

Signature page deadline for FFA scholarships is fast approaching

The American Farm Bureau Federation, Dodge Trucks and the National FFA (Future Farmers of America) Organization are pleased to announce that Dodge Trucks is offering collegiate scholarships to FFA members across the country. Dodge has been a sponsor of the National FFA Scholarship Program since its inception more than 20 years ago. Farm Bureau joined FFA and Dodge as a partner in 1999.

The scholarship program is a cooperative effort between Dodge, Farm Bureau and the National FFA Organization. To apply, a student must be an FFA member and a member of a Farm Bureau family. Students must complete the official National FFA Scholarship application including the parent financial analysis section, as financial need will be considered. Applications are available online at <http://scholarships.ffa.org>. A completed signature page must be mailed to FFA postmarked by February 15, 2008. The scholarships start at

\$1,000 each and are available to FFA members in all 50 states.

Dodge Truck scholarships are designed to recognize FFA members from Farm Bureau families throughout the U.S. for their supervised agricultural experience programs (SAEs), academic achievements and other school accomplishments.

Dodge Trucks sponsors these scholarships as a special project of the National FFA Foundation. The National FFA Scholarship Program, through the sponsorship of generous corporations and individuals, awards more than \$2 million in scholarships annually to FFA members.

Dodge has a long history of offering a helping hand to young people with an interest in agriculture-related careers. The company has supported the FFA for more than 50 years and continues as the leading sponsor of the American Farm Bureau Federation's "Young Farmers & Ranchers" competitions in 2008.

Children can suffer from disaster stress

Children can be especially vulnerable to stress following a disaster – particularly if they witnessed their home under water, spent nights in a shelter, changed schools, lost a pet, or had their normal routines interrupted.

"Children's mental health is a real concern that we need to address as we carry on our efforts to help communities recover," Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski said. "Like adults, children can suffer mental trauma when disaster strikes their families. I applaud the efforts of our state and federal agencies to meet these important needs."

"Children may suffer from anxiety because of disaster losses and the upheaval of family life," said Bob Nikkel, assistant director for Addictions and Mental Health, Oregon Department of Human Services. "Most children bounce back quickly with social support and the aid of their families, but it is important to be aware of your child's reaction to stress and anxiety and to seek additional help if necessary."

Children's reactions to the storms and flooding and their aftermath are strongly influenced by how parents, teachers, and other caregivers coped during and after the events. They often turn to these adults for information, comfort and help.

Caregivers should be alert to signs of trouble and how to handle them.

Children ages 5 or younger may cry more frequently than

usual, become clingy, have nightmares, show excessive fear of the dark, fear of animals or fear of being alone. Appetites may change. They may speak with difficulty or revert to behaviors such as bed-wetting or thumb-sucking.

Children ages 5 to 11 may exhibit increased irritability, aggression, and competition with their siblings for parental attention. Some become preoccupied with the disaster and want to talk about it continually. They may also show anxiety through whining, withdrawing from their peers, and losing interest in normal activities.

Teenagers 11 to 18 may show outright rebellion, physical problems, and sleep disturbances. They may engage in risk-taking behaviors such as reckless driving or alcohol and drug abuse.

Regardless of their age, children may become anxious or fearful as holidays, anniversaries or other special events approach. The following suggestions may help to reduce stress in children:

- Spend time each day giving each child undivided attention, even if just for a few minutes. Share experiences. Reaffirm your love. Make plans together. Just "be there" for each other.

- Encourage them to talk. Encourage children to describe what they are feeling. Let them talk about the disaster and ask as many questions as they like. Listen to what they say. Assure them that the disaster was an act of nature and not caused by them. Include the entire family in the discussion, if possible.

- Understand their fears. It is important that parents accept anxieties as being very real to children. Help them understand what causes their anxieties and fears. Recognize their losses, such as their pets, favorite toys and other personal items. Re-

assure them that everything will be all right.

- Explain what is going on. Make every effort to keep children informed about what is happening. Explanations should be in simple language.

With children 5 or older, rehearse safety measures for use in case of future disasters.

- Reassure them. Parents can help reassure children by telling them they are safe, holding and hugging them frequently, restoring normal routines, providing play experiences for them, and making bedtime a special moment of calm and comfort.

- Encourage activities with their peers. As with adults, social time with friends is a very important part of the recovery process.

- Temporarily lower expectations of them. Allow for the fact that stress from the disaster can show itself in many ways over a period of time, and make appropriate allowances.

You also can involve your children in creating and practicing a family disaster plan. Having a plan will help your child understand the positive steps you all can take to be ready for any future disaster. If you have access to a computer, check out FEMA for Kids at www.fema.gov/kids. The website has resources for children, parents and teachers including free posters, a booklet, "Helping Children Cope with Disaster," video and other information on how children recover from a disaster.

Through your persistence, children will realize life will eventually return to normal. If a child does not respond to the above suggestions, seek help for them from a behavioral health professional at: Columbia County Mental Health: 503-397-5211 day; 866-866-1426 after hours; or toll-free 1-800-294-5211 "press 0".

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