

# Parenting, Childcare Resources Available

**LOU ANN GOOD**  
Lancaster Farming Staff

**LEESPORT (Berks Co.)** — Sue Gichero understands children. She knows what child care providers should offer to provide a healthy environment for children. She knows about government regulations for childcare providers and the many resources available to make care giving easier and happier.

As a mother of two sons, Tom, 18, and Joe, 20, and a former childcare administrator, Gichero has worked 20 years in childcare.

Recently Gichero was hired by Berks County Penn State Extension Office, Leesport, to train childcare providers, 4-H clubs' clothing and textile leaders, and assist in family living programming.

Gichero will assist Fay Strickler, family and consumer science agent, in providing intergenerational activities and parenting programs. Strickler handles food, nutrition, parenting, childcare, health, consumer, family, and home management topics.

Strickler said that when she joined extension services in 1972, two full-time people were employed until funding was no longer available.

Strickler is now president-elect of Epsilon Sigma Phi, a cooperative extension professional organization that requires traveling nationwide.

"I'm looking forward to the team effort in meeting the many needs of the extension," Gichero said.

"There is a growing need for quality care giving," Gichero said.

To fill this need, Gichero will offer on-site training and hold

workshops for parents and caregivers.

The state requires caregivers to complete six hours of training annually. There are many places to receive additional training, but Gichero believes extension offers the best.

She said, "I'm excited that our resources are research-based from Penn State. Our information is current and accurate."

Gichero said that caregivers are often overloaded with work and have little time to keep updated on resources and information that make their jobs easier.

"I don't think people understand the difficult responsibility of caring for children," she said.

Childcare workers are on the low end of financial salaries when compared to other occupations.

"The problem is that staff salaries are based on what parents can afford to pay."

Parents, she said, too often select a childcare provider based on cost rather than what is best for the child. Preschool care varies from \$85-\$125 per week. Infant care is higher, Gichero said.

"It's important to understand the setting you put your child in. Take time to know where your child is spending each day," Gichero said.

Many parents receive subsidized child care. Although some parents need only pay \$5-\$15 a week, they sometimes do not pay their amount. This creates a dilemma for the childcare provider.

Unfortunately if parents refuse to pay their fee, a provider is forced to terminate services.

"If you truly care about children, you don't want to see chil-



Sue Gichero, left, and Fay Strickler review materials suitable for teaching preschoolers science activities. The books, games, puzzles, tapes and even a creature catcher help teach children about insects.

dren moved from one childcare provider to another. Ideally children should stay with the same childcare provider."

The extension not only offers services to childcare providers but also to parents. In fact, the extension has many activities such as puppets, games, and books for parents to borrow. Materials are classified. If a parent or childcare provider wants to teach preschoolers math skills, materials are available, from basic activities such as sorting buttons according to color and shape to matching numerals placed on a match box car to the garage where the car should be parked.

The extension also has many resource books available as a lending library for parents and childcare providers.

"We like to encourage more hands-on learning rather than rote memorization," Gichero said. For this reason, she has a plethora of ideas to incorporate learning into everyday activities. For example, parents can encourage chil-

dren to sort silverware.

"Play is work for children. That's how they learn," Gichero said of the need to use everyday experiences as learning.

"Children lead hurried lives. Slow down and enjoy the moment," Gichero advises parents. "Kids are involved in so many activities that they can become as stressed as parents. Accept children as they are; their success should not be at the expense of self."

Stress learning rather than performance. Model joy in learning. Gichero said, "When a child makes

a mistake, respond with that's OK, that's how we learn."

Gichero said that she is amazed that many parents tend to give children too much control.

"I think parents feel guilty be-

cause they haven't been with their children all day. Some things should not be negotiable. If it's cold outside, a child must wear a coat. Yet some parents

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## Potatoes For Every Occasion

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ions, minced  
1 teaspoon parsley flakes  
1 cup shredded sharp process cheese

Place French fries in shallow skillet, pour dressing over, tossing to coat potatoes evenly. Sprinkle with onion and parsley flakes. Heat, turning as needed until browned slightly. When potatoes are heated thoroughly, place in bowl, top with cheese, toss lightly, and serve at once. Makes 6 servings.

Betty Biehl  
Mertztown

**CHEDDAR POTATO SOUP**  
4½ cups milk  
2 cups water  
1 cup chopped ham  
1 medium onion, chopped  
Salt and pepper  
1 small carrot, shredded  
1 potato, cubed  
½ stalk celery, sliced  
1 cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded

Cook ingredients together except cheese until vegetables are tender. Season and thicken with flour or cornstarch if desired. When ready to serve, add cheese and stir until melted. Serves 8.

Elizabeth Young  
Lancaster Co. Dairy Princess

**HONEY MUSTARD ROASTED POTATOES**  
4 large baking potatoes  
½ cup Dijon mustard  
¼ cup honey  
½ teaspoon crushed dried thyme leaves  
Salt and pepper to taste

Peel potatoes and cut each into 6-8 pieces. Cover potatoes with salted water in large saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Cook potatoes 12-15 minutes or until just tender. Drain. Combine mustard, honey, and thyme in small bowl. Toss potatoes with honey-thyme mustard in large bowl until evenly coated. Arrange potatoes on foil-lined

baking sheet coated with non-stick cooking spray. Bake at 375 degrees for 20 minutes or until potatoes begin to brown around edges. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Renee Blatt  
American Honey Queen

### SWEET POTATO CASSEROLE

1 tall can sweet potatoes or 3 large fresh ones, cooked

2 eggs  
½ cup butter, softened  
¾ cup sugar  
¾ cup milk

Mash cooked potatoes. Mix in remaining ingredients and put into oiled casserole dish.

**Topping:**  
½ cup butter, melted  
½ cup brown sugar  
Pour mixture over top of sweet potatoes. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes. Fifteen minutes before finished baking, sprinkle the remaining mixture on top.

½ cup cornflakes  
½ cup pecans, chopped in blender until coarse  
Finish baking 15 minutes.

Ivamae Love  
East Waterford

### POTATO SALAD

10 medium potatoes, partially cooked in skins, cooled, cubed  
1 pound bacon, fried, crumbled  
6 hard-cooked eggs, cubed  
2 cups mayonnaise  
½ pound grated sharp cheese (sprinkle over top)

2 small onions, chopped finely  
Salt and pepper to taste  
Mix together ingredients. Bake uncovered in 9x13-inch long pan at 325 degrees for 45 minutes. Casserole can be assembled and baked the day before then heated to serve. Or prepare ingredients individually the day before and assemble when ready to bake.

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