

BREAKROOM BUZZ

October 2026

Beyond the Screen: Creating Quality Time Together

Screen time has benefits, but too much can affect sleep, school performance, physical activity, reading, relationships, mood, self-image, and body image. The goal is not to eliminate technology, but to create a healthy balance.

What can families do to replace some screen time?

1. **Get outside.** Walk, ride bikes, hike, visit a park, play games, or have a scavenger hunt.
2. **Have fun inside.** Play board games, read together, have a dance party, build a fort, or share stories.
3. **Help others.** Make care packages, pick up trash, donate items, visit a neighbor, or try a random act of kindness.
4. **Create and be productive.** Draw, paint, complete a puzzle, cook, garden, exercise, or practice relaxation.

5. **Make time to talk.** Use meals, car rides, walks, or bedtime to connect. Adults can model healthy habits by putting devices away.

Start small by choosing one activity each week. Less screen time can create more opportunities for connection, creativity, movement, and fun.

For more information, explore “Smartphones, Smart Families” and the survival kit at go.illinois.edu/SurvivalKit. These activities strengthen family relationships and create ways to enjoy free time.

Pumpkin Bars

Servings: 24

Ingredients:

- ½ cup margarine, softened
- ½ cup packed brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- ⅓ cup canned pumpkin
- 1 egg
- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 4 ounces reduced-fat cream cheese, softened
- 1 cup frozen light whipped topping, thawed

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. Grease and lightly flour a 9-inch square baking pan.
3. Combine the first four ingredients. Beat on medium with a mixer until well blended.

4. Beat in pumpkin and egg. Then beat in flour.
5. Spread batter in the prepared pan.
6. Bake 12 to 15 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Cool in the pan for 10 minutes.
7. Remove from the pan. Cool on a wire rack.
8. Beat cream cheese with a mixer on medium until smooth. Beat in half of the whipped topping. Fold in the remaining whipped topping.
9. Spread over cooled, uncut pumpkin bars.
10. Cut into 24 bars.
11. Store in refrigerator.

Nutritional information per serving:
90 calories; 4 g total fat (2 g saturated fat); 3 mg cholesterol; 75 mg sodium; 11 g carbohydrates; 0 g fiber; 1 g protein.

It's Breast Cancer Awareness Month

In October, let's take a moment to focus on our health. Here are a few easy things you can do this month:

1. **Know your body.** There's no single “normal.” Get familiar with your body so you notice changes, such as a new lump, skin changes, pain, or discharge.
2. **Know your risk.** Age, genetics, and family history all play a role. A talk with your doctor can help you understand yours.
3. **Build healthy habits.** Staying active, eating well, and limiting alcohol and tobacco all support breast health.
4. **Don't skip screenings.** Mammograms every two years (ages 50–74) plus self-checks help detect issues early.
5. **Talk about it.** Ask your doctor questions and encourage the women in your life to do the same.

Small steps make a big difference. Here's to a healthy, well-informed October!

Adapted from Illinois Extension, Health Insights Illinois. Read more at go.illinois.edu/CancerAwareness

