

FCS NEWS & NOTES

Cooperative Extension Service
Muhlenberg County
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Don't forget to call us at (270) 338-3124 to sign up for upcoming events!

**December 25-January 1, 2025:
Office Closed**

January 3: Indoor Air Quality Lesson at 10 AM and 5:30 PM via Zoom. **We will not host this lesson at the office. Please use the Zoom link if you would like to watch on your own from home.** (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84733208123?pwd=RtIHjiKXJsacJ7v7266qGiOmzodmMf.1>) **Handouts for this lesson are included with this newsletter.** Contact the Extension Office if you need us to email the link to you.

January 4: Stitched Together at 10 AM at the Extension Office. Bring your sewing machine if you have one.

January 8: Quilt Jacket Class at 9 AM at the Extension Office. This will be an informational meeting on creating your quilt jacket; class will be January 29-31 at 9 AM each day at the Extension Office.

January 9: Block of the Month Quilting Group meeting at 9 AM at the Extension Office.

January 16: Homemaker Council meeting at 9 AM at the Extension Office.

January 20: Office Closed

January 23: Cake Decorating Class from 9 AM to 12 PM for those who have registered. **CLASS IS FULL. Don't forget to bring your \$5 fee if you registered and have not paid yet.**

January 24: Laugh and Learn play date for parents and children ages 5 and under from 10 AM to 11 AM at the Extension Office.

January 24: Paper Quilling Class at 5:30 PM at the Extension Office. Please contact us to sign up.

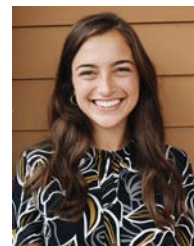
January 27: Pure Home Series at 10 AM and 6 PM at the Extension Office. Please contact the Extension Office to let us know which time you would like to attend. Space is limited. At our January meeting we'll tackle laundry and you'll make and take home your own laundry detergent.

January 31: Board Game Night at 5:30 PM at the Extension Office.

A Note from your Family & Consumer Sciences Agent

I hope everyone enjoyed the holidays, resting and spending quality time with loved ones! My family and I certainly did! As we step into 2025, there's so much to look forward to with exciting programs and fun events coming.

Be sure to follow us on Facebook to stay up to date and check out our calendar for what's coming up. Wishing you all a Happy New Year! May 2025 be filled with blessings and wonderful moments for each one of you.



Alex Kelly

Alex Kelly
Muhlenberg County
Extension Agent for
Family & Consumer
Sciences Education

Get Ready for the Spring Seminar Cultural Arts Day

Quips from the Cultural Arts Committee

The Spring Seminar/Cultural Arts Day will be on March 17. It is just around the corner, and it's time to start considering entering the Cultural Arts Showcase! This is a fantastic opportunity for you to showcase your creativity in various categories.

Be sure to review the categories and rules found in the back of the Homemaker Yearbook to guide your preparation. Start preparing today and make this year's Cultural Arts Showcase one to remember!

I don't know how many entries have been entered from Muhlenberg County in the creative writing category in the past, but I know some of you have a talent for this often overlooked area. I personally didn't even know there was a creative writing contest. Let's start working now on some pieces to enter this year! Come on ladies, you CAN do it!

Cultural Arts and Heritage-Guidelines for Creative Writing Contests

General:

- Only 1 entry per person is allowed in each category
- Entries are open only to members of KEHA
- All entries must be original
- The KEHA Executive Board reserves the right to not print any entry due to content
- Entries should be typed, *however* legible hand written entries will be accepted if there is no way the entry can be typed
- Entries submitted in electronic format, preferably in Microsoft Word, are encouraged
- Each entry should be submitted for state judging with the completed Cultural Arts and Heritage Handbook page 39.
- Entries will not be returned; be sure to make a copy
- All entries are due by March 1 to KEHA Cultural Arts Chairman:
Cindy Moore
2707 Sunnyside Road
Eminence, KY 40019

Poetry:

- Entries are limited to 30 lines

Memoirs:

- Entry is limited to 2 pages, double spaced
- Entry is limited to one memory, written in first person
- Entry should have a particular focus or element that receives the most emphasis
- Entry should focus on a person, place, or animal which has a particular significance in the writer's life
- Entry should recreate for the reader incidents shared with the person, place, or animal
- Entry should reveal writer's knowledge of and feelings about the person, place, or animal
- Entry should make the person, place, or animal come alive for the reader
- Entry should share new insights gained when recalling the significance of the subject of the memoir.

Short Story:

- Entry is limited to 3,000 words
- Entry may be written in the first or third person
- Entry should contain:
 - ⇒ A plot, rising action and a climax
 - ⇒ A focused purpose
 - ⇒ Setting details woven into the text of the story, allowing the reader entry into the story
 - ⇒ Development of at least one character through the character's own words, thoughts, or actions and/or those of another character
 - ⇒ A tightly woven plot limited to one main idea or purpose
 - ⇒ A problematic conflict, developed as the story progresses
 - ⇒ A resolution of that conflict
 - ⇒ Idea development through snapshots, thoughtshots, dialogue, description, etc.

Are Sprouted Potatoes Safe to Eat?

Sprouted potatoes are a sign of age or improper storage, not necessarily decay. As long as the sprouts are small and the potato is still firm, not soft or wrinkled, you can remove the sprouts and eat the potato. The potato is safe to eat, but the sprouts are not. The sprouts contain solanine, a natural toxin. If you eat it in large amounts, it can cause headaches, vomiting, and diarrhea. Solanine has a bitter taste, so you'll know if you're eating it.

Solanine is also in green potatoes. And just like with sprouts, you can remove the green by peeling the skin or cutting away small spots and still eat the potato. However, if the potato remains green after peeling or has deep green spots, throw it away. Cooking does not destroy solanine, and eating it can lead to sickness.

As a rule, eat firm potatoes with only small sprouts and/or skin-deep greening if you have removed the entire sprout and green-colored parts. Do not eat potatoes that are soft, shriveled, have large sprouts or deep greening.

Keep potatoes from sprouting and turning green by storing them correctly. Sunlight promotes greening, and warm temperatures promote sprouting so store potatoes in a cool, dark place that is well-ventilated. A bowl or open bag in a cabinet, pantry, or closet works well. Don't store potatoes and onions close together. Onions produce ethylene gas which causes potatoes to spoil quickly, and potatoes contain a lot of moisture which causes onions to turn brown and rot. In addition, do not store potatoes in the refrigerator as they will develop a sweet taste and darken upon cooking.

Cooked potatoes should always be cooled and stored in the refrigerator within two hours if not consumed. It is especially important to remove the foil from baked potatoes before putting them in the fridge because the foil traps heat and prevents air from circulating around the potato. This can lead to the formation of the botulinum toxin and if eaten, can cause serious illness or death if not treated.

Source: Annhall Norris, Food Preservation and Food Safety Extension Specialist

Winter Weather Policy

If Muhlenberg County schools are closed for inclement weather, all meetings and activities scheduled for that day will be cancelled.

Follow us on Facebook to keep the most up to date with closures, and be sure to join Remind!



Sign up for Remind Text Messaging so you never forget a meeting!

To join the Muhlenberg County Homemakers group, text the message **@98472d** to the phone number **81010**.

Homemaker Council members can join the Homemaker Council group by texting the message **@e8a3de** to the phone number **81010**.

After joining you will receive text messages with reminders such as program time changes, new program information, inclement weather closings, etc.



Thought for the Day

"Lookin' for adventure, and whatever comes our way."
Born to be Wild-Steppenwolf,
1968

Contact Us



(270) 338-3124



Facebook Pages:

**Muhlenberg
County
Cooperative
Extension**

**Muhlenberg
County
Homemakers**

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Lexington, KY 40506



Disabilities accommodated with prior notification.

Indoor Air Quality:

Sources and Effects on Our Health



Hardin Stevens

Senior Extension Associate
Family and Consumer Sciences Extension

The EPA estimates that we spend 90% of our time indoors, in homes, schools, workplaces, places of worship, or gyms. Research shows that indoor air pollution is increasing. Our air quality is affected by chemicals, gases, and particles from products used or naturally found inside buildings, inadequate ventilation, and moisture and humidity problems. The home is the most likely place you are exposed to indoor air pollution.

Developing an understanding of indoor air quality (IAQ) and identifying factors that impact the air you breathe while indoors will empower you to make decisions about how you can improve your indoor home environment.

What do you think of when you hear the term “air quality”?

Many people think of outdoor air pollution such as smog, smoke, and vehicle exhaust. But what about indoor air quality?

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), “Indoor Air Quality refers to the air quality within and around buildings and structures, especially as it relates to the health and comfort of building occupants.”



Indoor Air Quality Problems

The main causes of indoor air quality problems are contaminants that release gases or particles into the air:

- Tobacco products and secondhand smoke,
- Radon,
- Burning wood,
- Mold,
- Dust, pet dander, and hair,
- Volatile organic compounds (VOC) found in household cleaners, dry cleaning, hobby supplies, etc., and
- Pesticides.

Household items that may impact your indoor air quality:

- Heating and cooling systems, air conditioning units, gasoline-powered heaters, and other appliances,
- Fireplaces and woodstoves,
- Cooking appliances, and
- Building materials and furnishings.

Impacts of Poor Air Quality on Health

Indoor air pollution can cause symptoms such as irritation of the eyes, nose, and throat, headaches, dizziness, and fatigue. It might also cause, aggravate, or worsen asthma and allergies. It can also make it more difficult to fight off infections. Air pollution can also cause long-term health problems such as respiratory diseases, heart disease, and cancer.

How Can We Improve Indoor Air Quality?

To improve or avoid any health symptoms, work to improve your indoor air quality. Controlling the source of pollution is the most efficient way to do that. An easy way to do this is to make sure your home has proper ventilation. Increasing the amount of air that exchanges between inside and outside will keep your air cleaner.

Here are some ways to make sure your home gets proper ventilation:

- Open windows and doors (weather permitting). Keep windows and doors closed when outdoor air quality is an issue (wildfires, other health hazards, etc.).
- Use window and attic fans (weather permitting).
- Use bathroom and kitchen fans, especially if they are vented outside.
- Consider an air cleaner. They come in different types and sizes ranging from tabletop models to whole-house systems. Do some research to see if one is right for you.



To keep the air inside your home or office cleaner:

- Vacuum and dust often.
- Wash bedding regularly.
- Do not allow anyone to smoke or vape indoors. Adopt a smoke-free home and car. Ask people who use tobacco to go outside at least 20 feet from entryways, windows, and vents.
- Safely store chemicals away from children and pets.
- When taking a shower, use a ventilation fan.
- Dry any damp surfaces.
- Maintain and ventilate appliances and heating or cooling units. Change your air filters regularly especially in times of outdoor smoke events (e.g., wildfires).
- Use nonchemical products when possible.
- Seal all cracks in basements.
- Test for radon every two years. If your radon number is at or above 4.0 pCi/L, contact a certified radon measurement and mitigation professional to lower exposure to radon.

New home designs are adding features to bring outdoor air through the HVAC system.

Do House Plants Improve Air Quality?

There is no direct evidence that having houseplants cleans indoor air. In fact, houseplants may contribute to indoor air pollution by releasing VOCs into the air. Additionally, the plant's soil may have bacteria, pesticides, or other contaminants. Overwatering plants can cause microorganisms to grow, which can affect people with allergies.

There is no way to totally rid your indoor air of pollutants, but by following these steps, you can reduce potential exposure to these risks.

Improving indoor air quality requires an understanding of what contaminants are affecting the air you breathe in your home. Once you have identified the contaminant source, take appropriate action to eliminate or mitigate the source. Sometimes, improving air quality is as simple as opening windows or doors. Sometimes, you need expert assistance to effectively improve the air quality.

Sources:

Referenced 6/6/23

[https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/introduction-indoor-air-quality#:~:text=Indoor%20Air%20Quality%20\(IAQ\)%20refers,and%20comfort%20of%20building%20occupants.](https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/introduction-indoor-air-quality#:~:text=Indoor%20Air%20Quality%20(IAQ)%20refers,and%20comfort%20of%20building%20occupants.)

Referenced 6/6/23

<https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/improving-your-indoor-environment>

Referenced 6/7/23

<https://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/agents/indoor-air/index.cfm>

Referenced 10/23/23

<https://www.epa.gov/indoor-air-quality-iaq/text-version-indoor-air-quality-house-tour>

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