National Family Month is observed during the five-week period between Mother’s Day in May and Father’s Day in June. It is timed to coincide with the end of the school year, when families start spending more time together. National Family Month encourages family relationships and focuses on developing healthy and confident children.

This is a good time to reflect on your family and how to make it stronger. Strong families share many of the same qualities. Strong families:

- build trusting relationships by following through with promises
- are committed to each other sharing traditions and making time for family events
- communicate with one another about important decisions and day-to-day activities
- grow through crisis by using their experience to learn and grow. They know even bad experiences can bring about good changes.
- spend time together talking, reading, and playing games, taking walks, and cooking.
- have fun as a family by making plans for family trips, parties, and picnics
- show love and affection to each other. No matter what children say or do, they need to know that parents love them. Family members say “I love you”, give hugs, and show affection in other small ways.

Celebrating your family could include these five elements: home, trust, love, freedom, and hope. Providing your family with a safe and secure environment reminds them “There’s no place like home.” Helping your child create relationships with people they can trust gives them assurance and confidence to build their own relationships. The gift of unconditional love lets children know they are accepted and have value in their family. They feel important which encourages self-esteem and self-confidence. Freedom encourages children to learn and grow empowering them to discover their talents. Building strong families gives children hope for the future and the confidence to strive to reach those dreams deep inside their heart.
I encourage you to spend time with your family enjoying each other and nurturing those relationships. It is especially important to engage in meaningful activities that do not put a strain on your family budget. Luckily, having fun does not necessarily mean spending a lot of money. In fact, most families say their best times are about the quality of the time together. The key is to plan regular time to be together and have fun. Some ideas to get you started might be:

- go swimming at a nearby lake or public pool
- play a board game or a game of cards
- go camping
- have a picnic at a local park or on your living room floor
- go for a walk
- visit the local library
- go to a local park - play on the swings, play basketball, or just sit on a park bench
- cook a meal together
- visit a museum or historical site
- browse a local flea market
- grow a garden

It doesn’t really matter which activity you choose. The important thing is to do something together as a family. Supporting your child as they grow and encouraging their dreams helps motivate them to be successful. When families are strong and children are motivated to do their best it also makes our communities stronger. Strong communities provide a safe place for families and everyone benefits. Seems like a logical circle or life. So celebrate your family!

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