



We crossed a couple of big events off the agenda as they came and went this past week. My oldest participated in the local YEC (Youth Entrepreneur Competition). She fully planned her dream business, calculating what each item she would sell cost down to the penny. We spent hours upon hours at the kitchen table as I helped her search ingredient costs for so many recipes, which was just a small but very time-consuming part of what she needed for her finances. In the end, she had a very good picture of what it would take to start her farm-based, three-part business. Her years of presenting in 4-H gave her the confidence to deliver her business pitch to the judges, and her creative eye and time spent helping me set up for farmer's markets had her trade-show table looking like she was ready for market herself. She took first place and cannot wait to build upon her business for next year.

4-H Club Day had all three kids participating in events. My older two always play piano. As they get older and more experienced, they start picking songs that take longer to perfect. I had them pick their songs back in Septem-

ber or October, knowing it would be wise to choose early since life is busy. They worked through each song week after week and were each happy with how they played at Club Day.

My youngest played a short, age-appropriate song on her violin. She has had maybe 15 hours of lessons. She received a red ribbon and, of course, was appalled, and that attitude called for a talk. She can play by ear, so she is gifted in that way, but I opened her eyes to the number of lessons she has had and how it will take loads of practice to become a consistently good violinist. More than anything, she should be proud that she stood in front of a judge, confidently to say the least, and played an instrument she is just learning, then received critique on it. That should mean more than a red ribbon on her performance. Red ribbons are not bad. Red ribbons mean you have room to grow, and that she does, but being able to walk away from the whole judging experience with a good attitude says more than anything. She, like her siblings, is already excited to choose a song for next year. She is ready to grow with her music. She is also ready to make money with

her short little songs, as she has asked if she can put a hat out and play her violin at the fair. Somebody else obviously has an entrepreneurial spirit in the family, or has possibly watched too many videos of violinists on the street with collection hats.

The girls also did readings for Club Day. Again, they each read from the "A Chicken Was There" series, as they just love the short, humorous stories from the books. I have been reading to my kids since before they were born, enunciating and adding appropriate voices and feeling to what I read aloud to them as they grew. Watching them read aloud and do the same makes me smile and their ribbon placings made them smile.

We see more and more often what being a present parent and allowing the kids to learn by helping and then doing has shaped in them and in their character. I believe it will always be my life's greatest reward, watching them grow in confidence, resilience, and capability right before my eyes.

This is my go-to dressing to whip up if we're having a salad. It is tasty and healthy, especially with homemade mayo.

Quick Honey Mustard Sauce

1/4 cup honey (a spicy honey is great in this)

1/4 cup mayonnaise

1/4 cup Dijon mustard

1 tablespoon white distilled vinegar

1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Instructions

1. Combine: Whisk all ingredients in a small dish until smooth.

Drug & Alcohol Council

Dr. Leah Wiehl wrote an article that appears in this week's Pioneer that highlights the growing concern of parents about the mental health of their kids. The Smith County Drug and Alcohol has also been telling parents to be aware of their students' mental health. There should be no stigma when it comes to treating your mental health.

Dr. Wiehl wrote that when she grew up, parents avoided talking about drugs, alcohol, depression, and suicide. She further stated, "But now we know that staying silent doesn't protect our kids. Talking

with them does." The SCDAC has over the past year been stressing that very sentiment. We have implemented an evidenced-based prevention strategy called "Talk. They Hear You". This program reinforces the concept of visiting with the kids. Laying down rules and consequences is important. Trying to be a friend is not parenting. It's not bad being a friend, but acting like the parent is much more important.

Dr. Wiehl further stresses that having an open relationship with kids, parents are helping keep them

safe. "Kids speak up when they feel safe" said Dr. Wiehl. This is exactly what the SCDAC is striving to achieve. Parents talking to their kids about drugs and alcohol is key to truly protecting them.

It's important that we all participate in keeping our youth safe and informed. The SCDAC is collaborating with other organizations in the county to do just that. All of us have an important part in this endeavor. Let's all step up and continue to do our part.

Creating a Better Community: Connection, Education, Prevention



•Dr. Wiehl

everything perfectly. What matters is having a receptive heart and being ready to listen. Start early, be gentle, stay present, and keep showing up for your child.

One of the most harmful things our kids can believe is, "If I'm struggling, something is wrong with me." That's not true. Feeling sad isn't a weakness. Feeling anxious isn't failure. Asking for help isn't something to be ashamed of.

When we talk openly about mental health, we

show our kids that it's safe to feel, it's okay to struggle, and they are never alone.

Kids speak up when they feel safe. A safe home tells them: you won't get in trouble for telling the truth, I love you no matter what, and we'll face hard things together. When kids believe this, they talk and talking can save lives.

At Smith County Family Practice, and in collaboration with the Smith County Drug and Alcohol Council, we work every day to support families. But we can't

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do it alone. Healthcare, education, and programs all help, but nothing is more important than a parent who truly knows their child.

Every night, I remind myself: my job isn't to raise perfect kids, but to make sure they know they're deeply loved and can talk to me about anything, even the hardest topics. Start the conversation, ask the questions, and open the door. It could save your child's life. There is no greater calling than this.



BY KAREN MADORIN

It's Not Over til It's Over

When I grew up in the 60s, girls could play sports with boys at recess if they played rough as guys--no handicapping because they had to play in a dress. By the time I got to junior high, schools offered girls basketball, volleyball, softball, and track, but no football or soccer. Girls' basketball played with odd rules—a split court with offense on one side and defense on the other—only the ball passed across the center line. By the time our daughters competed, females played 5-man full court. Recently, girls' athletics added the option of wrestling. With a granddaughter grappling for the first time this year, we face a steep learning curve. The critical lesson learned so far: It ain't over til it's over.

Our ten-year-old, a ranch kid, feels more at home on horseback herding cattle or squatting in dusty corrals to help during annual brandings than she does competing in a ball game. She tried soccer and preferred working cows. This year, inspired by her cousin, she tried wrestling. The individualist in her found a sport she loves, leading her fans to heart-stopping moments and laughter.

Parents and sis support her 110 percent, getting her to practices, acquiring necessary gear, and doubling up on weekend chores to attend wrestling events. Mom found affordable shoes on Marketplace that caused giggles. When Coach asked our very literal gal where she got her foot wear, she answered, "Mom got 'em off a lady's porch." Mom quickly explained the pre-arranged purchase. More laughs followed as we watched videos filmed by an enthusiastic little sis. Camera focus tilts wildly as ad lib commentary reveals the photographer's commitment. "I believe in you, Sissy!"

Wrestling requires physical participation. Athletes clash muscle to muscle, fighting to survive 3 one-minute periods as opponents attempt to knot them into pretzels and pin their shoulders to the mat. Attend any weekend match to find over-crowded parking lots and standing room only for latecomers supporting youngsters giving this sport their all.

Our grand is a novice. Good coaches guide her, allowing her to discover she loves one-on-one competition and the confidence she gains from watching and supporting others, losing, and winning. She and her loved ones have relished every opportunity to explore this intense sport that delivers character development in spades.

This sport more than some demands a burning desire to overcome painful opposition. It also demands quick analytical and decision-making skills as well as stamina to either overpower stronger competitors or employ strategic leverage to win. It also means athletes and their fans can't let scoreboards psych them out. Loved ones alternate between holding their breath or cheering loud enough to rattle rafters as they encourage their wrestlers to hang tough. Staying in the fight is essential.

It's high-tension time when wrestlers are down 15 points with 3 seconds left. If they flip that opponent to their back and pin them with only a heartbeat left, they win. Sometimes we think we're licked when we aren't. Wrestling teaches that life lesson early. Considering girls didn't experience this when I was a school girl, I'm thrilled to watch gyms filled with single-clad little girls realizing the match "ain't over til it's over."



Post Rock Answers by Cassie Thiessen

Protect Your Landscape from Deer

Deer may be fun to watch as they jump through our backyards and run in the woods, but they can cause trouble in our landscape. Deer damage is a major problem in many of our backyards during the winter months.

Bucks rub on saplings and young trees to get the velvet off their antlers. In late winter their rubbing intensifies to help shed their antlers. This causes extensive damage to the bark and often results in a slow death of the tree. Protecting trees from damage is important in areas populated with deer. Once deer have damaged your tree, there is unfortunately little that can be done to heal the tree. If the damage was only to one side, it may survive, although it will be weakened and have an ugly scar. When bucks rub on a tree it damages the phloem and xylem wood. These are water and nutrient conducting tissues, when damaged, the tree won't be able to take up water or send food down to its roots. The cambium layer of wood is in the middle of the phloem and xylem. If it is the only wood damaged the tree will usually be able to heal.

In north central Kansas, it is often necessary to protect our young trees. To be safe, protect all trees, deciduous and evergreen, under 6 to 8 inches in trunk diameter. Here are some control options to protect your landscape:

There are several methods for protecting young

trees. Some are more effective than others. The simplest method, but also the least dependable, is the use of strong odor deterrent materials. The most common product on the market is called "Liquid Fence," which is sprayed on the tree. Predator urine is also sold as a deterrent. Deer repellents are not highly effective because they wear off with rain and snow. They should be applied at least once a month, or after every rainfall starting from early fall till late winter. If you happen to miss a timely application, your tree will likely be damaged.

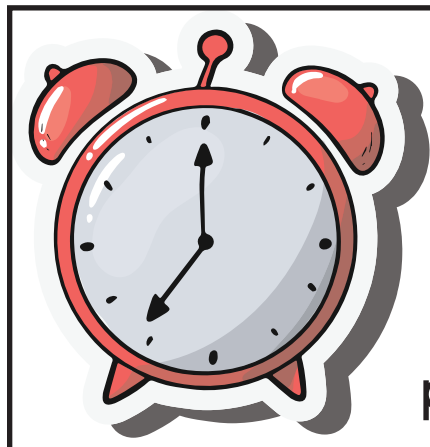
Another method is to wrap the tree using paper tree wrap or vinyl spiral wrap. Paper wrap is less effective as it can be worn through by the deer. Tree wraps can be found at many garden centers and nurseries. Wrap the trunk, covering all exposed bark, from the base until you reach the bottom branches. Be sure to remove the wrap in late winter/early spring before the tree leaves out. Corrugated plastic tubing is another option for protecting young trees. If bucks continue to rub on the plastic, the friction can rip the bark of the tree.

The most effective method is to construct a rigid fence out and around the trees. Start by using three to four heavy duty metal fence posts. Drive them into the ground at the dripline of the evergreen tree. For deciduous trees, put them 2 feet or more

from the trunk. The fence posts provide a rigid object for the deer to rub against. You could stop there, or you could add another level of defense. For additional protection, wrap the fence posts with a woven wire. Concrete reinforcing wire or similar material works well. This encloses the tree and prevents the deer from getting to it. You can also use perimeter electric fences 8 to 10 feet tall, baited electric fences and meshes, and electric deer shocking devices.

If you are down to a last resort. There are a number of home remedies to keep deer at bay. These include hanging all types of odorous soaps or even human hair in the lower branches. These methods are not proven and may provide limited control. I have heard of many people having success using Irish Spring soap. Simply wipe/rub the bar of soap up and down the tree trunk. Once that is accomplished the remaining piece of the bar is hung in the trees about deer head height. Plant an herb garden with strong flavored plants like chives, thyme, garlic, and oleander to deter deer. You can also try scaring the deer away using strobe lights, noise making devices or letting dogs roam around your property.

Protecting your landscape from deer is important to save your valuable plant investments. It's easy to get started with a few simple protective measures.



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