

Berks Spring Awareness Day Grapples With Issues

Laughter Lightens Changes, Challenges, Choices

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LEESPORT (Berks Co.) —
 "Laughter is the secret ingredient to health. It needs no prescription, is always available, doesn't cost anything, and is one of the few things that hasn't been taxed," Dr. Julia Cummings told 180 persons who attended the Spring Awareness Day at the Berks County Cooperative Extension on Tuesday.

With the premise that if negative emotions have a negative influence on the body than positive emotions have a healthy influence on the body, Norman Cousins, who had been given one chance in 500 to survive, surrounded himself with people, movies, and things to make him laugh with genuine belly laughter. Soon he was able to sleep without pain and returned to complete health.

Cousin's experience with the healing phenomenal of deep belly laughter has prompted the scientific community to explore how humor plays an important role of relieving stress.

"The internal perception of the way we see problems causes stress not the external problem," Cummings said. She encouraged the audience to learn to look for humor in every situation.

"It's important to laugh at your-

self," Cummings said. A vain, frightened, angry person can not laugh at his or herself. Humor increases self awareness and enables us to see ourselves in relation to others.

Recently Cummings overheard a discussion between an elderly couple in the grocery store: "Ethel, don't buy that; it's loaded with preservatives," a man said to his wife who had picked up a box.

"Fred," the woman replied, "at our age, we need all the preservatives we can get."

For those who are dismayed at the political systems, jokes that poke fun at the system relieve stress. For example, "They say George Washington couldn't tell a lie. Today, politicians can't tell the truth," Cummings said.

According to Cummings, humor can diffuse the most volatile situations. She reported that a company had effective results when sending humorous letters to past due account such as the following: In checking our files, we found we did more for you than your own mother. We carried you for 15 months.

Cummings said, "If it were not for laughter, we would all be sicker than we are."

Many of the audience agreed with the sentiment as the morning



Cindy Bishop, left, tells participants at the Awareness Day about the use of herbs.



This committee planned the annual Homemaker's Awareness Day for Berks County. From left, Nancy Farmer, Bettye Grief, Jane Treichler, Fay Strickler, home economist; Stella Richards, and Elaine Mavchline.



Faye Strickler, right, home economist, presents awards to Elaine Mauchline, center, and Lucy Brubaker.



Joan Cook, right, presents scholarships to Lynelle Harbold, center, and Susan Leiby.

session focused on issues of child abuse, neglect, and AIDS.

Child abuse

Berks County has two times the amount of child abuse cases than its neighboring counties, according to George Kovarie, executive director of Berks County Children and Youth Services.

He attributes the higher incident of abuse to the fact that countians are not as tolerant of abuse and promptly report suspicious cases.

While the agency seeks to protect innocent children, the irony of the system is reflected by the abundance of babies born addicted to drugs and the government's inability to intervene.

"A pregnant women who is addicted to cocaine or other drugs cannot be charged with abuse because the child doesn't have status until birth," Kovarie said.

One in four women, Kovarie said, will have had some type of sexual abuse between the ages of 0 to 18 years.

AIDS

Berks County also has one of the highest rates of AIDS in the state.

Amy Ortiz of Berks AIDS Network and Pat Childs of Rainbow Home told of the county's services for those infected and of the education to stop the spread of AIDS.

Rainbow House is a 12-bed residential facility for people 18 years and over who are terminally ill with AIDS. Rainbow House is a non-profit corporation supported by private donations.

Herb scents

Patrice Dyer, manager of the Village Herb Shop in Blue Ball, and Cindy Bishop, owner of Aromatic Essentials in Elizabethtown, demonstrated ways of growing and using herbs.

When container gardening, Dyer said that half potting and half gardening soil should be used. Garden soil should be sterilized by placing it in a 200-degree oven for two hours.

Herbs should not be overwatered.

Oil scents are stronger if herbs are not overwatered," Dyer said.

Dyer told of the uses for the many different herbs that she display. In addition to using herbs for cooking and for aromas, some herbs also repel insects and some such as lemon balm remove offensive odors from the air.

Pennyroyal leaves repel fleas and ants, patchoulli herbs repel silverfish, sweet herbs such as mint or lemon balm, repel moths, and tansy or citronella repel mosqui-

toes. Mice do not like the smell of mint, but if you want to attract them to a mousetrap, use anise seed with peanut butter.

Scholarships

Two \$400 scholarships, given by the Berks County Extension Homemaker's Scholarship, were presented to two Albright students who are pursuing nutrition or home economics education. The recipients are Lynelle Harbold and Susan Leiby, who is a 4-H program assistant working toward a degree.



Dr. Julia Cummings