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## **Apparel and Textiles**

### *IFI strikes back at invalid breast cancer "study"*

The International Fabricare Institute (IFI) is refuting the implications of a story picked up recently by the Associated Press and broadcast across the nation. The story, summarizing a report detailing the incidence of breast cancer in Newton, Massachusetts, suggested that environmental factors such as drycleaning and lawn services could be involved. IFI officials charged that the story was unfair and without scientific documentation. The epidemiologist with Silent Springs who led the study was quoted in the *Boston Globe* as saying, "We don't know that any of these factors are breast cancer risks at this point." The implications of the study were damaging enough and made worse because the Associated Press unjustifiably suggested that drycleaning could be a cause when no supporting evidence exists.

The Environmental Protection Agency continues to monitor perc, the primary solvent used in drycleaning. The Agency's own Science Advisory Board concluded that "there is no compelling evidence of human cancer risk" for perc. Given the stringent environmental regulations that cleaners must follow, perc is safe for cleaners and consumers.

**Source:** *Clothes Care Gazette*, November 1999

**Submitted by:** Ellen T. Miller, Apparel and Textiles Specialist.

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### *Consumer trends*

Consumer trends in textile products identified by University of North Carolina at Greensboro faculty Dr. Michelle Jones and Dr. Nancy Cassill were reported in the June 2000 *Clothes Care Gazette*. Changes in consumer buying were outlined as follows. In general, consumers are opting for more value and less quantity. They are choosing comfortable products such as a loose but fitted silhouette. Synthetic blends combining man-made fibers such as spandex, nylon, or polyester with cotton are big sellers. Consumers are interested in timesaving avenues for shopping, and technology is being used to provide wider access and greater convenience.

**Source:** *Clothes Care Gazette*, June 2000.

**Submitted by:** Judy Mock, Extension Specialist, Interim State Program Leader.

## Food and Nutrition

### *Weight loss for obese individuals may result in significant health benefits*

A recent study reported in the *American Journal of Public Health* suggests a modest sustainable weight loss of 10 percent in obese individuals, even though they do not reach an ideal weight or the reported healthy body mass index (BMI), may result in improved health and economic benefits.

Researchers assessed the relationship between BMI and the economic cost and health risks associated with obesity-related diseases including heart disease, hypercholesterolemia, hypertension, stroke, and type 2 diabetes. They found that depending upon age, initial BMI, and gender, a sustained 10 percent weight reduction would result in 0.3 to 0.8 fewer years of hypercholesterolemia, 1.2 to 2.9 fewer years of life with hypertension, and 0.5 to 1.7 fewer years with type 2 diabetes. The sustained weight loss should lead to a 12 to 38 cases per 1000 reduction in the lifetime incidence of coronary heart disease and stroke and should increase life expectancy by two to seven months. The reduction of years lived with these chronic diseases should result in lowering medical costs up to \$2200 to \$5300 for each obese person.

**Source:** Oster G, Thompson D, Edelsber J, et al. 1999. Lifetime Health and Economic Benefits of Weight Loss Among Obese Persons. *Am J Public Health*. 89:1536-1542.

**Submitted by:** Jackie McClelland, Food and Nutrition Specialist.

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### *Efficacy of long-term dietary intervention in obese patients*

Weight loss in many obese patients has been shown to be only transient and the ensuing weight gain greater than the original weight. Therefore, methods are needed to prevent regain of weight. Researchers recently concluded the first four-year study of 75 patients to demonstrate the long-term efficacy and safety for using meal replacements (replacing one meal per day and one snack with an energy-controlled meal and snack replacement) for weight loss and weight maintenance. After following body weight and biomarkers of disease risk for four years in participants who used meal replacements as a means of reducing energy intake, two significant findings were made. First, patients reduced energy intake and maintained weight loss for at least four years. Second, maintenance of weight loss was associated with improvements in several disease risk factors. This is important as it suggests that a meal replacement strategy can assist in initiating and sustaining weight control.

**Source:** M. Flechtner-Mors, H. Ditschuneit, T. Johnson, et al. 2000. Metabolic and Weight Loss Effects of Long-Term Dietary Intervention in Obese Patients: Four-Year Results. *Obes Res.* 8(5):399-402.

**Submitted by:** [Jackie McClelland](#), Food and Nutrition Specialist.

## **Housing and House Furnishings**

### *Housing our elders*

HUD USER NEWS announces a new HUD report, *Housing Our Elders: A Report Card on the Housing conditions and Needs of Older Americans*. While the report does indicate many positive findings for the elderly and their housing, there are still a number of challenges that need to be addressed. HUD lists some of the key findings of the report: as

- 1.45 million elderly people live in housing that needs repair or rehabilitation.
- Almost 1.7 million elderly households with low incomes are in critical need of affordable housing because they spend in excess of 50 percent of their incomes for housing.
- Most elderly renters pay more than 50 percent of their incomes for housing.
- Approximately 1.1 million elderly households report unmet needs for home modifications.
- There is a shortage of both owner-occupied and rental housing that is fully accessible.

For additional information, or to order this report, contact HUD USER, P.O. Box 6091, Rockville, MD 20850, 1-800-245-2691

or <http://www.huduser.org/publications/hsgspec/housec.html>

**Source:** *Housing Our Elders: A Report Card on the Housing Conditions and Needs of Older Americans*. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

**Submitted by:** Sarah Kirby, Housing Specialist.

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*Housing affordability*

This HUD report shows that affordable housing remains a real concern for many Americans. The report has four key findings:

- Despite robust economic expansion, the supply of affordable housing stock for struggling American families continues to shrink.
- Rents for housing in America are on the rise. In 1997 and 1998, rents increased at twice the rate of general inflation.
- While available affordable housing declines, the number of renters at or below 30 percent of median income is increasing.
- The void between renter households that are struggling and housing that is affordable to them is large and increasing.

**Source:** *The Widening Gap: New Findings on Housing Affordability in America*, September 1999, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

**Submitted by:** Sarah Kirby, Housing Specialist.

*When school is out: the future of children*

There are 39 million American children between the ages of 5 and 14, yet the United States has no organized system for providing supervision, activities, and opportunities to them during the hours when school is not in session. *When School is Out* is one of many extensive reports funded and published by the David and Lucille Packard Foundation in their series called *The Future of Children*.

This report discusses four major hurdles that are barriers to developing programs to serve school-age children. A series of recommendations are made in the report and multiple articles explore specific programs more in depth. For additional information on this and other *Future of Children* reports, e-mail the Packard Foundation at <e-mail [circulation@futureofchildren.org](mailto:circulation@futureofchildren.org)> or visit their Web site at <http://www.futureofchildren.org>. Their mailing address is The David and Lucille Packard Foundation, 200 Second Street, Suite 200, Los Altos, CA 94022.

**Source:** Packard Foundation. 1999. *When School is Out*. *The Future of Children*, 9 (2). Los Altos, Calif.: Packard Foundation.

**Submitted by:** Karen DeBord, Child Development Specialist.

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*Child poverty in the rural south*

Poverty is one of many difficulties facing the rural South. Although poverty exists throughout the United States, it is more pervasive in the rural South. In 1998, more than half of rural poor children resided in the South, representing a larger share of children in poverty than the rest of the country. While rural poor children are concentrated in the South, child poverty in urban areas is more evenly spread among the four regions of the United States. A higher proportion of poor children in the rural South than outside the South were in severe poverty, with a family income under 50 percent of the poverty level. Poor children are more likely to live in mother-only families, to be African-American, and to have parents who are younger, less educated, and not employed.

**Source:** Rogers, C. 2000. Child poverty in the rural South. *Southern Perspectives*: 4(2). Mississippi State University. Available at <http://www.ext.msstate.edu/srdc/publications/springsp00.htm>

**Submitted by:** Karen DeBord, Child Development Specialist.

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*Bullying in schools*

Bullying in schools is a worldwide problem that can have negative consequences for the general school climate. Bullying can also interfere with a student's right to learn in a safe environment without fear. Bullying can also have negative lifelong consequences -- both for students who bully and for their victims. Various reports and studies have established that approximately 15 percent of students are either bullied regularly or are initiators of bullying behavior (Olweus 1993). Direct bullying seems to increase through the elementary years, peak in the middle school/junior high school years, and decline during the high school years. However, while direct physical assault seems to decrease with age, verbal abuse appears to remain constant. School size; racial composition; and school setting (rural, suburban, or urban) do not seem to be distinguishing factors in predicting the occurrence of bullying. Finally, boys engage in bullying behavior and are victims of bullies more frequently than girls.

**Source:** Banks, Ron. 1997. Bullying in schools. Available at <http://ericeece.org/pubs/digests/1997/banks97.html>

**Submitted by:** Karen DeBord, Child Development Specialist.

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*Grandparenting survey*

Recent research by the American Association of Retired Persons has revealed that most grandparents have strong relationships and regular contact with their grandchildren. In a study of 823 grandparents age 50 and over, the researchers found that 82 percent had seen a grandchild in the past month. The top five activities in which grandparents engaged with their grandchildren were eating together, watching a TV comedy, staying overnight, shopping for clothes, and engaging in exercise or sports. The authors emphasize that the study provides a counterpoint to media reports which feature evidence of family breakdown. The full results of the scientific study can be found in a 120-page report issued in November 1999.

**Source:** AARP Grandparenting Survey. 1999. *The sharing and caring between mature grandparents and their grandchildren*. Available at <http://research.aarp.org/general/grandpsurv.pdf>

**Submitted by:** Luci Bearon, Adult Development and Aging Specialist.

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