Festival in Springfield. More than 80,000 spectators and 1,000 vintage cars will congregate in downtown Springfield for the three-day event, from September 21-23. For more information,



visit route66fest.com.

Uncover the factual history and ghostly lore about Abe Lincoln during Lincoln's Ghost Walk: Legends & Lore in downtown Springfield, through September 29. The 90-minute walking tour utilizes famous and obscure Lincoln sites as the backdrop for the strange and bizarre history surrounding Lincoln's life and death. Voted the number one ghost tour in the Midwest by Midwest Living Magazine, this tour is suitable for all ages. For more information, visit Springfieldwalks.com.

GREAT RIVERS COUNTRY

Explore the charming bed & breakfasts, historic river towns and autumnal activities that Great Rivers Country offers. Peace, Love and Pumpkins is the theme for this year's Morton Pumpkin Festival from September 12-15 in Morton. Festival goers will enjoy live entertainment, carnival rides and more than 20 special events and activities. The Delight Tent is one of many popular fixtures, presenting an assortment of sweet pumpkin treats. For more information, visit mortonpumpkinfestival.org.

Quincy's Great Rivers Grape Escape, from September 22-23, is a wine-tasting event featuring 12 local wineries, musical entertainment and food. Attendees can sample the great varieties of Illinois wine and meet many of the state's producers. For more information, visit quincygrapeescape.com.

Red, yellow and orange-hued leaves aren't the only colors to view in Illinois this autumn. At the annual Quad Cities Hot Air Balloon Fest in Moline, dozens of hot air balloons take off throughout the weekend and glow high above the town after dark. This year's festival runs from September 28-30. For more information, visit qcballoonfestival.com.

There's no better way to take in fall foliage than by simply hitting the open road. Fulton County offers an outstanding



drive full of natural wonders and historic landmarks in the Spoon River Valley Scenic Drive. Now in its 45th year, the drive follows the river through some of the spectacular views of Great Rivers Country the first and second weekends in October. For more information, visit spoonriverdrive.org.

TRAILS TO ADVENTURE

Home to tranquil state parks and picturesque forests, the Trails to Adventure region boasts myriad activities for the fall traveler. Visit the 11th Annual Shrimp Festival in Golconda on September 15 to experience a vast array of fishy fare and selections from famed southern Illinois wineries. The festival includes a farmers market, enchanting gifts from local antique shops, live entertainment and a beer garden, set along the

strikingly beautiful Ohio River. For more information, visit visitgolconda.com.

Pit masters and grill masters alike will revel in the chance to take part in the Murphysboro Barbecue Cook-Off in Murphysboro. Home to the barbecue ribs haven of 17th Street Bar & Grill, Murphysboro hosts the three day event from September 20-22. New this year, the public will be able to sample and judge contestants for the People's Choice BBQ & Sauce Awards. For more information, visit 17thstreetbarbecue.com.

Everyone's a little bit Irish during the Southern Illinois Irish Festival in Carbondale,

from October 5-7. This Celtic cultural celebration has something for the whole family, including concerts, dance workshops and demonstrations, arts & crafts, soccer games, traditional Irish food and drink and highland games. The festival even features an Irish magic storyteller. For more information, visit silirishfest.org.

Pay tribute to Illinois' frontier heritage during the Fort Massac Encampment, from October 20-21 in Metropolis. History buffs can step back in time and witness the Battle of Drouillard Creek. From the thunderous cannon booms to the precise drummer's cadence, spectators and participants will feel entrenched in 1700's period culture. The event also includes period food and drink, arts and crafts, storytellers and a magician for kids. For more information, visit metropolistourism.com. ♦



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TAILGATING BLISS

BBQ CHICKEN WINGS



Cut chicken wings into three sections; Discard wing tips. Place wings in a greased 15" x 10" x 1" baking pan. Bake at 350° for 35 to 40 minutes or until juices run clear. In a large bowl, combine remaining ingredients. Pour 1/2 cup into 3 quart slow cooker. Drain chicken wings; add to slow cooker. Drizzle with the remaining sauce. Cover and cook on low for one hour, basting occasionally. Yield: 10 servings.

3 POUNDS WHOLE CHICKEN WINGS
 2 CUPS KETCHUP
 1/2 CUP HONEY
 2 TABLESPOONS LEMON JUICE
 2 TABLESPOONS VEGETABLE OIL.
 2 TABLESPOONS SOY SAUCE
 2 TABLESPOONS WORCESTERSHIRE SAUCE.
 1 TABLESPOON PAPRIKA
 4 GARLIC CLOVES, MINCED
 1-1/2 TEASPOONS CURRY POWDER
 1/2 TEASPOON PEPPER
 1/8 TEASPOON HOT PEPPER SAUCE

CINCINNATI CHILI

2 LBS. GROUND SIRLOIN
 28 OZ CANS OF TOMATO SAUCE
 1 LARGE WHITE ONION
 2 TABLESPOONS VINEGAR
 2 TABLESPOONS CHILI POWDER
 1 TABLESPOONS CRUSHED RED PEPPER.
 2 TEASPOONS CINNAMON
 2 TEASPOONS WORCESTERSHIRE SAUCE
 2 TEASPOONS CUMIN
 1 TEASPOON SALT
 1 TEASPOON GARLIC POWDER
 1/2 TEASPOON ALLSPICE
 1/4 TEASPOON CLOVES
 1 BAY LEAF
 3 CANS WATER (SAUCE CAN).

Finely chop the onion and set a little aside for later. Combine onion and beef in a Dutch oven and brown, breaking up the meat. Add the remaining ingredients, (to increase the heat, add more crushed red pepper) stir well, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low. Simmer uncovered for 1-3/4 to 2 hours or longer if you can take it! The longer it simmers, the better it tastes. Stir as often as you like.

Serving suggestions: Serve by itself or have it 3-Way; Over spaghetti with cheddar cheese and topped with finely chopped onion. Yield: 6-8 servings.

THE 3 RULES OF TAILGATING
 - KEEP IT CLEAN - KEEP IT SEPARATE - KEEP IT AT THE RIGHT TEMPERATURE

TOP TIP:

GET THERE EARLY. THE SOONER YOU GET THERE, THE BETTER THE TURF YOU'LL BE ABLE TO CLAIM. 3-4 HOURS BEFORE KICK-OFF SHOULD GIVE PLENTY OF TIME TO PREPARE, EAT AND PACK UP BEFORE THE GAME.

STUFFED BACON BURGER



In a bowl combine soup mix in water. Crumble beef over mixture and blend well. Shape into 12 thin patties. Place a cheese slice on the six patties. Cover each with another patty. Pinch edges to seal. Wrap a strip of bacon around each. Fasten with a wooden toothpick.

Grill for 8 to 10 minutes turning once or until meat is no longer pink. Remove the toothpicks, serve on buns with the lettuce and tomato. Yield: 6 servings.

1 ENVELOPE DRY ONION SOUP MIX
1/4 CUP WATER
1-1/2 POUNDS LEAN GROUND BEEF
6 SLICES OF ANY CHEESE YOU LIKE
6 BACON STRIPS
6 HAMBURGER BUNS TOASTED
LETTUCE LEAVES
TOMATO SLICES

FOOTBALL BROWNIES

1 PACKAGE FUDGE BROWNIE MIX
(13 x 9 x 2 - INCH PAN SIZE)
6 TABLESPOONS BUTTER, SOFTENED
2-3/4 CUPS CONFECTIONERS' SUGAR
1/2 CUP BAKING SODA
1/2 CUP BAKING COCOA
1/3 CUP MILK
1 TEASPOON VANILLA EXTRACT
1/4 VANILLA OR WHITE CHIPS



Prepare the brownie batter according to the package directions. Spread into a greased 15" x 10" x 1" baking pan. Bake at 350° for 13 to 15 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack.

In a mixing bowl, cream butter, sugar, cocoa milk and vanilla. Spread over cooled brownies. Loosely cover and chill for 1 hour or until frosting is set. With a sharp knife, make lengthwise 1-1/2 inch parallel cuts from a short side to a long side to form diamonds.

In a microwave, melt the vanilla chips at 50% power; stir until smooth. Place in a small heavy-duty resealable plastic bag; cut a small hole in the corner of bag. Pipe laces on brownies. Yield: about 3 dozen.

RULE 4: ENJOY!

HOMETOWN HAPPENINGS

Bloomington-Normal Area

EVENTS

October

4 THROUGH OCTOBER 7. **Leaving Iowa:** The spark behind Leaving Iowa comes from being children of parents from the now dubbed "greatest generation." The story is a toast to their idealism and character and a little roast of their undying dedication to the classic family road trip. More specifically, it is about Don Browning, a middle-aged writer, who returns home and decides to finally take his father's ashes to his childhood home. When Don discovers Grandma's house is now a grocery store, he begins traveling across Iowa searching for a proper resting place for his father. This father-and-son road trip shifts smoothly from the present to Don's memories of the annual, torturous vacations of his childhood. Don't miss this special, one-weekend-only offering! The Community Players Theatre is one of the oldest community theatres completely staffed by volunteers. The non-profit theater has been providing live entertainment in Bloomington-Normal since 1923. www.communityplayers.org. 309.663.2121.

6 THROUGH OCTOBER 7. **Ropp Road Round-Up Festival:** Don't miss the first look at 2012 Rader Family Farms! We have new activities and an interactive Corn & Bean maze! Vote for your favorite "sponsored scarecrow" in the fund-raiser for the Children's Foundation. Ropp Road Round-Up Festival will have special Live Music, Outdoor Farm Activities, Hayrides, Pumpkins and More! Open Access to Pumpkins, Music & Shopping. And at the Ropp Jersey Cheese farm, enjoy many activities including milk a cow, hayrides, watch cheese making, feed goats, bottle feed calves! www.raderfamilyfarms.com. 309.275.8765.

13 **Capitol Steps:** In an election year the Capitol Steps sharpen their wits and skits for some no-holds-barred skewering. Formed by a



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troupe of former Congressional staffers, the Steps put the mock in democracy with a mix of political songs and commentary that have earned them legions of fans across the country. Regulars on National Public Radio, their wickedly funny political satire is sure to upset the right, left and center. Bloomington Center for the Performing Arts. 309.434.2777.

13 **Barn Quilt Heritage Trail:** Barn Quilt Heritage Trail - McLean County starts with a special event from 10-2 on the grounds of David Davis Mansion in Bloomington, IL on Oct. 13, 2012. Event is free and open to the public. Barn Quilt Trail guidebooks are available at the visitor center. Activities include reading of original poems, heirloom quilt display, auction of 2x2 painted quilt blocks, face painting, music by Don't Fret, funbelievable balloons, and Barn Dance with Bloomington Twirlers. Food available for purchase as well. There are 11 area farm buildings decorated with 8x8 painted quilt block and mounted on the building. www.mcleancountybarnquilts.com. 309.830.5358.

26 **Halloween Hoopla Family Fun Night:** Join us and celebrate Halloween in a not so spooky way! Complete your Halloween look and get your face painted by the Zoo Lady! Play spooktacular games, make crafts, and get ready for the ever popular trick-or-treating in the exhibits! Children must be accompanied by a paying adult. childrensdiscoverymuseum.net. 309.433.3444.

October

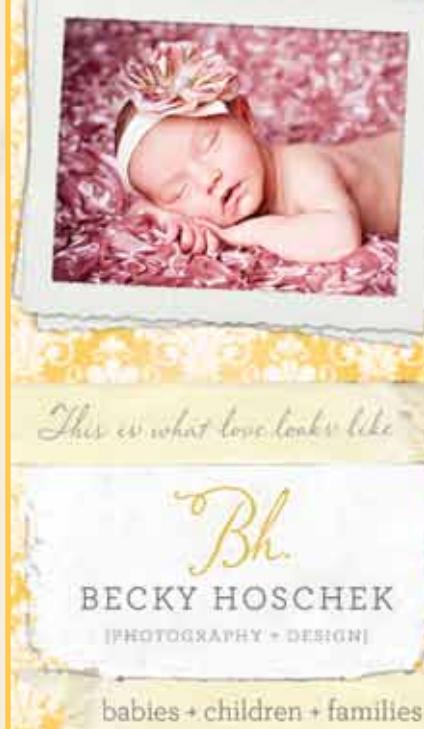
6 **Brew Ha Ha:** Benefit the Decatur Area Arts Council with Decatur's own take on Oktoberfest. Your \$35 ticket gets you into the new Hickory Point Golf Course Pavilion where you can enjoy free German food and domestic draft beer with live music by "Imagine That." There'll be a costume contest and a raffle for authentic Oktoberfest souvenirs. There will also be a cash bar for German craft beers. 217.423.3189.

6 THROUGH OCTOBER 7. **11th Annual Scarecrow Festival:** Festival always held the first full week-end in October in conjunction with the Knox County Scenic Drive. Fair goers vote on scarecrows in five categories and Best of Show for cash prizes, scarecrows made by groups, individuals and businesses. Enjoy live entertainment, handmade crafts, children's activities, food and much more. Vendors and scarecrow entries needed!!! Galesburg Standish Park. 309.342.3761.

7 **23rd Annual Pumpkin Pie Bicycle Ride:** Join the Starved Rock Cycling Association for this autumn bike ride starting at the YMCA in Ottawa! Food, showers, sag, goodies, maps, and PUMPKIN PIE will be provided. Helmets required. See website for more information. 815.830.4291.

20 THROUGH OCTOBER 23. **Lakefest:** Decatur Celebration, Inc. introduces LakeFest - an all-new festival at Nelson Park this September 20 - 23, in conjunction with the prestigious Bassmaster Toyota Trucks All-Star Week. Lakefest activities include live music on four stages, fishing industry exhibits, a kids play area, festival food vendors and more. Plus, don't miss the exciting tournament weigh-ins each day in Nelson Park - see how big the fish are and which anglers move on to compete for \$100,000 in prize money. The tournament will be filmed by ESPN, resulting in a one hour special on ESPN2. Attendees can expect the same family friendly fun that has made Decatur Celebration a success! www.decaturlakefest.com.

27 **Gruesome, Gory, and Ghastly Ghosts and Ghouls:** Two ghost story concerts for Halloween will feature local favorite tellers Dan Keding, Kathe Brinkmann, and Kim Sheahan, as well as tellers from UIUC faculty, staff, and students, and members of the C-U Storytelling Guild. All donations and admission fees will support the Museum's educational programs. The afternoon family event will feature multicultural ghost stories. The stories will be most appropriate for children grades K-6. The children will leave with bags of candy to start their trick-or-treating off right. Spurlock Museum. Urbana. 217.244.3355.



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Neighboring Areas

HOMETOWN HAPPENINGS

EVENTS

Peoria Area

October

5 THROUGH OCTOBER 27. **Spider Hill at Three Sisters Park:** Spider Hill has been awarded the distinction as the best Halloween attraction in Illinois by hauntedillinois.com. Spider Hill is now in its 13th year of operation! Open every Friday and Saturday night in October, gates open at 6 p.m. for ticket sales and the scares start at 7 p.m. Tickets are sold until 11 p.m. Tickets are \$8 per person per attraction. Wristbands for unlimited scares are \$20 each. Group parties welcome! Group rates available. 866.278.8837.

6 THROUGH OCTOBER 14. **Spoon River Scenic Drive.** The Spoon River Valley Scenic Drive Associates invites you to come to Fulton County, Illinois and enjoy the natural wonders of the Spoon River Valley. Spoon River has carved a wide scenic valley through Fulton County as it flows from London Mills to the south and east where it joins the Illinois River near the southeastern corner of the County. The Spoon River became nationally known from the work of Edgar Lee Masters, author of the noted Spoon River Anthology. 309.647.8980.

13 **A Grand Occasion:** The Peoria Symphony Orchestra will perform the Classical Series "A Grand Occasion" on Saturday, October 13 at 8 pm at the Peoria Civic Center Theater. The show will feature Anna Lee on the violin. She returns with a passionate performance of Prokofiev's Second Violin Concerto. The Peoria Symphony Orchestra shows its own passion and perfectionism in Rossini's William Tell Overture and Tchaikovsky's monumental Fifth Symphony. 309.680.35986.

November

15 THROUGH DECEMBER 31. **Home for the Holidays:** Conklin's Barn II Dinner Theatre now traditional annual revue of holiday music, comedy and audience participation is back with a new evening overloaded with music and holiday hilarity guaranteed to provide a terrific time for the whole family. Your favorite performers will fill the Barn to the rafters with magical music and Grinch-proof guffaws that will last you all the way through the holiday season - and beyond! Performances fill up quickly for this annual event, so make your reservations early! www.barn2.com. 309.965.2545

22 THROUGH JANUARY 1. **28th Annual East Peoria Festival of Lights Holiday Light Show:** the almost 2-mile drive-through electric park is the Festival of Lights' signature event! Folepi's Winter Wonderland features the majority of the Parade of Lights floats and many other lighted displays. And for 2012, the popular downhill skiers will be enhanced! Drive under arches while lighted reindeer leap over your car, and later through a tunnel of blue arches. And see many favorite displays, including a lighted waving Folepi. Now the Festival of Lights helps usher in all the November and December family holidays! Marking 28 years of holiday cheer, the festival will begin a new tradition by starting one week earlier with the Parade of Lights on Saturday, Nov. 17. Then, the Folepi's Winter Wonderland drive-through display will open for the first time ever on Thanksgiving night, Nov. 22, allowing many Thanksgiving holiday visitors their first time to see this spectacular event! 309.676.0303.

October

5 THROUGH NOVEMBER 10. **Springfield's Ghost Hunt:** This 3-hour self-driving tour goes to 3 sites believed to be actually haunted. We'll explain basic ghost hunting and give you paranormal equipment and engage in an actual paranormal investigation. No gimmicks or tricks, this is a real ghost hunt. www.springfieldwalks.com. 217.502.8687.

6 **Fur Feather Fin Fall Fling.** The Spoon River Valley Scenic Drive Associates invites you to come to the Spoon River Valley. Spoon River has carved a wide scenic valley through Fulton County as it flows from London Mills to the south and east where it joins the Illinois River near the southeastern corner of the County. The Spoon River became nationally known from the work of Edgar Lee Masters, author of the noted Spoon River Anthology. 309.647.8980.

13 THROUGH OCTOBER 14. **Great War Encampment:** Learn about Illinois' participation in World War I and how the effects of that war influence us today. Living Historians will display equipment and uniforms and skirmish in the reconstructed trench. Guest speakers discuss tactics and trench life. Illinois State Military Museum. 217.761.3910.

17 **National Fossil Day at the Illinois State Museum:** The Museum is partnering with the National Park Service for the 3rd annual National Fossil Day. Docents will be present in the Changes: Dynamic Illinois Environments exhibition to answer questions and allow visitors to see additional fossils. www.museum.state.il.us/. 217.782.7386.

October

19 THROUGH OCTOBER 20. **Jack-O-Lantern Spectacular:** Meander thro 2012 hand-carved, illuminated jack-o-lanterns! Also Tree of Lights, spooky music, food vendor & new features! Free shuttle at SH-G West (Washington & Amos). Rain/shine. Adults \$7; 4-11 \$5; 3-under Free. Save \$1/each on advance purchase. www.carillon-rees.org. 217.753.6219.

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Springfield Areas



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