

TAKING TIME

by Rebecca Escott

Extension Home Economist



Hope For The Snowbound

For those of you who have been living with lanes that are drifted shut and cars that are snowed under, the good news is that it's only 57 days until spring. Between now and then I'm sure there will be several more snowfalls.

After a few days of being snowbound, people begin to experience cabin fever. And with cabin fever

may come some tense moments as a family. Some people end up lounging for many hours in front of a buzzing TV because "there's nothing else to do." If you want to fend off cabin fever in your home, try some TV-free activities.

The UN has declared 1994 "International Year of the Family." This proclamation highlights the value that families contribute to

communities and nations. When families do things together, they strengthen the family unit. TV-free games and exercises are a perfect way to build your family.

Take some time away from the tube to play "the biggest and the smallest." Instruct family members to find the BIGGEST and the smallest item in various categories. For instance, search your home or a specific room for the biggest and smallest books or ball. How about a shoe or plant? You can work in teams or have one person serve as the "big" specialist and another act as the "small" expert. If you have several children, you could play adults against the kids. Set a time limit for completion. Compare notes on what teams determined to be the biggest and smallest items.

This game not only builds strong families, it boosts an individual's observation skills and creativity.

Another way to sustain your family is to build ties with other families. My husband and I had a great time visiting with neighbors as we dug out from the last storm. The spontaneous conversations and snowball fights renewed my sense of community. Fight off your cabin fever by venturing outdoors. When is the last time families on your road or in your community got together for sled riding or a snowman building party? Shed the TV lethargy and host a winter event. Top the time off

with hot chocolate and relaxed conversations.

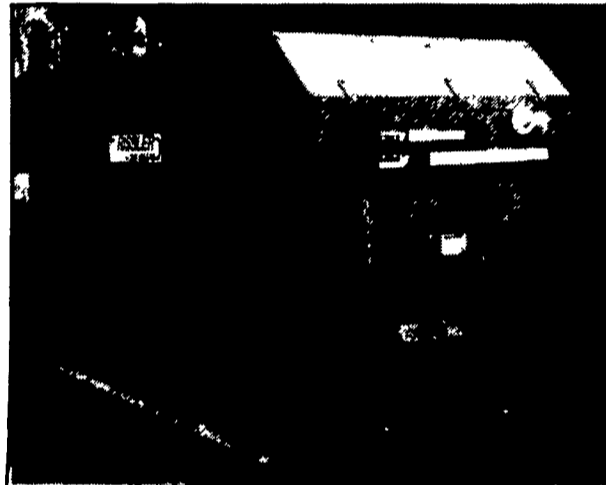
I hope these few ideas motivate you to shake off those boredom blues. Take the time to try these TV-free family activities. It's a great way to strengthen your family and to kick off a year-long celebration of "International Year of the Family."

Rebecca Escott is a Home Economist with Penn State Cooperative Extension in Lehigh County. Cooperative Extension provides practical information designed to improve the quality of life for local residents. We work in partnership with Penn State and county government.

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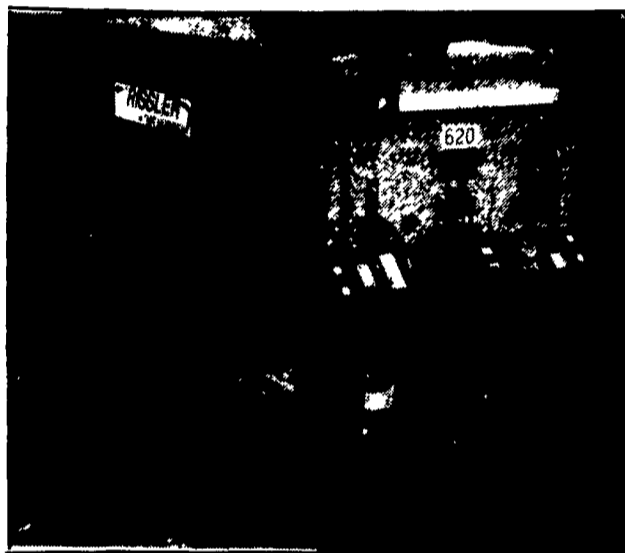
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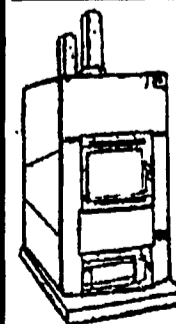
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