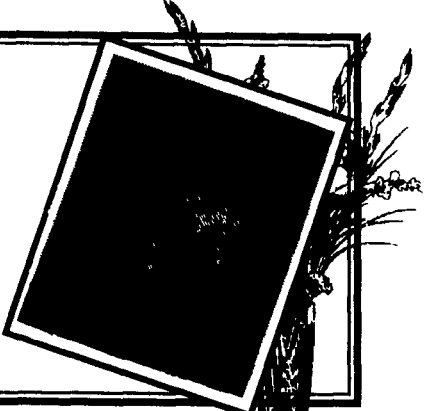


**Family Living
Focus**

Sharon Stencovage
Schuylkill Co.
Extension Agent



**Children and
Homework Hassles**

Just a few months remain in the school year and the enthusiasm that our children had for school work is fading fast. As parents many of us may be beginning to become more frustrated when it comes to helping our children with their homework. If this is occurring in your household, then it may be time to rethink our role in homework and to learn how to approach it with our children.

Remember that homework is given to students to reinforce the learning that has taken place at school. It also helps students to develop a sense of discipline and organization. At this time of year, parents may be nagging their children to get their homework done, which doesn't encourage discipline development or a love of learning.

How can parents solve this problem? A Cooperative Extension specialist from New Mexico, Diane DelCampo, has provided the following suggestions for helping children with homework and ways for parents to approach this important task more positively:

- Schedule a consistent daily quiet time for children to work on their homework. Together decide on a time period that would work for your family. Depending on the age of the children and the amount of homework received, the length of time will vary. If your children have no homework or finish before the time is up, encourage your children to spend some quiet time reading. Parents can read also to model this behavior. If a favorite television program comes on during the homework time, tape it and watch it later, or change the homework time. The family homework routine should be created to be flexible, so that it would work for the children and you.

- Assist children with one or two examples, but don't help with every homework question. If the homework is completed accurately, you know that they have learned the material. When a parent helps with every question, you may not know if your children truly understand and can do it on their own. Children who continue to be frustrated and dependent on parents to complete their homework, may not understand what is expected.

- Help children organize a time frame for long and difficult projects. Establishing short-term deadlines for different parts of the project, either over a period of days or during the course of an evening. If the project is a one night deal, work early in the evening, and schedule homework breaks. This will help children to pace themselves, according to their capabilities.

- Reduce stress in your children's lives as much as possible. Many times our children may be involved in lots of extracurricular activities. This may lead to tired and distracted children, who are burned out. Take a look at your schedule and work toward a balanced one, which will allow our children to complete their homework, as well as time to relax and play.

- Recognize the limits of your patience. If homework hassles are affecting your family life and are a constant irritation, think about hiring a tutor. Even an older student in your neighborhood, who likes to work with children, can perform this role. This may help ease the relationship between you and your children, as well as help your children do better in school.

- Use a non-threatening approach to homework. When children make mistakes in their homework, ask them how they got the answer. Often when children attempt to explain this, they will discover their mistake and make appropriate corrections. This technique is more effective than giving your children the right answer.

- Support the teacher. If you see a problem with the homework, communicate this either through a

note or an appointment with the teacher. Complaining about the teacher only encourages your children to question the teacher's competence and authority.

When homework is considered part of your family's daily routine, and is handled positively and hon-

estly, both parents and children can appreciate its usefulness beyond the letter grade that is received on their report cards. Homework then will become less of a family issue and not a power struggle between parent and children.

Newsletter Helps Parents Stay On Target

NEWARK, Del. - Cuddled in his mother's lap, one-year-old Ian contentedly studies the pages of a colorful picture book. But not for long. With a determined wiggle, he squirms to the floor and toddles about the family room under his mother's attentive eye.

Shari Miller, like any new parent, wants to be sure her child is growing and developing normally. But as a working mother settling into a new home, her spare time is limited. Juggling work and family demands, she doesn't have much chance to sit down and read books on child development.

Luckily for Miller - and for many other Delaware parents - help comes regularly in the mailbox in the form of "Great Beginnings," a University of Delaware Cooperative Extension newsletter series geared to her son's age.

"I like it because it's concise," says the Newark resident. "I can see immediately if his developmental skills are on track."

While "Great Beginnings" allows her to check that her son is reaching developmental mile-

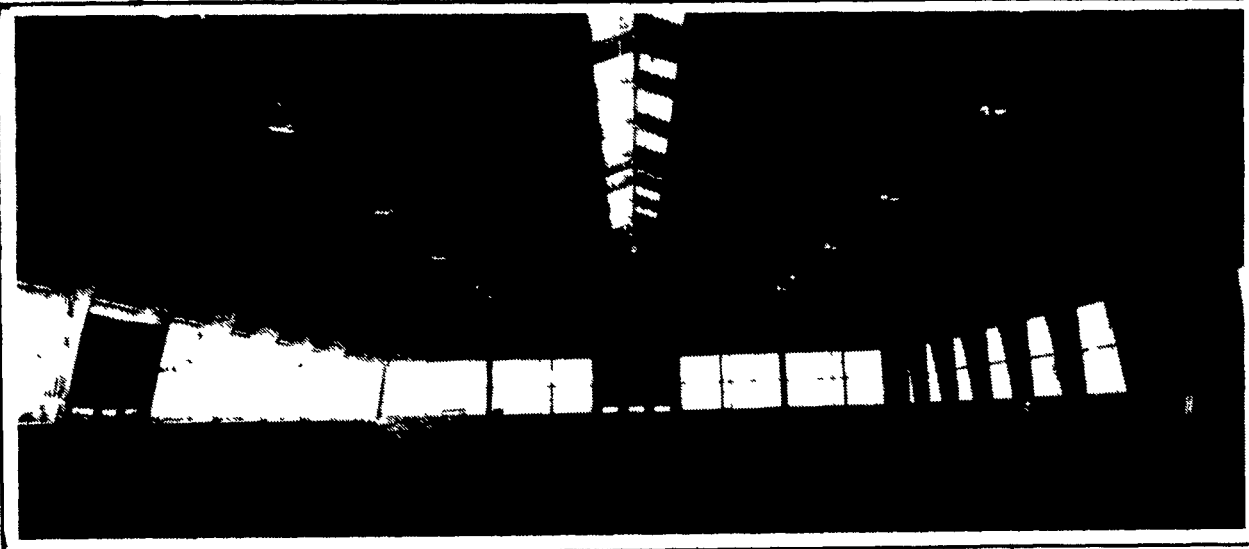
stones on schedule, Miller also can get ideas for easy homemade toys, learn effective methods of discipline and find out where to seek help if it's needed.

"It's a great refresher," says Miller, who is certified to teach elementary education. "I often use the ideas for activities and share them with my mom when she babysits. Last week, I used the tip of letting Ian play with pots and lids from the kitchen. I was amazed at how long it kept him occupied."

"Great Beginnings" is mailed each month from a child's birth to 36 months, and each issue contains information specific to the age. For instance, the 13-month issue Miller just received offers research on children's fears, tips on weaning the child from the bottle or breast and suggestions on how frustrated parents can take time out away from their children.

A subscription to "Great Beginnings" costs \$7 for one year, \$13 for two years, and \$20 for three years. The fee may be waived in cases of financial hardship. For more information, call (302)831-1328.

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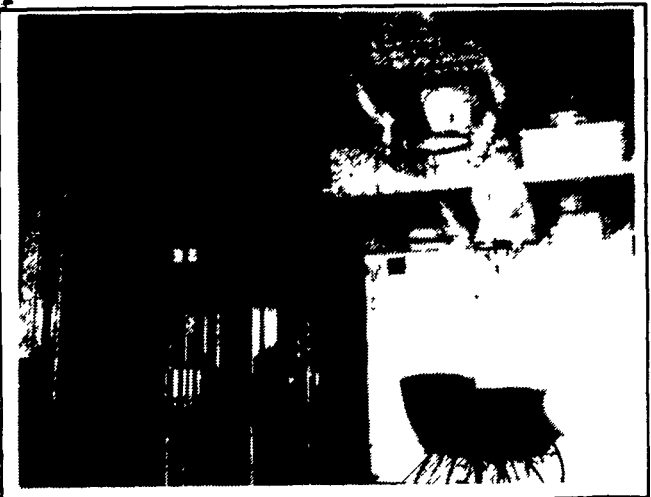
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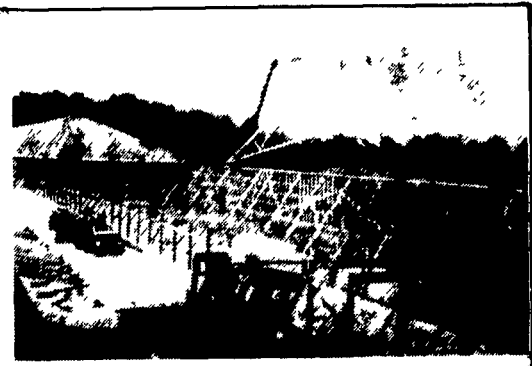


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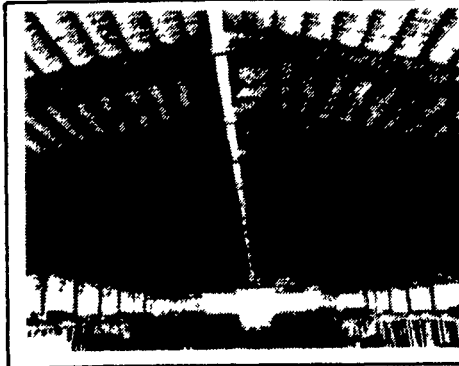
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