

# 'Family Time' Program Works for Harnish Family

BY KIMBERLY HERR

OREGON — Four-year-old Andy stands on a kitchen chair, attentively stirring a pan of hot chocolate, while his mother watches.

"You have to let it cool," Andy warned a visitor.

Allowing Andy to help her in the kitchen is just one of the concepts expressed in the Family Time program, according to Lois Harnish, Andy's mother.

Lois and her husband, Jim, who live on a small dairy farm in Oregon, agreed last October to pilot the Family Time program for the Lancaster County Extension Office. They have been participating in the activities suggested and will evaluate the program upon its conclusion.

The program, according to Michelle Rodgers, Extension home economist, is a three-part, learn-at-home program, featuring reading, activity boxes and ideas on how to spend quality time with the family.

"I was looking for good quality ideas to use in working with my children," Lois explained. "I also needed good ideas for nursery school." Lois helps out Thursday mornings at the Millersville Mennonite Church's Time Out program, which allows mothers to spend some time on their own.

In addition to Andy, Lois has a six-year-old daughter, Sonya. Saying that she highly recommended the Family Time program, she outlined the four basic strengths that research has



Making family traditions can be fun and rewarding for a family. The Harnish family started the tradition this year of setting up a train set at Christmas. Above, Lois and four-year-old Andy enjoy the train.



Andy Harnish and his mother, Lois, work on the GEO board, one of the many activities suggested in the Family Time program, sponsored by the Lancaster County Extension Office.



Lois Harnish works on a pine cone and peanut butter bird feeder, which will be used on their Lancaster County dairy farm. This is another activity suggested in the Family Time program.

shown families to have. They are: appreciation, commitment, religion and communication.

"It is important that we know the strengths, and then we can build on our strengths," Lois said.

In keeping with the idea of strengthening the family, Lois showed one of the activity boxes that is included in the Family Time program. There are two such boxes, with each family allowed to keep one box for two weeks. According to Lois, there are 26 activities in all.

The box includes such things as matching cloth bears to help learn about textures and size, a GEO board and rubber bands, for making designs, and sandpaper letters and numerals to feel and identify. There are also items for dress-up play, such as a cape, poncho and wand.

"I liked the paper cups best," Andy said.

The game he referred to, according to his mother, was one in which paper cups had numbers marked on them and he had to read the number and put that many buttons in the cup.

"Some of the games are geared to young children and some to older children, Lois said.

"I can give my children individual attention as we do these activities," Lois said. "It is good quality time that we can spend together."

Another phase of the program is reading. According to Lois, there is a list of 12 suggested books, which deal with concepts important to children, such as loneliness, dealing with death, jealousy and family conflict.

To aid in the understanding of the books, there are suggested activities to follow, such as pantomimes. "Children love to act out pantomimes," Lois said.

"This (the reading) has really helped children understand why we act the way we do," Lois said.

"Reading is good time spent with children," Lois said. "It is a time to be close, a time to have good eye contact with your children."

Why eye contact?  
"It lets them know I care and that I'm listening," Lois explained.

The third phase of the program deals with family activities and creating family traditions. A tradition which the Harnish family began this year was setting up a train set at Christmas.

They have also enjoyed some of the other suggested activities, for example, making animal-shaped pancakes and measuring each family member's height.

Another activity was pretending to go for a drive around town. Lois

gave Andy and Sonya a pie plate on a broom handle to pretend to drive. Andy explained that his father pretended to be in the front seat with him, and his mother

pretended to be in the car with Sonya.

"We went hunting and we went to McDonald's," Andy said, using

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## BACK HOME

By Michelle S. Rodgers



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### Computer Age Families

Bytes...Bits...Booting Discs! That's the latest lingo at the Extension office. Our office is finally catching up with the computer age. I imagine the race has only started as this fast paced technology changes and advances everyday.

Not only is technology speeding ahead but this new "guest" in the office has had some side effects. Extension agents not only participate in the county-wide workshop run, the farm visit marathon and the two hour P.S.U. 120 mile race, with the newest event being the "Apple Pie Dash". Competition is keen for computer time as we each excitedly unlock the potential it provides in our educational program efforts.

The computer age has not only entered places of work but our farms and homes as well. Christmas day found software programs tucked under the tree. And I found myself spending part of my vacation rearranging to make room for our new "guest" and its hardware! Hours later found me pouring through manuals and making Syntax errors

How has the computer age affected your family? What is the effect of this computer madness on our families? It is too early for a "print-out" on long term effects but present information is positive. Dr. James Van Horn, Extension family specialist, indicates a computer can enhance and strengthen the family. At the very least, it encourages family members to work together and cooperate to solve various problems. And unlike the T.V., the

computer is not passive. The computer provides new challenges one after another and the user receives immediate feedback.

With all the positives, there are still some considerations for families to keep in mind. Recently, while visiting friends, we spent the entire evening taking turns at computer games only to realize as we drove home that we really hadn't had much conversation. All we remembered saying was "hello" and "good-bye".

If you have a home computer or are just looking into purchasing one for your family keep these ideas in mind.

—Locate the computer in a place that is not a major traffic pattern but provides close proximity to the room where your family spends time together.

—Have seating for several people to encourage family members to work together and share information together.

—Develop some ground rules. Decide how long each family member will be allowed to use the computer and how programs will be shared.

—Decide if homework and chores get done before the computer is turned on

With or without invitation it appears that computer "guests" are going to become permanent members in many families for years to come. The computer has caused our Extension family to work and learn together. Hopefully, as computers enter our homes we can utilize them also to strengthen our families.