

Thanksgiving (Every Day)

Thinks about it: the great thing about Thanksgiving –aside from the turkey, stuffing, potatoes, cranberries, pie and...stop me! – is sitting down with family and friends.

You don't need a holiday as a reason to celebrate dinner together. Youth who eat dinner with their parents/caregivers are less likely to smoke, drink or do drugs. Communities That Care of Lorain County, a countywide coalition working to prevent and reduce underage substance abuse, surveyed over 10,000 youth last fall and nearly 46% said they eat dinner 5-7 times a week with their families. Sounds good, until you consider the national average is 60%.

In September, the coalition held a Family Dinner Day Story contest. Winners will be receiving coupons for Stouffer's Meals; Stouffer's is a co-sponsor of Family Day: A Day to Eat Dinner with Your Children. The event was created by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. For more information on family dinners and Family Day check out: www.casafamilyday.org

Here are some of the best of the best Family (Dinner) Day memories we received:

- **Dinner – It Brings Us Together:** “My family has always eaten together. It is a family tradition for all of us to eat together. It is normal for us...Now, my children are teenagers and they are learning to cook at home. They can make scrambled eggs, pierogies, macaroni and cheese and brownies and cupcakes. They cook better than I do!” **Christine Marie Pozega, Lorain; Ms. Pozega’s dream is to someday open a restaurant that houses a soup kitchen.**
- **The Carters:** “Once when it was time for dessert...I went to the freezer and got out the gallon-sized ice cream tub. You know the kind that comes in the big plastic container. My brother and sister had been teasing quite a bit at dinner that night so I thought I would joke around a little myself. I said to my brother, ‘Hey, catch,’ and as I attempted to PRETEND to throw the gallon tub of ice cream at his head...it slipped out of my hands and headed straight for the stained glass light overhead. It hit the light and as the light swung back and forth the gallon of ice cream fell right in my father’s lap. ..from this day forward, instead of Kristen, my brother and sister called me ‘klunksten!’ “ – **Kristen Lazard, guidance counselor at Keystone Middle School, LaGrange**
- **An Unexpected Guest:** “We kept hearing this chirping sound at the dinner table but couldn’t figure out where it was coming from. As the chirping continued, we laughed harder, still not able to locate our uninvited ‘visitor.’ We looked under Nana’s chair, she checked her clothes and we even looked in her hair! Finally, Nana went to the bathroom and a few minutes later appeared back at the dinner table with a cricket in her hand, telling us the cricket was in her underwear! My children roared with laughter! Nana has passed away since then, but sometimes when we hear the crickets chirping, we’re reminded of that summer night when an unexpected guest created the best family day memory.” **Becky Shaw, Vermilion**
- **Family Dinner Memories:** “Growing up, our Sunday dinner was very special, but not in the same way others had dinner. My Grandfather (who raised me) made waffles for our dinner. The waffle maker sat on the kitchen table, the batter poured in and I watched with amazement as the waffle grew inside the waffle maker. This was so special for me and the year was around 1940...five children and eight grandchildren later Sunday dinner is still a major tradition in my family...God has blessed me with a wonderful family and I believe in my heart that dinners together helped maintain the family spirit. I will continue to cook Sunday dinner as long as there is family willing to come.” **Marianne Pierro, program coordinator, Child Care Resource Center, Lorain.**

- **Most Creative Way to Get the Family Together:** “Pizza at Mill Hollow Park...the easiest picnic ever, then we’d have an annual boat race where kids made their own little boat and we raced them. We also raced sticks (to this day!) when we go over a bridge on a trail..we also do pizza and popcorn with special root beer and have a big bonfire. My oldest son said when he was deployed to Iraq that he looked forward to this so much! (If there’s a big game on T.V., we actually take the T.V. out in the back yard and watch it together outside in the dark!) **Bev Williams, Amherst.**

Thanks to all for sharing their wonderful memories. Now, go create some more over family dinners ; it is one of the simplest, best things to do for you and your family. Enjoy this holiday season and all the dinners to come.

For more information on easy ways to keep families and youth healthy and safe, contact Communities That Care of Lorain County, www.ctcloraincounty.org or 440-282-9920.