

PINAL COUNTY QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY — MARCH 2024

Volume 11, Issue 1

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Cooperative Extension, the outreach arm of the University of Arizona, brings the University to the people.

The faculty and staff in the Pinal County Extension office are part of a non-formal education network bringing research-based information into communities to help people improve their lives.

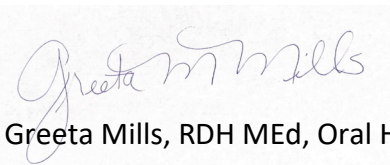
Cooperative Extension is committed to delivering high-quality, relevant educational programs and information to Pinal County citizens and communities.

Happy 2024 from Cooperative Extension!

Often this is a time of making resolutions, setting goals, and to increase our chances of actually making changes, we need to set small, measurable, attainable goals.

Perhaps some of the things on your list are found in this edition of our Newsletter like improving your knowledge of your home landscaping by attending a Smartscape series, finding new activities to keep your kids healthy by playing and enjoying healthy snacks. Maybe you are looking for some activities and can tap into the MAC (Maricopa Agricultural Center) Farm Ag-Venture program or the Park Days at the Florence Farmer's Market.

Pinal County Cooperative Extension is your local neighborhood resource and we hope you'll reach out to us with questions about programming that helps you reach your goals.



Greeta Mills, RDH MEd, Oral Health Professional

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THE UNIVERSITY
OF ARIZONA

AG—VENTURES



MAC FARM AG—VENTURES ROLL ON!

Written by Victor Jimenez, 4-H YD Program Agent

EXPERIENCE



MAC Farm Ag-Ventures

 **Farm Field Trips**

 **School Site Presentations**



Learning about agriculture is what takes place at the Maricopa Agricultural Center.

Each year the MAC (Maricopa Agricultural Center) Farm Ag-Venture program teaches our youth how food comes from a farm, in such a way that they have fun learning. We encourage all parents to contact the teachers working with their children to call us and schedule a MAC Farm Ag-Venture educational field trip, **with activities that follow the Arizona State Guidelines**. Give it a try, (MAC Farm – 520-374-6216). You'll be glad with how much your children will learn from this great experience. If they can't come to the farm, we can go to them at your local schools; so please give a call.

Remember, if you eat, you're involved in agriculture.

WE LOVE THE FARM !!!

"Very educational; hands-on activities were great."

- Teacher, Phoenix

"The presentations were visual and held everyone's attention. Staff was friendly too."

- Parent, Mesa

"Absolutely wonderful! You have one of the best educational field trips available."

- Adult Volunteer, Tucson

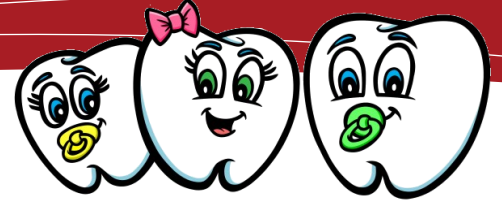
"I don't want to leave, but I hope I can come back again."

- Student, Chandler

"A great way for urban youth to learn about Arizona agriculture."

- Teacher, Casa Grande

FIRST SMILES ORAL HEALTH



BINKY, EL CHUPÓN, PACI, SOOTHER

Submitted by Greeta Mills, RDH MEd, Oral Health Professional



No matter what we call them, they all mean the same thing. A device used to satisfy the sucking reflex in an infant.

The American Academy of Pediatrics and American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry adopted a policy paper in 2022 about pacifiers and their uses. There are several things mentioned in the paper of interest to First Smiles and our work with oral health screenings of children birth to 5 yrs. old.

Pacifiers are recommended in the first few months of life when an infant goes to sleep because there is some protective effect against sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). They are also useful when a baby needs calming, pain relief, or stress relief, and may be recommended to reduce the risk of finger or thumb-sucking.

However, once a child is one-year-old, risks may outweigh the benefits. The risks of ear infections go up if the child uses a pacifier. We don't know yet exactly why, but some of the ideas are that binkies interfere with the normal suck/swallow process and the pressure and fluid exchanges between the ear, nose, and back of the mouth/throat area. Another thought is that more bacteria, yeasts, and viruses are introduced into the mouth with pacifier use. Pacifiers can be disinfected or sterilized by boiling in water for 15 minutes.

Children that use a pacifier longer than their first year of life may have a higher incidence of what we call an "open bite". That is where the front teeth and the front of the upper jaw modify or change to adapt to the shape of the pacifier. If chupón use is discontinued before a child is three, the open bite may improve. If use continues, it begins to also change the way that the back teeth come together creating a cross-bite. To reduce the risks of changing the shape of the mouth and face, the recommendation is that use of a paci not go beyond 18 months of age.

There is some evidence that prolonged use of a binky beyond 18 months of age for several hours a day may have a negative impact on speech development.

Understanding the uses, benefits, and risks can help you make decisions that are best for your child and your family, for health, for smiles now and in the future!



MAKE EASY & HEALTHY FAMILY MEALS!

Submitted by Sybil Peters, Program Coordinator, Sr.

As the New Year is starting, creating a Healthy Eating plan can be a great step to take! While there are many great resources available, we wanted to share one from the MyPlate for Families curriculum that we teach through the AZ Health Zone. This is a 4-week curriculum that can be attended either in person or online.

PLAN: Plan your family meals. Think about meals, snacks, and beverages you serve throughout the week. Write down a list of foods you need to prepare your meals and take it with you when shopping. Focus your budget on foods that are healthier for your family such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, dairy and protein food.

- Use a shopping list to stay on track. Review coupons and sales to find less expensive foods. Look in newspapers, weekly store ads or on the store website to find sales or coupons for the foods that you need from your list.
- Join a store's bonus or reward card program to receive more savings.
- Choose foods that cost less all year long. Beans and eggs are low-cost healthy protein foods. Frozen vegetables like spinach and green beans are also low-cost options.
- Stock your kitchen. Select foods that you can make and serve quickly on busy days such as canned beans and fish; canned low-salt or low-sodium vegetables or soups; whole-grain pasta, brown rice, and quick cooking oats.
- Store fresh food right away to keep it fresh longer. Use fresh fruits, vegetables, and milk quickly to prevent them from spoiling.
- Buy fruits and vegetables in season. Some fruits and vegetables, such as peaches or corn, are cheaper when you buy them in season. Look for sales in the grocery store and at your local farmers markets for less expensive choices.

PREPARE: Do some tasks in advance. Make meals on weekends or nights when you have more time. Prepare extra and freeze some meals to use later in the week.

- Look for shortcuts. Grated, chopped or pre-washed foods cost more but often save time in the kitchen. Compare prices on these items to your available time to do these tasks yourself. Look for sales on easy to prepare foods such as frozen vegetables or mixed salads.
- Prepare a meal that kids and adults will enjoy. Try not to make separate meals for each person. If your child likes plain vegetables, meat, rice, or noodles, set some aside before you add other ingredients.
- Serve no-cook meals. Make simple meals like salads with canned tuna and beans or cold sandwiches with lean meats and sliced vegetables.
- Cook when you have more time. On weekends or nights when you are less busy, make soups, stews, or casseroles. Cook larger amounts of lean ground beef or turkey and use some for chili or spaghetti later in the week. Freeze some of your meals for hectic days.
- Involve kids in family meals. Let children help with simple tasks like washing fruits, choosing vegetables, setting the table, or measuring foods. On busy weekdays, give everyone a task to help get dinner on the table.

Also having the whole family choose recipes can get everyone excited to make meals at home. You can find recipes at <https://www.azhealthzone.org/recipes/> as well as visiting <https://www.myplate.gov/myplate-kitchen/recipes>

You can also find additional information about meal planning, shopping, and creating healthy meals at https://www.myplate.gov/app/shopsimple?utm_campaign=desktop-redirect&utm_medium=redirect&utm_source=shop-simple

**Free
Activities**

PARK DAY AT THE FLORENCE FARMERS MARKET



**Take-home Gardening & Nature Education activities
Live Music, Food, Raffles, and Vendors**

Saturdays:

November 11th

December 9th

January 13th

February 24th

March 9th

April 13th

8:00 am- 12:00 pm

@ Padilla Park

440 N Main St Florence, AZ 85132

(behind Silver King Marketplace)



**AZ HEALTH
ZONE**

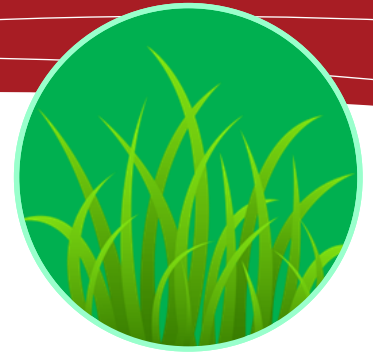
**THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
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Pinal County**

**EXPLORE
PINAL COUNTY
FLORENCE, ARIZONA**



This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - SNAP through the AZ Health Zone. This institution is an equal opportunity provider. The University of Arizona is an equal opportunity, affirmative action institution. The University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or sexual orientation in its programs and activities. Persons with a disability may request a reasonable accommodation, such as a sign language interpreter, by contacting (UA, Cooperative Extension, Pinal County at 866.836.5221). Requests should be made as early as possible to allow time to arrange the accommodation.

HORTICULTURE



BECOME A MASTER GARDENER

Submitted by Anne LeSenne, Assistant Agent, Horticulture

MASTER GARDNER CLASSES IN SAN TAN VALLEY

Our Master Gardener course will be offered in San Tan Valley this spring, with the classes starting in early March. See the flier on the next page for more details. I would encourage every HOA board to have their landscape committee Lead become a Master Gardener so they can help guide your landscape company to deliver the best possible care of your common landscape areas.

SMARTSCAPE CLASSES

We will be offering the Smartscape for Homeowners course starting in January. The complete course takes three classes. The Casa Grande course will start January 3rd at 3pm at the Casa Grande Public Library located at 449 N Drylake St, Casa Grande, AZ 85122. The Maricopa class will start January 11th at 3pm at Global Water Resources, 22590 N Powers Parkway, Maricopa, AZ 85138. This training is free and really valuable for homeowners who want to learn how to more successfully have a beautiful landscape in the low desert and be water efficient.

MARICOPA MASTER GARDENER ANNUAL SPRING PLANT SALE

On March 2nd, the Maricopa Master Gardeners will be hosting their annual Spring Plant Sale at the Maricopa Agricultural Center, 37860 W Smith-Enke Rd, Maricopa, AZ 85138. They grow a good selection of herbs, flowers, succulents, cacti, and veggies that can take the Arizona heat. The sale starts at 8am and usually sells out by 11am.

GROWER PARTICIPATION NEEDED FOR POLLINATION FIELD STUDY

We're looking for growers who would want to participate in a Pollination field study. We want to gather data to show the benefits of managed pollinators on crops in Arizona. The crops I'm interested in are: Cotton, Alfalfa grown for seed, Citrus, Tomatoes, Olives, Melons (watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew), Apricot, Cherry, Peach, Pear, Plum, Guava, Squash, Peppers, Strawberry, and Pomegranate. Growers need to have yield data from last year and be willing to give us the yields from the year with pollinators on the crop to compare. The crop will also need to be relatively isolated from other crops in bloom at the same time.

If you are interested, call Anne LeSenne at (520) 836-5221, x227.



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
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Pinal County

MASTER GARDENER COURSE



Master Gardener classes are taught by The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension faculty, industry professionals and other horticulture experts.

Participants will learn the **fundamentals of selecting, installing, and maintaining healthy, appropriate landscapes and gardens for Pinal County.**

The University of Arizona Cooperative Extension trains gardening enthusiasts of Pinal County as **Master Gardener volunteers** who help their fellow citizens grow better gardens and more sustainable landscapes.

This Master Gardener course will be offered on Monday and Wednesday afternoons starting March 11, 2024 from 3:30pm to 6:00pm at the Bronze conference room at the San Tan Valley Pinal County Government Complex, 31505 N. Schnepf Road, San Tan Valley, AZ 85142.

Registration is required. The course will be completed over 15 weeks of instruction. The cost of the course is \$200 plus the purchase of the Arizona Master Gardener Manual.

CONTACT US!

820 East Cottonwood Lane, #C, Casa Grande, AZ 85122
(520) 836-5221, x0
annelesenne@arizona.edu

WHO SHOULD JOIN:

Anyone with an interest in environmentally responsible landscaping and gardening in Pinal County AND a desire to teach those principles/skills from research-based materials to others.



SPRING COURSE SCHEDULE:

Mar. 11 Botany
Mar. 13 Soils, Fertilizers, Composting
Mar. 18 Entomology
Mar. 20 Plant Pathology
Mar. 25 Orientation to Master Gardeners
Mar. 27 Integrated Pest Management
Apr. 1 Plant Propagation
Apr. 3 Tree and Shrub Pruning
Apr. 15 Herbaceous Ornamentals
Apr. 17 Landscape Design
Apr. 22 Irrigation Design & Efficiency
Apr. 24 Citrus
Apr. 29 Cactus and Succulents
May 1 Desert Plants and Xeriscape
May 6 Vegetables and Herbs

Smartscape for Homeowners & HOA's

Thursdays, January 2024
3:00 to 5:00 pm

Held at:
Global Water Conference Room
22590 North Powers Parkway
Maricopa, AZ 85138



Register Here:
www.surveymonkey.com/r/NRHVXVJ



SMARTSCAPE



Ready to learn how to properly prune, maintain, and irrigate your landscape and be more water efficient?

Smartscape educates Homeowners on the fundamentals of designing, installing, irrigating, and maintaining beautiful, water-efficient landscapes.

Learn from industry expert Anne LeSenne in this course created for Homeowners and HOA members. Space is limited so don't wait to sign up!

Smartscape Course Schedule:

Plants, Soil, and Water
Landscape Design &
Renovation Plant
Selection & Installation January 11

Landscape Water
Management & Irrigation
Controllers January 18
Drip Irrigation Design &
Installation

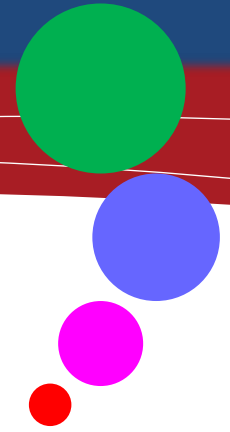
Maintaining Desert
Adapted Plants Plant
Disorders January 25
Desert Adapted Plants

Attend each class for your chance to win a water or landscape related prize and receive a certificate of completion from Smartscape at the end of the course!

For more information, please contact:
Anne LeSenne, Assistant Horticulture Extension Agent
annelesenne@arizona.edu

820 East Cottonwood Lane, #C, Casa Grande, AZ 85122

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FAMILY ACTIVITIES TO BEAT THE WINTER BLUES

Submitted by Sam Colarusso, Community Outreach Assistant II

It's the midst of winter. But here in Arizona, that may look a little different. You may start your cold, dark morning bundled up, waiting for the car to heat up. Later that afternoon you may be rolling the windows down to feel the sunny, warm breeze. Even with our milder winter weather, we are not immune to the effects the change in seasons can bring to our bodies and minds.

Winter blues affect many people to some degree. Feeling a little more sluggish or gloomy during the shorter, colder days of winter is common for adults, and can affect kids as well. Children and adults may feel the letdown of the holiday rush being over. And, there's also the sluggishness that comes from all the extra treats that were consumed. Cold and flu season is in full action during these colder, shorter days. It can take its toll on any of us, and it can be especially true for families with young children. Here are some ideas to help your family cope with the winter blues:

- Get outside as much as possible. The window of time to be outside in the sunshine may be a little shorter, so be sure everyone in the family is getting their intake of fresh air and Vitamin D.
- Open the curtains and blinds to let in as much natural light as possible. Use lights to brighten things throughout the house to compensate for any lack of sunlight getting in.
- More time indoors doesn't need to lead to boredom. Families can keep bodies and minds busy with simple things from around the house. Build forts with sheets and blankets. Use pillows, paper, and other household objects to play "Don't Touch the Lava."
- Don't let holiday cheer disappear. Giving joy to others is the best kind of happiness we can give to ourselves. Spend an afternoon helping your kids write letters to family and friends. They can share what's going on in their lives, make up stories, draw pictures, make small crafts, and so on. Kids will have fun coming up with something special to give, and the recipient will be surprised to get something fun in the mail.

The Pinal County Cooperative Extension's Developmental and Sensory Screening team have age-appropriate activities for all children ages 1 month to 5½ yrs. old. Call (520) 836-5221, ext. 236, today if you are interested in receiving a free vision, hearing, or developmental screening. We will provide you with additional information and activities for your child.

FINANCIAL LITERACY & POSITIVE DISCIPLINE



HEALTHY FOODS—HEALTHY BUDGET

Submitted by Muriel Gutierrez, Instructional Specialist

When asked, “What is the most frustrating thing about managing money?”, the most frequent answer we hear is “The cost of groceries and never knowing what to budget for and how to eat healthy when inflation keeps the prices changing.” So how can you eat right when money is tight? Eating healthy on a budget requires strategic planning, smart planning, smart shopping, and making the most of your resources. Here are some tips to help you eat right when money is tight:

- Join Rewards Programs: Take advantage of loyalty or reward programs for discounts.
- When creating your budget for the month, make sure to plan for however you buy your groceries (ie. Weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly) and track what you spend so you can note what you actually spent.
- If you receive SNAP (food stamps), make sure to add the amount you receive onto your spending/savings plan. It is a boost for your food budget.
- Shop Smart: Compare prices, buy store brands or generic, use coupons, and seek out the sales and discounts.
- Make a list based on need: foods you need with budgeted money. Prevent overspending using an envelope and only spend the cash you have allocated.
- Make sure you eat before you shop: you are more likely to stick to your list; impulse buys tend to happen when you are hungry .
- Check Unit prices: Compare the unit prices on shelf tags to determine the most cost effective buys.
- Seasonal and Local Produce: Explore local farmers markets or discount stores for inexpensive produce. Buy in season vegetables, as they are less expensive and fresher.
- Limit Processed Foods: Convenience and processed foods are usually more expensive. Use whole ingredients and cook from scratch
- Limit Snacks and Treats: Choose snacks that are affordable with healthy options like fruits, vegetables, or nuts and limit expensive snacks and treats.
- Water as a Beverage: Choose water as beverage of choice. It’s healthy and more economical than other unhealthy sugary drinks.
- Buy in Bulk: Purchase non-perishable bulk items for lower unit prices.
- If you utilize SNAP (food stamps), look for the double up markets in your area to double the amount of \$\$ on your SNAP for produce.
- Utilize your community resources: Explore local community resources (i.e. food banks, co-ops)

Remember, a balanced and nutritious plan is as important as a balanced and healthy spending savings plan. With careful planning and mindful shopping, you can make healthy choices, even when on a tight budget.

RESOURCE IDEAS:

Caring Hands Of Pinal County	Casa Grande Food Bank
Florence Baptist Church Food Bank	Gila River Nutrition Assistance
Florence Baptist Church Food Bank	House of Refuge Helping Hands
Hope International Food Bank	Seeds of Hope

FARMERS MARKETS:

Borderlands Produce Rescue
Casa Grande Farmers Market
Battraw Family Produce
Cooltown Community Market

For more community resources: <https://casagrandeaz.gov/257/Community-Resources>

Works Cited: *Eat right when money’s tight*. SNAP Education Connection. (n.d.).

<https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/resources/nutrition-education-materials/eat-right-when-moneys-tight>

- [Maricopa Master Gardeners](#)
- [Pinal County 4-H](#)
- [Sensory & Developmental Screening](#)



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4-H provides educational opportunities for youth to become capable and contributing members of a global community. Children, ages 5-19, learn about healthy lifestyles, animals, plant sciences, and leadership.

Contact: Esther Turner at (520) 836-5221, x211 or eturner@cals.arizona.edu

AZ Health Zone is a program designed to influence healthy eating and active living in a positive way that promotes health and reduces disease among all people living in Arizona.

Contact: Sybil Peters at (520) 836-5221, x216 or sybilpeters@arizona.edu

Child Care Health Consultations (CCHC) develops relationships with childcare facilities to provide training to staff that will improve their knowledge and practice in the childcare setting.

Contact: Cathy Martinez at (520) 836-5221 or clmartin@cals.arizona.edu

Choose Health Action Teen (CHAT) is designed to recruit teens to teach younger children the benefits of healthy eating and active living. Teens also participate in community service events.

Contact: Esmeralda Castillo at (520) 836-5221, x244 or ecastill@cals.arizona.edu

Developmental Screening Program reaches out to families with children, ages 0-5, to screen for early developmental milestones such as gross and fine motor skills, communication, personal-social skills, and problem-solving capacities.

Contact: Jennie Treadway at (520) 836-5221, x236 or treadway@cals.arizona.edu

Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is a nutrition education class designed to assist limited resource families in eating smart and being active and in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and behavioral changes necessary to contribute to their personal development and the improvement of the total family diet, nutritional and physical well-being.

Contact: Esmeralda Castillo at (520) 836-5221, x244 or ecastill@cals.arizona.edu

Field Crops Systems uses research and education efforts to work to improve field crop productivity and global food and fiber supply, farm economic viability, and protecting the environment.

Contact: Randy Norton at (928) 985-8844 or rnorton@cals.arizona.edu

Financial Literacy & Positive Discipline Parenting will help individuals gain the knowledge, self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-awareness to become in control of their finances, and thus improve their lives controlling their financial health. This program will help with daily stressors such as: worrying about electric bills, putting food on the table and wondering if they have somewhere to sleep tomorrow night, which all influences the way individuals interact with their child(ren), their families and their communities.

Contact: Muriel Gutierrez at (520) 836-5221 or mquierrez5@arizona.edu

First Smiles is an oral health program that provides preventative oral health education, oral screening, referral to dentists for children birth to age five; and fluoride varnishing for children with emergent teeth up to age five.

Contact: Greeta Mills at (520) 836-5221, x235 or gmills@arizona.edu

Horticulture Program develops and delivers educational information, structured programming, and technical support to the consumer and commercial horticulture sectors, as well as urban agriculture and food systems in Pinal County.

Contact: Anne LeSenne at (520) 836-5221, x227 annelesenne@arizona.edu

MAC (Maricopa Agricultural Center) Farm Ag-Ventures educational programs include a combination of videos, educational presenters, hands-on learning experiences and tractor-trailer rides around their 2,200 acre farm for a close-up view of what makes a working farm operate.

Contact: Victor Jimenez at (520) 374-6216 or vjimenez@cals.arizona.edu

Sensory Screening Program provides free screenings of children, ages 0-5, for vision and hearing impairments that could affect developmental growth.

Contact: Jennie Treadway at (520) 836-5221, x236 or treadway@cals.arizona.edu