

Family Living Focus
by
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sense of familiarity, comfort, support and caring. It's those dozens, even hundreds, of little rituals that are unique to each family year-round as well as during the holidays. Maybe it's the way Wednesday night has been designated as "leftover night" in your home, or that you visit Grandma every Sunday after church. Special foods, games, activities, stories, decorations, parties, religious celebrations, and get-togethers with family and friends also come to mind when one thinks of celebrating family traditions.

Contrary to what many believe, traditions do not have to be elaborate celebrations, in fact, it's the "little traditions" — simple acts such as eating meals together, celebrating birthdays, or enjoying a special storytime — that often mean the most to children and that they recall most fondly as they grow older. The

"Little Traditions" Often Mean the Most

Several months ago, I was reminded by my 3-year-old daughter how quickly traditions can take root in a family. We were getting ready for bedtime one night when she said to me "Don't forget my milk, Mom. Daddy always gets me milk before bedtime." Since that time,

I've heard her repeat this familiar message many nights before her bedtime. It's a simple request but one of profound importance, as it reminds me of how the simplest acts provide children with such a familiar sense of the "way things are always done" in the family.

Family traditions serve just this purpose by giving children a

nice thing about such rituals is they they often are not planned — most simply happen naturally as a result of family members sharing time together.

Particularly during this time of year, it's a great time to begin to think about those traditions that mean the most to you, and those that you hope to pass on to other family members. Here are a few ideas for simple family activities that can help to strengthen your ties, not only during the holidays, but throughout the year.

- Hold an "I Remember When ..." session with as many extended family members as possible. Let each family member recall significant events that have been meaningful to them. Young and old generations will love reminiscing about life long ago and now.

- Make a family tablecloth each year to be used at dinner-time or at special family outings. Use a plain white cloth sheet and let family members draw or paint designs on it and sign their name. You may wish to design a "family emblem" or motto to draw on your tablecloth.

- Make it a tradition each holiday season to do something nice for those service providers who mean the most to your family — child care providers, teachers, or mail and newspaper carriers. Youngsters will enjoy learning about the spirit of giving!

- Hang a family bulletin board in your kitchen, family room or hallway. Each family member can have his or her own section to share achievements, talents, messages or snapshots. Create a special seasonal display for important holidays.

- Make it a point to sit down for as many meals together during the week as you can. While families today are busy, nothing promotes quality family time together better than sitting down together for meals. Some fun conversation starters include "What's something funny that happened today?" or "If you could have three wishes, what would they be?"

- Celebrate a joint clean-up project together. A regularly celebrated "clean-the-attic" party can be a great way to enjoy time together while sharing treasures from the past. Be sure to enjoy a favorite meal after all the hard work is done!

- Play games together. The old adage "families who play together, stay together" certainly has its merits.

- Keep a family photo album or scrapbook of family events and activities. Video cameras offer another great way to preserve cherished family moments. Have a "Family Night" where you can enjoy eating popcorn while watching your favorite home videos.

- Finally, make your own list of "little traditions" that your family now enjoys or would like to enjoy in the future!



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At the Lebanon Farm Women Convention, entertainment by Sounds of Renown included serenading June Shelley, the most recently married member, to the tune "Just In Case You Change Your Mind."

Lebanon Holds 58th Annual Convention

SCHAEFERSTOWN (Lebanon Co.) — About 150 women attended the 58th annual convention held by the Lebanon County Society of Farm Women recently.

Held at the Schaeferstown Fire Hall, the day-long convention featured speaker Margaret Long. As a pediatric nurse at the Hershey Medical Center, Margaret travels to Honduras annually with a medical team. According to Margaret, Honduras is the second poorest country in the world. The team saw 200 patients during the two-week visit. Many children have severe problems such as Spina Bifida, limb length discrepancy, and club feet.

In other business, Karen Sellers

reported on the activities of the different Farm Women societies throughout the county.

A bazaar table during the day helped raised funds. Members each donated a baby item to be distributed to those in need through Lebanon County Christian Ministries.

Three members were presented pins for being more than 80 years of age. Ruth Bucher, who is 90-years-old, was unable to attend the convention, but will receive a pin in honor of her age.

Lettie Schadler, Lebanon County extension director, gave a report on the county's 4-H clubs. County

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