

# TAKING TIME

by Rebecca Wolf

Extension Home Economist



In the relay, each person has the task of moving from one point to another carrying the paper cup (empty or filled with a small amount of water) on a part of his body. For example, one might carry it on his hand, another on her elbow, a third on her head, a fourth crab-style on his stomach. Get the idea? This is a great one for community picnics or family reunions.

Remember people of all ages can play. Involve grandparents, parents, teens, and young children in the same game. You may want to form teams that have someone older than 60, someone who is between 13 and 18 years old, and someone under 10 years of age, etc. on each of them.

Another quick filler that I've introduced to several parent and day care provider groups this month is the sponge toss. It is similar to the spontaneous balloon tosses that often occur at birthday parties where people just start bouncing a balloon around a room. The goal is to not let it touch the floor.

You and your children can do this with sponges. (The bigger the sponges, the better. I like to use giant car wash sponges. They are easy to grab.) Begin by tossing one sponge into a group. As the pace picks up, add two or three more.

Within two minutes everyone is laughing, and laughter is one of the best stress relievers!

For a particularly scorching day, add excitement by plunging the

sponges in a bucket of water occasionally. Insist on under-hand tosses.

Not only does this play time help you to relax, your children are learning. They are improving eye-hand coordination skills, balance,

concentration, strategic planning, and cooperation skills.

It's easy to let the hectic pace of life, with work and farm time, to squeeze out family time. But we all need to take breaks. Our bodies need the down time. Our kids need our attention.

## Greenwood FFA Anniversary

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to develop a class plan along with the guidance counselor that enables students to take academics as well as agriculture. "That's one of the advantages to being in a small school!" Students can now choose from three different tracking systems — agriculture/academic, agriculture/business, and agriculture/industrial arts.

As principal of Greenwood High School, Ed Burns sees the FFA program as very beneficial. "Under MeeCee Baker, we're looking to 2000, looking at ag-science, it's hi-tech oriented! Over the years we've accepted the curriculum for not being lesser - just different. A lot of kids go on to academics — the stigma of vo-ag is gone!

"I'd like to see it continue in its diversification - very few kids actually come from farms. I also want to see the continued growth with non-traditional female enrollment. The male students are becoming more accepting."

Burns attributes the success of the program to the school board and Baker's enthusiasm.

When asked what benefits he felt FFA had, Burns said that "It's given kids a hands-on experience and sense of belonging. Many of the goals are similar to education in general. I see a lot of acceptance among the kids — they accept each other for what they are!"

Glenn Cauffman was part of the team that campaigned 10 years ago to reinstate FFA at Greenwood after it had been dropped in 1964 due to a low point in the agriculture economy. He was also the first part-time agriculture and FFA instructor 10 years ago.

Glenn Cauffman is able to see the fruits of the seeds he helped sow several years ago. "It's heart-warming to see the program develop. I give MeeCee a lot of credit for helping it grow. She is making it a respectable program."

More excitement has come for

Cauffman in seeing the facilities expand at Greenwood, offering an agricultural science diverse approach for the students.

As a parent, school board member, educator, and concerned community member, Cauffman feels very strongly about FFA. "The training the kids get in FFA is not duplicated anywhere else in education. It has a lot of depth — opportunities for diversity. All kids can feel a part of something with the opportunity to achieve they can build their self-esteem."

As a farmer in the community, Sid Witmer sees the importance of FFA in the school to be vital for the future of agriculture. "As farming becomes more technical, the more training kids have, the more beneficial it is. With the number of farmers decreasing, an agricultural science background can help the food industry."

In addition to learning more about agriculture in the classroom, "kids also learn composure and leadership." Part of that composure and leadership is the pride they have for the industry.

As another vital team member in reinstating the FFA chapter 10 years ago and a present board member, Lloyd Byers has invested much time and energy to support the program. When asked "Why should the board keep funding FFA?" Lloyd said, "The amount of money we invest in the kids comes back to the community. The kids are learning about agriculture — the largest employer in Pennsylvania as well as being good citizens." Another attribute of the program is the diversity offered for the students — positive outlets for their energy.

Lloyd reiterated what so many others had said — the school board supports the program and the instructor, MeeCee Baker is positive about every kid. She is preparing the students for agriculture diversity.

### Family Summer Fun

I don't know how your schedule has been. Mine has been hectic! I've found myself mumbling, "Stop the world. I want to get off!"

When I begin letting my work and "adult" obligations overwhelm me, I realize I should call time out. For me, the thing that helps me relax when I've become too serious and driven is children.

I surround myself with children. I watch them play. And, I join them in play. Now for harried parents who think their stress comes from their children, this time out with kids may not seem to be a solution. But when is the last time you relaxed and laughed and "let your hair down" with your children?

I've been reading some startling statistics and comments about how Americans have forgotten how to relax and live at a healthy life pace.

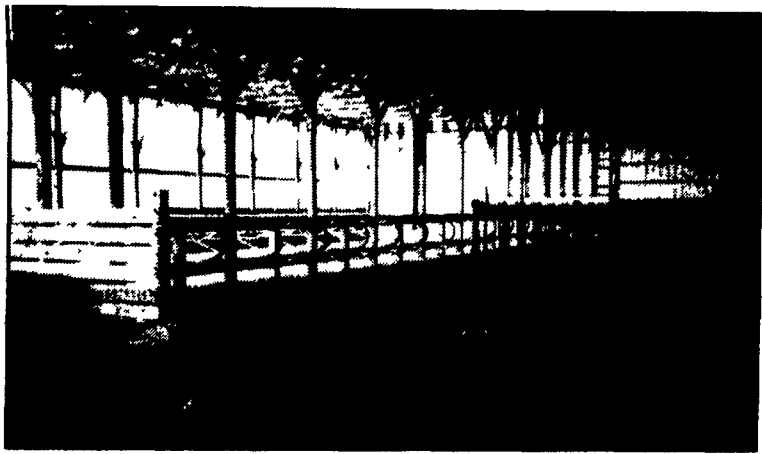
So, if you want to slow down and be silly with some kids (or darling adults) in your life, try some games the next time you are

together.

Cooperative Musical Mats is a take-off on musical chairs. The difference is that with this game everyone wins in the end, and everyone usually ends up laughing instead of having many people with hurt feelings. You start the game by having "mats" (sheets of paper, old paper bags, or rug remnants) scattered on the floor or in the yard. Start the music. When the music stops, each person must find a mat to stand on. Then restart the music, and the players move.

Each time remove some mats. This means that as the spots get fewer, more people have to share a mat. Depending on the size of the group and the size of the mat, make rules like "everyone must have at least one foot/one toe on the mat." End the game with as many people as possible on one mat.

Another great game is a paper cup relay. You can do this having two teams, or you may do it with one team racing against the clock.



## Long Core Cattle "Waffle Slats"

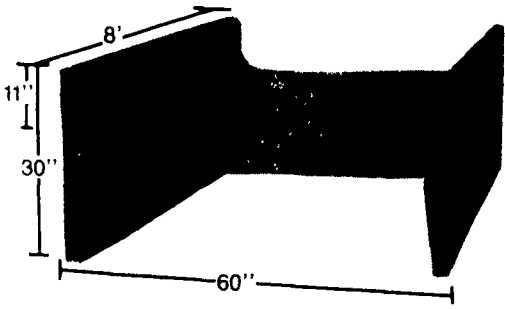


Heifer "Waffle Slats"

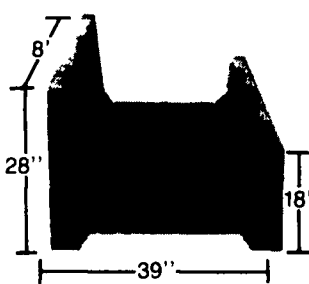
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