

American Red Cross Offering Babysitter Training Courses

The American Red Cross is offering Babysitter's Training Course in La Grange and Columbus.

To help keep children of all ages safer in their communities, the Red Cross is proud to offer the new Babysitter's Training course.

The Fayette County class is

scheduled for Wednesday, March 31 from 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. at 255 Svoboda Lane, La Grange, giving youth ages 11 and older, the skills and confidence to be great babysitters.

The Colorado County class is scheduled for Wednesday, March 17 from 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. at 419

Washington Street, Columbus.

"Our goal is to create a safe and supportive community for families," said Stacey Norris, Community Outreach Coordinator, American Red Cross.

"When parents hire trained babysitters who know how to provide proper child care and

handle emergencies, their children are safer and so are our babysitters."

The Red Cross Babysitter's Training course is a great way for young people to build self-esteem and develop leadership, decision-making and communication skills; as well as give them a meaningful

way to earn money.

Used to train and certify over 120,000 babysitters nationwide each year, the Red Cross Babysitter's Training course is fun and fast-paced with hands-on activities, role-plays, and lively discussions.

The course teaches young people how to:

Supervise children and infants

Perform basic child-care skills such as diapering, feeding and dressing

Choose safe, age-appropriate games and toys

Identify safety hazards and prevent injuries

Care for common injuries such as burns, cuts and bee stings

Communicate effectively with

parents

Find and interview for babysitting jobs

As a part of the course fee of \$40, participants will receive newly revised training materials, including the Babysitter's Training Handbook, with information to use in class and on the job; an Emergency Reference Guide that provides step-by-step instructions to handle common emergencies; and a CD-ROM that includes tools such as a printable activity booklet with games, songs and recipes, a resume template and more.

For more information or to register for the Babysitter's Training course, please contact Stacey Norris at 979-968-8931. Space is limited so register today.

Cattle Industry Looks To Rebound In 2010

2010 is off to a wetter start as rains have been falling across the state on a routine basis.

Stock tanks are filling up and greener pastures should be

around the corner come spring time.

That could lead to ranchers putting more cows out to pasture.

Given the shrinking supply of beef over the past few years, the industry should be swimming in record prices.

That is not the case.

"The reason is demand for beef has fallen off mainly due to the economy," said Marv Ulbricht, president of the Colorado County Farm Bureau.

"People cut back on the higher end protein source as the uncertainty of job loss and pay checks rippled throughout the U.S."

Because of the drought and lack of demand, many producers destocked their herds from where they were 20 years ago.

Cattle numbers have been dropping a few percentage points each year.

Today, the national cowherd is the smallest since 1959.

The inventory of Texas cattle and calves totaled 13.3 million head on Jan. 1 of this year, down 2 percent from last year's inventory.

The Lone Star State continues to rank first in the nation in total number of cattle and calves with 14 percent of the total United States inventory.

Restocking looks to be a gradual process as producers search for any positive signs that the market has taken a turn for the better.

"The wild card is exports," Marv said.

"If we get meaningful beef trade moved back into Japan, South Korea and Taiwan we could see this thing really pick up pretty good in 2010."

USDA currently expects beef exports to rebound by 10 percent in 2010.

If the expectations hold out, beef exports will total 2 billion pounds.

As the economy improves and if and when restaurant patrons gain the financial confidence to eat out more, it could spell a double boost for the beef industry.

U.S. Launches Series Of New Coins

As the past couple of years have seen average Americans' purse strings tighten, even the

United States Mint has markedly reduced the number of coins it's produced between 2008 and 2009.

But while money has been harder to come by, the Mint has seen a unique opportunity in releasing a number of special new coin designs that could someday become collectibles.

First established by the Coinage Act in 1792, the U.S. Mint became the first federal building erected under the Constitution.

Starting with the circulation of 11,178 copper cents in 1793, the Mint has been issuing a variety of interesting limited-edition coins for over two centuries.

But 2009 saw a noticeable decrease in coin production at the Mint's main facilities in Denver and Philadelphia.

The two facilities only produced 3.548 billion circulating coins in 2009, a sharp drop from the more than 10 billion produced in 2008.

Even the production of one-dollar presidential coins dropped. 2008's highest-production presidential coin, commemorating President James Monroe, had almost 125 million coins in circulation, compared to 98.4 million coins produced for 2009's top presidential dollar, honoring William Henry Harrison.

Since this past holiday season, the U.S. Mint has launched a number of intriguing coin campaigns. The Christmas holidays saw the launch of a special commemorative silver dollar honoring the 100th anniversary of the Boy Scouts of America.

Surcharges for the limited-edition coin are going to the National Boy Scouts of America Foundation.

Since then, the U.S. Mint has unveiled designs and plans for a variety of special coins honoring the First Spouses (including Jane Pierce and Mary Todd Lincoln), Zachary Taylor, and historical Native American figures.

The Zachary Taylor one-dollar coin was first circulated in November, but now is available in a special limited-edition coin cover that provides a nice presentation for collectors.

The Native-American-themed one-dollar coins come on the heels of the 2008 Native American One-Dollar Coin Act, which looks to celebrate the contributions of Indian tribes and individual Native Americans to the history and development of the United States.

The first of these one-dollar coins, which was released in January, features the image of the legendary Sacagawea.

February saw the U.S. Mint release a stylish limited-edition set featuring four separate Presidential one-dollar coins honoring Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce, James Buchanan, and Abraham Lincoln.

These impressive designs are quite popular among collectors and can possibly accrue value as the U.S. Mint cuts down on its coin production.

At the very least, it's an interesting way to honor America's storied history.

Tips To Improve Your Golf Game

On the surface, golf can be a game of beauty and majesty, producing some of the most storied traditions in all of sports.

But for casual players, it can be the single most frustrating exercise ever invented.

You don't necessarily need to hire your own golf pro to improve your experience on the links.

Of course, a lesson or two probably wouldn't hurt either.

"If you feel rusty or self-conscious, take a golf lesson or join a clinic to brush up your game and confidence," says Carol Preisinger, the Director of Instruction at the award-winning Kiawah Island Club Golf Academy.

"A good grip, posture, and alignment go a long way when you don't play often."

If you don't have time to play, visit the practice facility and spend the majority of time working on your short game."

Preisinger knows what she's talking about. Kiawah Island hosts a number of heralded courses designed by such golfing luminaries as Tom Fazio, Tom Watson, and Jack Nicklaus.

In fact, Kiawah's Ocean Course was designed and built specifically for the 1991 Ryder Cup matches.

However, if lessons aren't in the cards, Preisinger offers some other helpful tips:

*** Call in Advance:** Before arriving at the course, inquire about rates, dress code, and other necessary information.

If you're on a budget, ask about twilight rates.

Many resorts have discounted rates in the afternoon.

You can save money on green fees and the course may be less crowded.

*** Know Your Game:** By being familiar with how far your shots carry, you'll better navigate course hazards.

"Carry is the key word here, especially when water lies between you and the green," says Kiawah's Preisinger.

"Plan accordingly and pick the best club that will carry the water."

*** Improve Your Club Selection:** Updating your golf clubs can help.

Consider investing in custom wedges to save strokes, hybrids for hitting more greens, and a putter with a length and head weight that's right for you.

But lugging a set on your vacation isn't all that appealing. Leave them at home if they aren't imperative to your game.

Many resorts provide top-of-the-line equipment. Just don't forget to buy golf balls.

*** Play Challenging Courses:** Top resort golf courses typically offer scenic landscapes, lagoons or ocean views, which add beauty to the eye and depth to your game.

*** Learn the Rules:** It might seem elementary, but familiarizing yourself with the USGA rule book, especially specific situations and procedures, may save you some strokes.

Ask if local rules allow for "drop areas" on holes with water hazards, which could save you time and golf balls.

For more information about the courses on Kiawah Island, which is just off the coast of South Carolina, visit www.kiawah.com. Difficult to pick up, impossible to master, golf has confounded players their entire lives.

But with a few simple tips, the grand game can get just a little easier.

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