

NEWS & KNOWLEDGE...
NEWS YOU CAN USE....
January, 2023

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

The Annual Connections Pottery Sale on December 10, 2022, along with the Bake Sale, was a huge success! The sale raised over \$4,000.00. These funds are used for Connections social and recreational activities. Thank you to every one who helped, including volunteers, members and staff. We are happy to see so many repeat customers that came to the sale to buy a piece of Connections pottery.

**CONNECTIONS SOCIAL/RECREATIONAL OUTINGS FOR
JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 2023:**

THURSDAY OUTINGS:

01/05/23-Shopping at Valley Hills Mall
01/12/2023-Bowling at Pin Station
01/19/223-Employment/Education Dinner
01/26/23-Bingo
02/02.23-Burton's Farms/Big Lots
Shopping
02/09/23-Bowling at Pin Station
02/16/23-Employment/Education Dinner
02/23/23-Shopping at Walmart

SATURDAY OUTINGS:

01/07/23-Springs Road Flea Market
01/21/23-Shopping/Out to Eat for Lunch
02/04/23-Valentine's Day Party at
the Clubhouse
02/18/23-Movies

Employment News:

At this time, Connections is searching for employers who are willing to participate in our Transitional Employment (TE) Program. As of now, we have three members who are working at Hart Square and two members who are working at the Catawba Valley Healthcare, Main Campus. We have a TE position open at the Design Foundry.

Going to the Second Harvest Food Bank with Karen: (By Dawn):

On Thursday, December 15, 2022, I accompanied Karen and two members to the Second Harvest Food Bank on 538 1st Avenue SW, Hickory, North Carolina, 28602. Karen and the rest of us went inside the Food Bank building. Karen, another member and I did the shopping. We had to wear Agency Shopper tags and a pair of gloves. The Second Harvest Food Bank is a big warehouse-like building. There are items in boxes such as canned vegetables, water, cereal and condiments. Another member and I worked to gather some canned vegetables for Judy, (The Cook at Connections Clubhouse), such as corn, mixed vegetables, soup and carrots and I put the items into a box. Karen gathered up some water and condiments. The Second Harvest Food Bank also has a cooler for items such as eggs. It also has a freezer where mainly meat is stored. Karen, another member and I got some together some chicken and beef. We put the boxed items on a rolling cart. Then, Karen and I looked through the Hygiene Boxes. We found some really good Bingo prizes like lotion, shampoo, conditioner, toothbrushes, soap, and hand soap. We even found a small bottle of Mr. Bubble Bubble Bath. Then, we went to the found of the building to weigh the items we selected. After weighing the items, Karen filled out paperwork. The other member and I rolled the carts to the back of the building and Karen drove there. The other member loaded up the van. We dropped one of the members at her workplace. From there, Karen, I, and the other member went to Connections. I enjoyed my visit to the Second Harvest Food Bank. Working there was a welcome departure from my usual routine. I enjoyed getting together some vegetables and some hygiene items for Bingo. Going to the Second Harvest Food Bank to help Karen was a rewarding experience as well.

**Some Interesting Facts about the Second Harvest Food Bank:
(From: www.tacomadmg.com):**

Food insecurity is a situation where a person has difficulty to find food for his/her/their next meal. As of 2013, 49.1 million American households experienced food insecurity and, unfortunately, more American households are experiencing food insecurity. Non-profit organization such as Second Harvest Food Bank are addressing this problem by providing food rations to low income people and people experiencing food insecurity. The Second Harvest Food Bank is of Feeding America, a non-profit organization with a network of 200 food banks across the United States, that provide food through soup kitchens, food pantries, and community-based shelters. John van Hengel started the Feeding American movement in 1979 when started soliciting unwanted foods from local gardens, grocery stores and produce farms in his area. His efforts helped to start St. Mary's Food Bank, the first food bank in the United States. From there, the movement went on create a non-profit organization, which became America's Second Harvest. On August 31, 2008, the name of America's Second Harvest was changed to Feeding America. Since then, von Hengel's initiative is ranked as the second largest charity in the United States in terms of revenue. Here are some interesting facts about the Second Harvest Food Bank as follows:

1. Second Harvest is a national leader in fighting hunger in the United States. Second Harvest provides access to food as well as education, advocacy, and disaster relief. In Louisiana alone, the organization provides food for hungry people to community programs and partners in 23 parishes. Also, staff and volunteers are dedicated to distributing over 32 million food meals to 210,000 people a year.
2. It is a way to eliminate poverty. Second Harvest, through their food distribution programs, kitchen meal services, nutrition, education and public-based assistance, helps people in the community to get out of poverty. They assist people on ways to secure food for their tables while they feed the hungry at the same time.
3. They strive to aim for zero waste food. Every year, Second Harvest secures millions of pounds of excess food that may have been otherwise thrown out into the trash bin. Their staff and volunteers make sure that this food is evenly distributed to thousands and thousands of families who are struggling with hunger most of the time.
4. Second Harvest accepts cash donations as well. Not only does Second Harvest accept extra food items, they also welcome donations. The money that kind-hearted individuals donate can help to buy as much as three to seven times more food than people can buy at local grocery stores because Second Harvest partners with some of the biggest names in the food industry such as General Mills, Chiquita Brands International and Kraft Foods.
5. Feeding the hungry isn't about just giving food or money. For people who cannot spare food or money, but want to help, Second Harvest also accepts volunteers to help pack, sort, stock and distribute food to hungry people. Just go to your Second Harvest Food Bank to get more details about volunteering with them.

The Connections Clubhouse Guess the First Snow Contest:

Connection Clubhouse is holding the, "Guess the First Snow," contest. The rules of this contest are that the snow must lay/stick on the ground (dusting) in Newton at the Clubhouse (It does not count if it snows in Hickory but not Newton). The closest date that is under the actual date of the first snow wins if the actual date is not guessed. The winner wins a 5 dollar credit for the Snack Bar at Connections.

10 Tips for Getting Through the Winter Months: (From: www.drugs.com):

1. **Get Outside Often:** It can be easy to avoid going outdoors in the winter time. However, staying inside for days, with nothing but artificial heat and companions who are ill increases your chances for getting sick during the winter. Go outside on a clear, sunny day when it's not raining. Dress warmly, step out into the winter sunshine, and admire the beauty of nature. Getting outside will make you feel better.
2. **Keep Up Your Exercise:** You can choose a gym close to your home or work, find a fitness or yoga group near you that fits into your schedule. Get some appropriate workout clothes and schedule workout time in your schedule like you would schedule with a doctor's appointment. You can download an app like Fitness Buddy to keep track of your fitness. Go outside on a sunny day, dress warmly and run, jog or walk in the cold.
3. **Make the Most of Nutritious Winter Fruits and Vegetables:** Try to minimize eating carbohydrate loaded foods such as white bread and pasta and put dark, leafy greens, winter, citrus and pomegranate, which thrive in the winter, on your plate. These fruits and vegetables have nutrients, antioxidants and fiber, which will increase your energy level and help you with winter weather weight gain. They may also help with reducing your risk of cancer.
4. **Protect your Skin From the Inside-Out and Outside-In:** Cold dry air takes moisture of your skin. In combination with blasting hot air from heating units and scratchy winter fabrics, your skin can become dry, itchy and scaly. Use a heavy oil-based moisturizer for your skin. Apply it every time you shower or bathe. Also, apply the moisturizer any time your skin feels dry. Drink plenty of water and eat foods such as berries, which are high in antioxidants. Also, consume omega-3 fatty acids (Found in foods such as salmon and walnuts) or take omega-3 supplements. Consider using a humidifier to help add moisture to the air.
5. **Watch Your Vitamin D Levels:** Your immune systems and your moods depend on Vitamin D. In the winter, you may suffer a vitamin D deficiency since vitamin D is made in your body after sun exposure and less exposure to the sun may bring about a vitamin D deficiency. Vitamin D also helps the body to absorb and maintain calcium and phosphorus levels for building bones. Ask your doctor to conduct a blood test to determine your level of vitamin D. If your vitamin D level is low, you may benefit from a daily vitamin D supplement of between 400-800 IU per day or 10-20 micrograms.

6. **Try to Keep a Regular Sleep Schedule:** Melatonin regulates your sleep-wake cycle, which is released in response to light. If you expose yourself to too much light at night through the use of computer screens, television screens or electronic devices, you will inhibit the release of melatonin, which results in a decrease in sleep quality and sleep quantity. Decreased sleep quality and sleep quantity will make you feel sluggish and tired the next day. Get up and go to bed at the same time every day regardless of the season, Restrict your computer use and television watching at night. If you have trouble sleeping, you may need to consider a melatonin supplement.
7. **Stop the Cold or the Flu in Its Tracks:** You may experience a sore or scratchy throat, congestion in your nose or eyes or feel a change in your health when you develop a cold and/or the flu. Keep some natural remedies at home to deal with the first signs of a cold and/or the flu such as olive leaf, garlic, echinacea, elderberry, vitamin C and zinc to help boost your immunity and increase your resistance to winter viruses
8. **Be Mindful about Your Heart:** Extreme cold and unaccustomed exertion can harm your heart. Studies have shown that heart attack rates increase with the decrease in temperatures and people who normally do not exert themselves on a regular basis are at risk of a heart attack if they engage in intense bursts of activity. Be careful if you have to go out on a freezing cold day to shovel snow. Use a small shovel and move small amounts of snow at a time. If you experience chest pain, please take it seriously and seek medical care if you experience discomfort, tightening of your chest or pain in your chest, upper arm or neck area. Most heart attacks start with mild symptoms at first, so you need to seek medical help if you have any of these symptoms.
9. **Stay in Control of Your Asthma (If you have asthma):** Winter can present challenges for people with asthma. Colds and flu can trigger asthma attacks. Smoke from fireplaces can cause irritation of your airways and invisible mold spores from live Christmas trees can aggravate your asthma. You need to avoid possible triggers for your asthma.. You can buy an artificial Christmas tree to replace a live tree. Cover your mouth with a scarf when you go outside and continue to take your asthma medication, even if you are feeling well. If your asthma is not in good control, please see your doctor.
10. **Shine Some Light on Your Winter Blues:** Thirty percent of people in the northern United States struggle with the winter blues. A few people suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a kind of depression that occurs at the same time each year. If you feel more irritable as the winter progresses or suffer from a lack of energy, feeling very down or feel a craving for carbohydrates, please see your doctor about the possible use of light therapy to help with your winter blues. Also, getting outside more and engaging in exercise may help your winter blues as well.

**10 Tips to Save Energy at Home:
(From: www.elevatenp.org):**

Not only does winter bring on festive occasions, it also brings on cold temperatures, which lead people to use more electricity and gas in order to keep homes warmer and to keep homes well lit. Here are ten ways to help you save energy and to help you save some more money as well as follows:

1. Welcome the Sun-Opening your curtains and blinds during the day allows the natural heat of the sun to come into your home, helping you by increasing the level of vitamin D in your body since your vitamin D level decreases during the winter time. Getting heat from the sun in your home will decrease your need to cut up your thermostat for heat, helping you save money.
2. Cover your windows at night-While letting in natural heat during the day helps with your consumption of heat, a lack of insulation around your windows causes up to a 25% decrease in heat at night time. So, you can help insulate your windows by keeping your curtains and blinds closed at night.
3. Use LED lights for decorations-LED light bulbs use about 75% less electricity than regular light bulbs. They also last 25 times longer than incandescent light bulbs, meaning you can save money on your electric bill, while decreasing your need to change light bulbs so often since LED light bulbs last longer than regular light bulbs. LED lights for holiday decorations are also attractive as regular Christmas lights, but they also use less electricity, helping you save money.
4. Close unused vents and doors-If you have rooms in your home that you don't use often, you can consider closing heating vents and closing doors to help you conserve energy. If you do not waste electricity by heating up unused rooms, you save both money and energy.
5. Use space heaters for smaller areas-Space heaters can help you warm up smaller rooms without the need to use your furnace, helping you save both energy and money.
6. Lower the temperature-Lowering the temperature in your home by just a few degrees can help you lower your energy bill. Turning your thermostat back a few degrees lower than your usual settings will result in big long-term savings. Also, lower temperatures help with the production of melatonin, a sleep hormone, which helps you sleep better at night.
7. Bundle up-Before you cut up your thermostat, put on a layer of warm clothing. Raising your body temperature with warm clothing is more cost effective than raising the temperature on your furnace. People lose 45% of their body heat

through their heads. So wearing a warm hat inside and outside retains more heat around the head. You can use blankets to keep warm during the day and, at night, you can sleep under a thick blanket or comforter.

8. Reset your water heater thermostat—Water heaters consume the most energy in your home after air heating and cooling systems. Most people don't know that heating water takes a lot of energy and they tend to leave their water heaters on higher temperatures than needed. Water heaters cycle water on and off throughout the day, to maintain water at a set temperature, which results in the water staying hot when not used, resulting in a needless waste of energy. You can save on your energy bill by just turning down your water heater thermostat two to three degrees. You can save a lot of money by turning down your water heater thermostat and you will notice no difference in your water temperature.
9. Air sealing and insulation-If your home is not air sealed or insulated, you will lose warm air through gaps, cracks and leaks in your home. Warm air naturally goes to colder areas, which means you will have a harder time keeping your home warm in the winter time. A leaky home will make you run your heating system constantly to keep your home warm. One way to address this problem is air sealing your home using caulk to seal cracks and openings around areas like windows and door frame, You can use weather striping around doors. Other areas that need air sealing in your home include electrical outlets, light fixtures and AC units. Insulating walls, ceilings, gaps and crevices in your home will also help to keep out the cold. Insulation slows the natural movement of hot air to cooler spaces. It also reduces the amount of heat that leaves your home and increases the energy efficiency of your home. Not only does insulation keep warm air in your home during the winter, it also helps to keep your home cool and comfortable during the summer time.
10. Get a smart thermostat-A smart thermostat will connect to your Wi-Fi to learn your preferences and habits to establish a schedule that modifies temperatures to save energy when you are not at home or you are asleep. You may qualify for rebates and incentives to install a smart thermostat, depending on your energy provider, city and/or state of residence.