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Home Economics: Investing in Families

Family disintegration, sexual abuse, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse—these are all occurring in today's families. Sadly, Adventist families do not escape these problems either.

Home economics is one discipline that focuses on strengthening the family. Its classes teach what to expect from marriage and parenthood—and from every phase of the life cycle from birth to old age. Home economics helps young people make vital decisions, set life goals, take care of a family, manage money, make wise use of time and health, and choose a satisfying career.

Today, home economics graduates are prepared to be employed in a variety of business, educational, and community organizations and agencies. Career options include: restaurant manager, housing consultant, interior designer, dietitian, consumer affairs reporter, day-care center director, parenting educator, family financial consultant, child abuse caseworker, textile chemist, test kitchen manager...the possibilities are almost endless. Further, through 1995, more than 37,000 employment opportunities are projected annually for home economics college graduates.

The concept of family is important to Adventists. But do we give only lip service to this concept? Do we bemoan the high rates of divorce and child abuse while closing down home economics departments at the secondary and college levels because "we can't afford them any longer"? If we truly placed a high priority on family values, we would support and strengthen the teaching of home economics by requiring all students to take at least one class that helps them clarify their values, goals, understanding, and knowledge of Adventist family life-style.

Why do we seem to think that it is too expensive to educate students for essential everyday activities? It does cost money to offer these courses. But *not* offering them also costs money—divorce has fiscal as well as emotional costs; child abuse, financial mismanagement, and substance abuse cause terrible damage to the individual and society. Do we consider these costs?

To support home economics is to vote for the value of stable, happy Adventist individuals and families. Teaching young people to manage time, money; and health; discipline children; prepare nutritionally balanced meals; and communicate effectively with other family members will help them in their current home life as well as prepare them for a rewarding future.

We can show our commitment to strong Adventist families by our curriculum requirements and financial support of home economics. The dollars spent for home economics education will be repaid many times over in benefits to the individual, church, and society.—Diane L. Fletcher. □

Dr. Diane L. Fletcher is Chairman and Associate Professor of Home Economics, Southern College of SDA, Collegedale, Tennessee. She served as coordinator for this issue on home economics, providing invaluable advice and assistance throughout its preparation.