

## To Your Health!

By Judy Hargis, P.A., and Audeen Wagner



### VERNONIA PREVENTION COALITION

Vernonia has a new ally in the fight against drug abuse. The Vernonia Prevention Coalition (VPC) is a group of adults and youth who are working together to prevent alcohol, drug and tobacco use by children. The director of VPC is DeAnna Pearl, and although she has been in this position only a few months, big strides have been made from her office in the Learning Center.

DeAnna's job is basically to work with the community in many diverse areas involving young people and adults. She sees herself as mentor/train-er/cheerleader, leading adults and young people into prevention programs, and supplying information to schools

and the community.

A large part of what she does is teaching – “preparing the community to prepare kids to become responsible adults,” she says. The goal of VPC is to help Vernonia become a community “where healthy decision making is fundamental and being drug-free is the norm.” That is the “Vision” part of the mission statement; the rest of it is “To develop safe and healthy neighborhoods through collaborative planning, community action, policy advocacy and enforcement.” The idea of securing a drug-free community in today's society is not just a dream. While it seems that drug traffic and use in our cities is sometimes accepted as normal and inevitable, a healthy and safe community can be a reality. That is the mission of VPC.

DeAnna is well-prepared for her role as director and teacher and facilitator. She says, “I'm a small-town girl, born and raised in Reedsport,” so Vernonia feels right for her. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Education from Western Oregon and a Masters in Teaching from George Washington University. Her most recent job before coming to Vernonia, was a rewarding experience. She was Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Coordinator in Siletz, covering an 11-county area in northwest Oregon. She developed prevention programs for communities in alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Her projects with the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, members of other tribes, and non-tribal members received national recognition.

This young woman is a high-energy, dedicated, enthusiastic person, and her office is a whirlwind of activities. A couple of examples:

- She has a program underway called Strengthening Families, a 7-week project where parents and their children learn strategies for a healthy lifestyle. She is already getting inquiries from families about signing up for the next session, starting in January.

- A two-day training session with John Underwood, a nationally known speaker and advocate for healthy and safe communities, focusing on the effects of alcohol on the performance of athletes. The Vernonia session will be November 19 and 20, and is open to

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## Turkey tips for Thanksgiving

When planning holiday menus, keep your time schedule in mind. Although many families enjoy roast turkey, it's time-consuming to prepare. Be aware that shortcuts could result in food safety problems.

If the turkey is frozen, allow thawing time. It's best to thaw in the refrigerator, allowing about 5 hours per pound. That may mean starting 4-5 days before the meal. To speed up thawing, submerge the wrapped bird in a sink of cold water, allowing about 30 minutes per pound. Change the water every half hour so it stays cool to slow bacterial growth. Turkey can also be thawed in the microwave. Cook immediately after thawing.

Bake at 325°F. Cooking longer at lower temperatures could result in bacterial growth. It's unsafe to put the turkey in an unheated oven that is timed to turn on early in the morning or to partially cook a turkey and then finish it the next day. Be aware that stuffing the bird increases baking time. Stuff just before baking. Stuffing ahead

could give bacteria a chance to grow. Stuffing could be baked in a separate, covered dish for 45-60 minutes.

To bake, allow about 15-18 minutes per pound for unstuffed birds and 18-24 minutes for stuffed ones. Use a meat thermometer to determine doneness. The temperature should reach 165°F in the inner thigh. The stuffing temperature should be at least 165°F as well. Allow the turkey to sit for about 20 minutes before carving.

Food safety continues to be important after baking. Although many people procrastinate, it's very important to refrigerate leftovers right away. Because bacteria grow rapidly at room temperature, turkey and other perishable foods shouldn't be kept on the table or counter for longer than 2 to 3 hours after cooking. Remove the stuffing and cut meat off the carcass. Refrigerate or freeze in meal-size portions in shallow containers.

*Source: Carolyn Raab, Extension Foods and Nutrition Specialist, Oregon State University*

## What do you do with a wild turkey?

“Bag” your holiday groceries in the outdoors by going turkey hunting. Oregon turkey hunters are in the field now and lots more will be soon defrosting the bird they got this spring.

Here's information provided by the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife on preparing your wild turkey to become the centerpiece of Thanksgiving dinner.

Dressing your turkey: First, decide if you want to skin or pluck your bird. Plucking is considered the traditional style of preparing a wild turkey. Though it does take more time and produces more of a mess than skinning, it will help keep your turkey moist and prepare it to be roasted, smoked or whole deep fried.

To pluck, first dip the bird in hot water – some people use boiling but others say 140-degree water is optimal for plucking a bird. Then pluck off the feathers. Plucking can be done before or after dressing (removing entrails) of the turkey but if possible, pluck the turkey before you dress it (to keep water from going inside the bird's

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