

TAKING TIME

by **Rebecca Escott**
Extension Home Economist



To Be Or Not To Be Home Alone

In anticipation of hosting my 6 and 8-year-old nephews for a Valentine's Day sleep-over, I've been thinking about the skills, interests, and attention spans of children this age. So much attention has been given recently to the "home alone" syndrome that this was a good reminder of normal development expectations for elementary-school children. For me, this was exploration in anticipation of a fun day. For many families, it is a pressure-filled question.

In 1991, 15 million children in the United States cared for themselves or siblings without adult supervision. For some of these children this is unsafe and inappropriate.

If you are thinking about choices for your children, consider this checklist. The questions target essential skills a child should have before he is unsupervised in his home.

- ✓ Can your child recite his name, telephone number, and address even under stress?
- ✓ Can your child take a telephone message accurately?
- ✓ Can your child use the phone

to call you or a friend?

✓ Does your child understand the concepts of emergency? Late and later? Stranger? As you spend time together, get in the habit of asking, "If you had been here alone, what should you have done?" Use this technique if a utility service person knocks on the door, a younger sibling falls and scrapes her knee, or your child comments about being frightened.

- ✓ Can your child read and understand a written message?
- ✓ Can your child prepare a simple snack by himself?
- ✓ Can your child find something interesting or useful to do while alone?

✓ Does your child feel comfortable about being alone by herself? Some studies have shown that children who live in rural areas appear to be less fearful about being home alone than those who live in urban areas. But remember that each child is unique. Also consider that in rural areas, children may be some distance from help in an emergency.

- ✓ Do you feel comfortable with your child being home alone?
- ✓ Does the child generally observe rules that exist in the

home?

Parents can practice these skills with their children in anticipation of being home alone. Ask a relative to call and purposely have your child take a message. Allow your child to practice selecting familiar numbers from a posted list and dialing the phone. Establish a set spot in the home for messages. Leave notes there on a regular basis (even when you are home). Train your daughter to check this spot each time she comes in this house.

I encourage families to survey the neighborhood. Is there a trusted adult who could serve as a helper or listening ear if needed? Would that person hold an extra key to your home in case of an emergency? As a family, think about what phone check-in routines you might follow.

I am reminded of an African proverb, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." If you are not a parent of young children, as a part of your "village" could you volunteer to be a watchful eye? Do you drive through your neighborhood as a part of your daily routine? How could this help? Remember not to pressure children who ask to take phone messages. Don't grill them for further information like, "Well, when will she be available?" If you stop by a home and a child will not allow you to enter (even if she knows you), respect that. In fact, volunteer to come back later. You can be a part of the community's solution to school-age child care concerns.

Families Churn Ice Cream To Win

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — The Pennsylvania Farm Show featured a special "cold" contest, the Ice Cream Churn-Off. This event generated many interesting recipes for homemade ice cream. Flavors ranged from fruit varieties to chocolate concoctions. But, judges were able to select three top entries from among eight different contestants.

In first place, the judges selected Elsie Smith's "Hawaiian Delight," a mixture of pineapple, bananas, maraschino cherries, and macadamia nuts. Smith and her grandchildren, all from Roaring Spring, Blair County, made the recipe in her hand-crank ice cream churner. Her hand-made method was one of her keys to a successful ice cream creation. Smith won a \$300 top prize in the contest.

Defending champion, John Hess, from Manheim, Lancaster County, churned his creation, "Strawberry" ice cream, to the second place award, \$150. This recipe featured his family's homemade strawberry jam as the major ingredient. The \$125 third prize recipe came from Harold and Linda Geise, from Watsonstown, Northumberland County, who created "Winter's Delight" for the judges. This recipe featured walnuts and maple syrup as the flavoring ingredients.

Other recipes in the contest included: "Peppermint Stick," made by Benjamin Schriver, Jonestown, Lebanon County; "Raspberry," made by Connie Troutman, Mohrsville, Berks County; "Chocolate," made by Galen Kopp, Mt. Joy, Lancaster County; "Peanut Butter Crunch," made by Harry Thompson, Mt.

Joy, Lancaster County; and "Black Raspberry," made by Chris and Brenda Davidson, Shippenburg, Cumberland County.

This contest was designed to offer families and friends the opportunity to create their own varieties of homemade ice cream. Pennsylvania's ice cream industry is the second largest in the United States, with over 74 million gallons produced in 1991. The state's 10 billion citizens are also known as big consumers of this "chilling" dairy product.

Complete recipes for the top three prize winners follow. A complete contest recipe brochure can be obtained by sending a self-addressed and stamped legal-size envelope to: "1993 Fun Night Ice Cream Recipes," PA Dairy Promotion Program, 2301 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg, PA, 17110.

WINTER'S DELIGHT

- 2 cups walnuts
- 10 large eggs
- 2 cups sugar
- 4 cups milk
- 4 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 3 cups pure maple syrup
- 2 quarts heavy cream

Spread walnuts on a cookie sheet and toast in a 350 degree oven for about 8 minutes. Cool and chop fine. In a large non-reactive pan, combine eggs, milk and sugar. Cook over medium heat until mixture reaches the consistency of mayonnaise. Remove from heat and stir in vanilla, maple syrup, walnuts, and cream. Cool. Pour into ice cream freezer and freeze.

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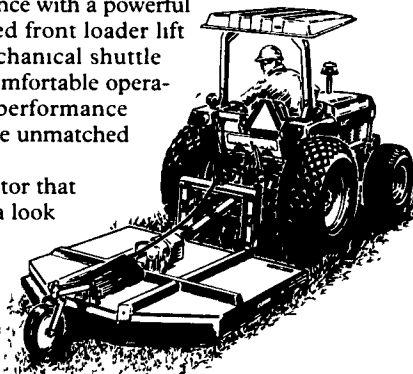
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