



## EXTENSION

## STRENGTHENING OKLAHOMA FAMILIES

### Make the Holiday Season Merry And Bright...and Safe

'Tis the season to gather with family and friends to enjoy tasty meals, festive decorations and create memories. This time of year also comes with increased risks around the home. Keeping safety top of mind will help ensure the holiday is happy – not hazardous.

December is the leading month for home fires, said Gina Peek, assistant director, Oklahoma State University Extension/Family Consumer Science program leader and associate dean for Extension and Engagement in the College of Education and Human Sciences.

"We're lighting the fireplace and turning on the heating system," she said. "And, many holiday decorations require electricity, which can mean lots of extension cords. Being mindful of the electrical load on extension cords and outlets is important. Use surge protectors when plugging in multiple decorations."

There are increased numbers of kitchen fires this time of year. With all of the hustle and bustle of the holidays, it can be easy to get distracted from what's cooking on the stove or in the oven. Unattended cooking is the leading cause of cooking fires throughout the year.

Holiday décor, including live trees and candles, can create a cozy atmosphere but raises fire hazards. Choose flame-resistant decorations. Candles add lovely



ambiance throughout the home, so if you choose to use them, keep them at least 12 inches away from anything flammable. Consider using battery-operated candles instead. Also, place the live Christmas tree away from heat sources, such as fireplaces, vents, or space heaters. Turn off the lights and blow out candles before leaving the house or going to bed.

"Although Christmas tree fires aren't terribly common, they do tend to be more serious, causing \$15 million in direct property damage," Peek said. "This is just one reason why it's vital to have working smoke detectors in the home."

Test smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors to ensure they're working correctly. Ensure fire extinguishers are readily accessible and that everyone in the house is familiar with the emergency evacuation plan.

### Garfield County Extension Office

#### Address

316 E. Oxford  
Enid, OK 73701

#### Phone

580-237-1228

#### Email

Joy Rhodes  
[Joy.rhodes@okstate.edu](mailto:Joy.rhodes@okstate.edu)

#### Website

<http://oces.okstate.edu/garfield/>

#### Social Media

Facebook: Garfield County OSU  
Extension Family & Consumer Sciences

### In this issue

- Safe Holiday Season
- Rick Nelson's Retirement
- 2026 Lessons
- Upcoming Classes
- Table Runner Workshop
- OHCE Board Meeting
- OHCE Achievement Day
- Air Force Cookies
- OHCE Board Brunch
- Leader Lessons
- Office Closed



*Continued from page 1*

When stringing lights on the Christmas tree or on the house, check each string for frays, broken bulbs and damaged sockets. Replace as necessary.

If celebrating with young children at home, keep small ornaments, batteries, and breakable décor out of reach. When visiting grandparents, ensure they keep all their medications out of reach. Some pills look like candy and could be enticing to a young child.

Holiday plants, such as poinsettias, lilies, and mistletoe, can be harmful to people and pets. And speaking of pets, chocolate can cause them serious medical issues or even death. Be sure to store those special holiday treats out of reach.

"The holidays should be a time of enjoyment and connection with family and friends," Peek said. "Making sure safety precautions are in place will help you focus on making memories – not managing an emergency."

## **Rick Nelson Retirement December 19 2 - 4:30**

Rick is retiring! Stop by the Extension Office to visit, share memories and wish Rick well as he begins this exciting new chapter.



## **Leader Lessons-2026**

**January**-That's Not the Way I Would Have Done It

**February**-Container Gardening

**March**-Aging with Purpose

**April**-District Lessons-Air Fryer Basics or Relax Your Way to Better Blood Pressure

**May**-All About Route 66

**June**-Free Month

**July**-Made In Oklahoma

**August**-Cook Once Eat all Month

**September**-State Lessons Neurodivergence-What is it? Or Dancing for the Health of It.

**October**-New Uses for Mason Jars

**November**-Food Gift Mixes

**December** Free Month

## **Upcoming Classes/Events**

**Stay Strong Stay Healthy** Classes Feb 2-March 26, 12:30 pm each Monday and Thursday. No charge for the classes but sign up by January 26 to place a hold on your chair.

**LEAD (Living, Eating and Being Active with Diabetes)** Classes March 4-25<sup>th</sup>, 12 Noon. Cost is \$40, includes a meal each class and all printed materials. More information in the February newsletter.

**Barn Quilt** Classes to be held April 10 and 11. Each class will be from 9 am to 4 pm. Cost TBA. More details in the February newsletter.

The table runner workshop has tentatively been scheduled for February.

More information will be coming in January.

# Education Workshops for December/January

Check out some of these offerings for OHCE members, guests or anyone interested in a  
Good time with friends and learning a new skill

## OHCE Executive Board Meeting January 5, 2026

Final plans for Achievement Day will be discussed at this meeting as well as plans for the upcoming OHCE year and Spring Association meeting in April.

## OHCE Executive Board Meeting/Brunch December 1, 9:30 am

Board Members are asked to bring breakfast items to share during our meeting December 1. Chairs of each OHCE Fair Division should be prepared to present "Fair Changes" in each category at this meeting. The yearbook will be reviewed with the final copy prepared for printing.

## Garfield OHCE Achievement Day Sat, January 24, 2026 9:30 am

To prepare for Achievement Day all secretary books and achievement score cards are due to Extension Office by January 12, 2026. All OHCE Awards, reports, OHCE Photo and Life Story Contest are due at this time. Check your current yearbook for information on Reports and Awards starting on page 30.

All OHCE members are invited to the annual Achievement Day Program Saturday, January 24, 9:30 am. County Officers and Committee Chairs will be installed as well as awards for our members. The Brunch will be hosted by the Executive Board.

## Leader Lessons

The January Lesson will be a mail out on the topic of "That's Not the Way I Would Have Done It". This will be available in early January.

The February Lesson will be on January 28, 2:00 pm at the Garfield County OSU Extension

Conference Room. Our topic is "Container Gardening".

OHCE Yearbooks will be ready for pick up by groups by mid-December at the office.

## Cookies for Vance Air Force Base

Cookies for Vance are due by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday each month to the Extension Office. Cookies for December are being donated by True Honest Workers and January cookies will be furnished by Pioneer Wheathearts.



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Joy Rhodes  
Extension Educator, FCS/4-H Youth Dev.

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Garfield County Extension Office  
316 E. Oxford  
Enid, OK 73701



**GARFIELD COUNTY  
EXTENSION**

Dec. 1 – OHCE Board Brunch  
Dec. 19 – Rick Nelson Retirement  
Jan. 5 – Board Meeting  
Jan. 24 – OHCE Achievement Day  
Jan. 29 – Leader Lesson  
Feb. 2 – Stay Strong, Stay Healthy



Garfield County Extension Office will be closed for the holidays from December 24 – January 4. We will open on Monday, January 5, 2026.

*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year*

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