



**CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION**  
*A SAMHSA Funded Drug-Free Community Coalition*  
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**November 11, 2009 – Make time for family time**

Elizabeth Eckley is the Community Mobilizer for Centre County Communities That Care. This weekly column, published on Wednesdays, is a collaboration of Centre County *Communities That Care* serving Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and Philipsburg-Osceola Area School Districts, and Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care* serving the State College Area School District.

It's that time of year again. The kids are back in school, the days are getting shorter, and the peak of Central Pennsylvania's breathtaking fall foliage has passed. The first unexpectedly early snowfall of the season was a not-so-gentle reminder that winter is not far off. Soon the holiday bustle will be starting, and if your family is like many others the pace will pick up.

With so much going on, it's easy for families to lose sight of how important it is to spend meaningful time together. Don't let that happen to your family! The following ideas come from a community group out of Wazyata, Minnesota called "Family Life First."

Limit your kids' activities. Never have there been so many options to keep our kids busy. Sports, music, dance, tutoring – the list goes on and on. Have your child select one activity per season or per year and perhaps something different next year. There's less pressure on them and the family can spend more time together.

Limit yourself. Not only does this set a good example for your children, but allows you to have more time with your family. You can't be there for your kids, if you're not even there.

Kill the TV. Turn the TV off during meals and enjoy your time together without the background noise. Take one or two nights per week and turn it off. Enjoy reading, talking, listening to music, or other activities that you don't normally get to do together.

Have Sunday brunch. Plan a fancy spread for this once-a-week occasion. Attendance is mandatory and everyone gets a chance to share the events of their week.

Get enough sleep. Most research recommends 7 to 8 hours per night for adults, and as recent articles in this column show, kids need even more. If you are well rested, you'll feel calm and relaxed – and ready to do things with your family.

Plan a family fun night. Watch a movie together, and then discuss the characters and messages. Play board games or create your own – like a scavenger hunt where you have to find specific items around the house. Games that require you to work together will build relationships and open the lines of communication.

Your time together as a family is precious. As you prepare for the upcoming holidays and the new year that will follow, give your family a "time-out" and enjoy each other! You'll appreciate it in the long run.

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