Date: 2/16/12
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From: Roxie Dinstel
Re: Pinching Pennies to run Mondays on page A-3
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One of the best ways to wreck your budget is to have a health problem. February is “Heart Health Month” and it is an appropriate time to look at how we treat our hearts. Heart disease is the most common cause of death in America and deserves more of our attention.

Heart disease kills an estimated 630,000 Americans each year. It’s the leading cause of death for both men and women. In the United States, the most common type of heart disease is coronary artery disease (CAD), which can lead to a heart attack. You can greatly reduce your risk for CAD through lifestyle changes and, in some cases, medication.

Heart disease is very expensive to treat. Cardiovascular disease and stroke hospitalizations have cost nearly $450 billion in health care expenses and lost productivity in 2010 alone. The sad truth is that these ailments are usually preventable.

The good news is that there are only a few causes of heart disease that are out of our control, such as genetic predisposition, family history and aging. The rest is a matter of choice. Even small lifestyle improvements can make a significant difference. Weight control, good nutrition, regular exercise and stress reduction are all part of that. Each one of these is fully achievable for everyone with enough commitment and willingness to make the necessary efforts. Thinking about heart disease is a good start, but it doesn’t end there. You need to do something about it.

It’s easy to forget about your heart health when you’re on the go! In the daily grind of working, raising a family, or rushing to get to that meeting, we often take the health of our hearts for granted. Show your heart some extra TLC today by getting active and eating better.
**Get Active**—Thirty minutes a day of moderate physical activity, five days a week, will lead to feeling better and living longer. Fortunately, it doesn’t have to be all at once. Make time for walking in your day. Park in the far end of the parking lot or take the stairs. Take short walks during the workday. Plan a walk with a special person or canine companions when you get home from school or the office, before you get tied up with making dinner or cracking open the books.

**Eat better**—A healthy diet is one of your best weapons in the war against heart disease. Keep a journal for yourself of what you are eating and drinking. Stock your kitchen with healthy foods and leave the junk food at the store. Cut back on salt and added sugars. Eat fish twice a week. Include fruits and vegetable in a variety of colors in your diet every day. Increase your fiber intake with whole grains. Cut back on saturated and trans fats. Don’t forget to drink plenty of water.

Now if you need help as you get on the road to treating your heart well, we have a class for you.

Tanana District Cooperative Extension is offering the Strong Woman-Healthy Heart Program to help women improve their heart health. It is a fun, hands-on way to make positive changes to help you eat better, move more and improve your general health and well-being.

The 12-week program will be offered beginning in March. The class will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 5:30 pm at the Extension office at 724 27th Avenue. Classes will have an aerobic exercise session and a short nutrition lesson including topics on menu planning, portion control, and healthy eating. Participants will learn how to improve cholesterol levels, blood pressure, and weight.

The 12 week series will start on March 6th and will have a supplies fee of $25. To register for the class or if you have questions, call 474-2420.

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