

ALAH JR. HIGH SOFTBALL VS CASEY WESTFIELD



The ALAH jr. high softball team opened their 2023 season with a home game against the Casey Westfield Braves on Thursday, August 3. Annelise Ponder was the starting pitcher for the Knights.



ALAH shortstop Annabelle Vanausdoll tags out the Casey runner attempting to steal second base in the first inning of the home opener on August 3.



Knights third baseman Bella Romine tags the Casey runner out in the first inning of the game last Thursday. The Braves player was caught in a rundown between third and home. All three outs by the Knights defense in the first inning were put outs on runners attempting to steal.



Ella Oye center fielder for the JH Knights softball team watches the ball come to the plate in the second inning of the home game last Thursday vs. Casey Westfield. The Knights were to play Charleston on August 4 and then have two home games on the 7th and 8th before traveling to Bement on August 10.



ALAH JH softball catcher Alana Perez does a nice job framing the pitch for a called strike in the game vs. Casey Westfield last week. Alana also did a great job catching runners attempting to steal as she had several put outs in the game.



ALAH jr. high softball head coach Jerry Lane talks to his team after the season opener on August 3. Standing next to Coach Lane are his assistants Kailee Otto and Whitney Wyncoop. Despite the 12-0 loss Coach Lane discussed the lessons to be learned from the game and the importance of playing good competition like the Braves to make the team better.

Seasonal summer spending

I would like to share this great article by Extension Educator Jamie Mahlandt about seasonal spending – especially summer. Jamie says: acknowledging seasonal and occasional expenses is an important part of your spending plan or budget. Tracking these expenses allows you to plan ahead in case you need to save up. Vacations, kids' summer camps and daycare, and property taxes may be some seasonally occurring expenses that bust your budget if you are not prepared. Planning for these important expenses throughout the year instead of waiting until the full amount is due will help you keep your budget balanced and stay on track to meet your financial goals.

Staycations may be a budget-friendly option if your budget does not allow for expensive travel this year. Look for inexpensive attractions that are within driving distance to avoid the cost of an overnight stay. For the St. Louis area, there are some low-cost entertainment opportunities: St. Louis Zoo has free admission, general admission to the Sci-

ence Center is free, the Magic House has some free family nights in the summer, and the St. Louis Arch Museum is free. There may also be free opportunities for bowling locally during the summer.

Check out your local library to see if any activities or events are happening over the summer. Most libraries have a summer reading program for youth. Others offer entertaining youth events in combination with its summer reading program at no cost. Some libraries provide mobile Internet hot spots for library cardholders to check out. Local libraries may be places to find information for summer entertainment on a budget.

Create a spending plan for the next year by setting aside money for a future vacation. Research low-cost options for vacations that meet your personal values and needs, whether it be relaxing on a beach, hiking and exploring the outdoors, or visiting an amusement park. Look for ways to vacation while minimizing costs.

With school-age children, families may require addition-

Facts for Families By Cheri Burcham, Family Life Educator

al funds for childcare during the summer months. In addition to the childcare costs, the grocery costs may also be higher during the summer months. Illinois General Assembly recently passed legislation to provide free breakfast and lunch for K-12 students, which lowers food costs during the school year. When

summer break arrives, is your budget prepared for those extra meals?

In Illinois, children under the age of 14 are not allowed to be unsupervised for an unreasonable period of time. Summer childcare can be hard to find and expensive. Some day camp programs may qualify for the Child and Dependent

Care Credit. Be sure to keep records of your childcare expenses over the summer as this may be useful when filing your taxes.

For some homeowners, summer may bring Illinois property tax deadlines. Each county may have a different deadline, but the first installment may be due in the summer/fall with the second installment a month or so later. Even if your property taxes are paid by a third party, such as your mortgage company, it is good prac-

tice to review your property taxes annually to know your property's assessed value and the taxes due. For more information on your property assessment and taxes, go to your local assessor's website.

Acknowledging all the seasonal and occasional expenses in your budget allows you to plan for these costs in advance. Create a spending plan for summer that incorporates your values and considers all the seasonal summertime expenses.

In-person Master Gardener training offered at two locations this fall

Master Gardeners are volunteers who provide unbiased, research-based information after completing classes taught by University of Illinois specialists and Extension Educators. Illinois Extension Master Gardeners host educational programs in the community, respond to calls or emails from the public, maintain demonstration gardens,

and donate food from community gardens. Registration is now open for the fall Master Gardener training sessions in Macon and Piatt counties.

Master Gardener training will be from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Thursdays beginning Sept. 14 and ending on Dec. 14. There will be no classes on Nov. 16 and Nov. 23. Classes will be held at the Piatt

County Extension office, 210 S. Market St. in Monticello and the Macon County Extension office, 3351 N. President Howard Brown Blvd., in Decatur.

Master Gardener training includes botany, soils, vegetables, fruits, flowers, trees and shrubs, grasses, landscaping, insects, and diseases. The fee for the training is \$175, and

fee waivers are available.

Visit go.illinois.edu/mg-trainingdmp by Sept. 11 to register for the fall session. For questions, please contact Beth Miglin, Piatt County horticulture program coordinator, at 217-762-2191 or Whitney Allison, Macon County horticulture program coordinator, at 217-877-6042.