

**Family Living
Focus**

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Today childcare and the nation's economy go hand in hand. More than 13 million married or single women are in the work force. Childcare is the challenge of today's family.

Many parents fear that a child will relate more to a caregiver than to a parent. From infancy, a child needs warm consistent care. Researchers report the importance of a good fit between parent or caregiver and child or infant.

Good news for worrisome parents. Research notes that infants, from a very young age, are capable of becoming attached to more than one person. However, they do develop an order of preference.

So, what does this mean? Warm, consistent care is key. Childcare can be a good experience. Good care by parents and caregivers is essential.

Good child day care requires three components. First, a caregiver must provide care and guidance to the children. The caregiver must be willing to work with the parents. The goal is to ensure the child will grow and learn in a warm, secure environment.

A good caregiver is well trained. Being an experienced "Mom" or "Dad" is good training. Make certain the caregiver likes children. Even though the caregiver is in business, caring for children is not "just a job."

Caregivers need to know child development. Knowledge of developmentally appropriate behavior and normal growth patterns is essential. Caregivers should understand what children can and want to do at different stages of growth. Parents should be assured that the caregiver knows that each child is unique and special. Talk with the caregiver about behavior issues.

Are the caregiver's child rearing attitudes similar to the parents? Are the family's cultural values respected? A young child needs caregivers who respond in a consistent manner. Infants need to know that when they cry, they will be held and cuddled.

Interaction with the child from the earliest age is critical. Check and see if the caregiver reads, talks and sings to the children. Communication skills begin with infancy. It is the basis of learning and social development in later years.

Parents need to know the ratio of caregivers to children and infants. Ask if the caregiver is licensed or registered. If so, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania places restrictions on the ratio of caregivers to children. A child needs

individual attention from a caregiver. If too many children are "in care," each child will not have a chance for someone to listen to them, be read a story, or sing a song.

Second, is the setting suitable? The facility must be safe and healthy. Is the facility clean and comfortable? Ask yourself: "If you were a child, would you want to stay here?" The equipment and supplies — toys, games, and furniture — should be in good condition. Toys should encourage physical, social, and cognitive development of the child. Is there enough space indoors and out so all the children can move safely and freely? Watching television or videos, even educational ones, is becoming a prime activity for the children. From the earliest years, children need to be engaged in activities.

Ask if the caregiver has the children on a routine. Most children feel more secure with even minimal routine or schedule. However, if the schedule is vastly different from the schedule at home, the child can become very confused. Children thrive on consistency.

Finally, what will day care cost you? Day care costs vary depending on the type of care, the days of care and the hours of care. Most caregivers ask the



Lebanon County 4-H board members Maxine Maser and Jack Ferry preview items that will go up for bid on Thursday, Aug. 3, during the Lebanon County 4-H Benefit Auction at the Lebanon Fairgrounds, Cornwall and Rocherty Roads, Lebanon. The board hopes to raise \$4,000 to fund costs of educational materials, activity fees, transportation, and awards. To donate items or for more information, call (717) 270-4391 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

parents to sign a contract. While caregivers may love your child, they are in business. Signing a contract is good business for all parties. A contract tells parents what they can expect from the caregiver and the facility. Policies are stated. Parents know their obligations.

Ask about paying for days your child is sick. What happens if you are late picking up the child? Expect a fee for care after regular hours.

Deciding on a day care program is a challenge. Visit a variety of programs. Talk with caregiver and parents. Take your child along. The caregiver, the facility and the health and safety of the child are the key elements. Select a program in which both you and your child will be comfortable.

Barbecue Benefit Aug. 3

LEBANON (Lebanon Co.) — Food, fun, horses, and supporting a worthy cause — all this is possible at the Sixth Annual Chicken Barbecue to benefit the Four Diamonds Fund for children with cancer.

Sponsored by the Eastern Arabian Horse Show/East Coast Championships and Country Fair, the barbecue will be Aug. 3 from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Quentin Riding Club, just three miles south of Lebanon on Rt. 72.

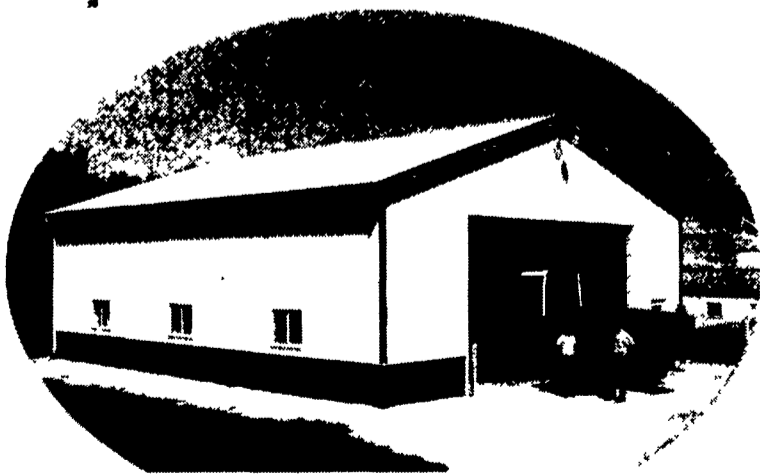
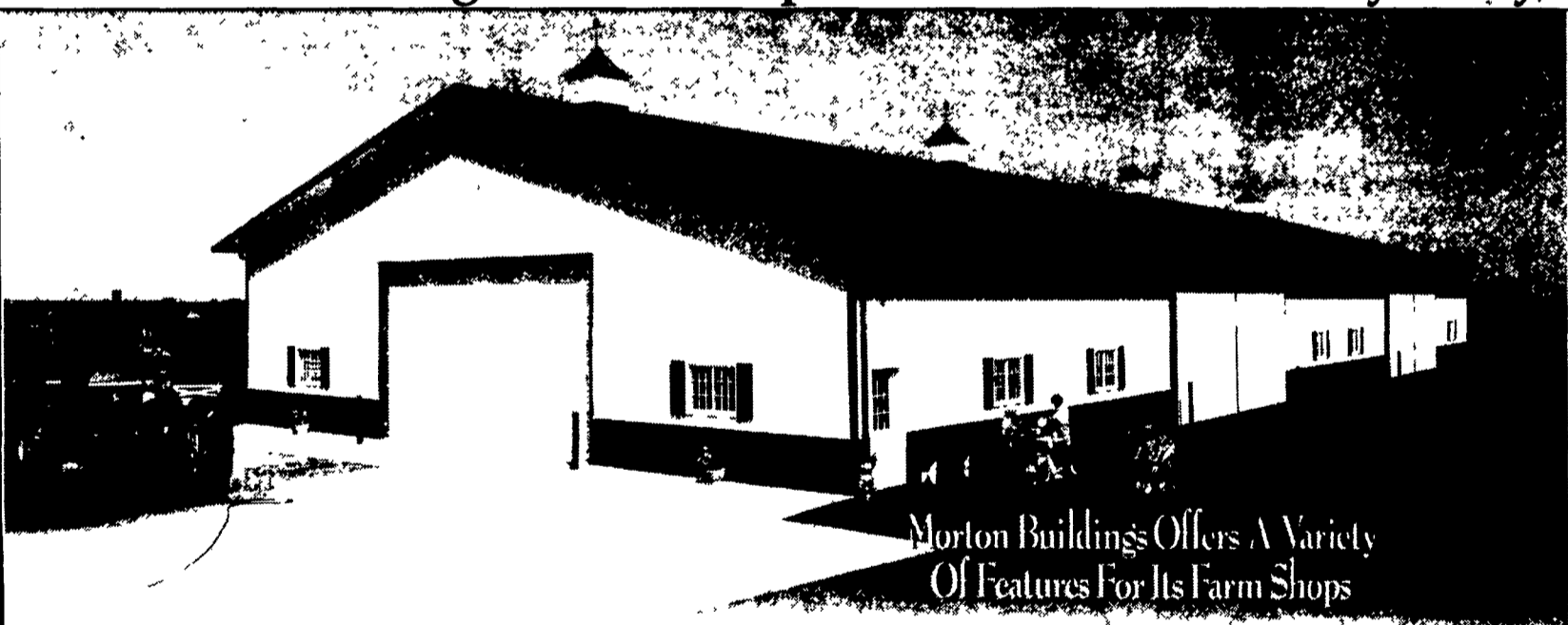
The meal includes half a chicken, baked potato, corn on the cob, pepper cabbage, roll and

butter, fruit, and beverage, all for just \$7.50. You can eat at ring-side and watch the horses or take it home.

Tickets are available at Brandt's Mill Saddlery in Lebanon, H & H Tack Shop in Annville, Keller Bros. Ford in Schaefferstown, Cross Road Farm Tack Shop in Lebanon, and the Office of University Development in Hershey. Tickets must be purchased in advance, and the deadline for purchase is July 30.

For more information, call 717-949-2722.

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