

Marks Remarks by Mark Rowen Lincoln County Educator 11-2-07

Many articles have been written about the evolution of the family from the 1800's to present. The author of the book "The Intentional Family", William Doherty gives some very good advice for today's families to follow. He suggests the connection to family members have to be developed over time. Each individual needs to have a set time when the focus of the time period even if just one hour, is on them alone. This means Dad has to give the same amount of time to little Kathy as he does to little Johnny but also to his wife as well. The activities you do may be different, listening to piano, playing ball, or helping cook the meal, but the amount of time needs to be the same. One of the most interesting aspects of the family is the "rituals" around mealtime. This is one time period when the "whole" family can gather together. I know there are a number of external influences trying to get our attention. This means for mealtime, it would be a good idea to turn off the TV, stereo, Ipod, and headphones, and focus on each other. Individuals can contribute to the mealtime by setting the table, putting ice in the glasses, or by helping carry the dishes back to the kitchen.

The most important part of the mealtime is the "connection" made. This should become a ritual by having the family mealtime at least once a week. Take this time to discuss the weeks scheduling, important activities, but allow equal time for each member to participate.

If a meal at home cannot happen, maybe meet at a restaurant for a family dining experience. Again use the same suggestion, make each family member the focus, equally. This connection with the family, if intentional and practiced, will begin to become important to all members, no matter the age. The idea of starting this "family time ritual" may not be welcomed, but each family member needs to be open to change and all need to participate. It may even become a "protected" time for communication and enjoyment for everyone.

For more information about this or other topics please contact the Lincoln County Extension office at 764-2756.