

By Christopher Burnett | Staff Writer

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Cooking demo focuses on kitchen fire safety

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Two fire inspectors from the Fort Leavenworth Fire Department joined members of the Fort Leavenworth Frontier Heritage Communities staff to present a cooking safety class Oct. 11 in the FLFHC Community Center. Nearly 30 community members learned about safe kitchen practices in various scenarios.

“A lot of the fires that happen on post are kitchen fires,” said Laura Alexander, FLFHC’s new marketing coordinator. “We want to reduce that by offering this cooking class during Fire Prevention Month and in conjunction with the fire department.”

“The purpose of the class is to provide useful information and demonstrate fire safety best practices,” Alexander said.

Fire Inspectors Jaime Amparan and Derek Elrod prepared three menu items to demonstrate the points made during the presentation in an applied situation of actual cooking. Cooking fires are the primary cause of home fires and home fire injuries, Elrod said.

“Even more people are burned by hot cooking equipment, such as ranges, ovens, pots and pans,” Amparan said. “Additionally, (they can receive) injuries by scalds from hot drinks, soups or food from the microwave.”

Child safety is also important.

“Young children are at a particularly high risk from these non-fire cooking burns,” Elrod added. “We recommend that every kitchen have an established ‘kid free zone’ of at least three feet around the stove. And another best practice for safety is to never hold a child while you are cooking or carrying hot foods or liquids.”

The National Fire Protection Association recommends several proactive safety measures to minimize fire risk. Some of these include staying in the kitchen while frying or broiling food, and to turning off the stove when leaving the kitchen while cooking — even if only leaving for a short time.

“We want to cover all aspects of cooking — the baking in the oven, the grill, on the stove top — cooking common items that most families will make at some point. We also want to provoke discussion and proactive thought about safety,” Amparan said.

For some, it was about meeting new people and learning.

“I am here to hang out with neighbors, meet new neighbors and learn some new recipes,” said resident Melissa Caputo. “I think the fire safety aspect of the event is wonderful. With us living in such a close community, where houses are often touching one another, I was encouraged to hear the information about changing batteries in smoke detectors.”

“This is another awesome community event,” said Caputo’s neighbor, Lakesha Finley-Flowers. “I think the demonstration of using fire extinguishers and the information about the various types of extinguishers for different uses was extremely helpful.”

The NFPA emphasizes that home fire extinguishers have limits, noting that some extinguishers discharge completely in as little as eight seconds. It is important to evacuate the home and call the fire department, rather than attempt to fight the fire using an extinguisher.

“The very best thing that anyone can do is to make sure a fire doesn’t happen in their house,” said Deputy Fire Chief Christian Howell. “Be proactive by taking simple preventative measures. Keep combustibles away from the stove. Make sure that you stay with your cooking. Make sure that you are following your recipe and know what you are doing.”

Fire Prevention Week is Oct 9-15. The Fire Department hosted its annual open house Oct. 12 where visitors were treated to food, met firefighters and toured Fire Station No. 2 at 295 Biddle Blvd.



PHOTO/ PRUDENCE SIEBERT, FORT LEAVENWORTH LAMP

Deputy Fire Chief Christian Howell places marinated chicken wings on a hot grill during a kitchen safety cooking class Oct. 11 at the FLFHC Community Center. Photo by Prudence Siebert/Fort Leavenworth Lamp