One of the most enjoyable and meaningful experiences a family can have is by holding a family reunion. Today families, live all over the country and the world. A family reunion brings distant and long forgotten members, in-laws, extended family and friends together. Kids get a chance to meet and bond with their cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents and other relatives. For everyone in the family it is a time to praise their ancestral heritage, to bathe in the beauty and endurance of their shared culture and to reaffirm their values and uniqueness.

Begin by putting a family planning team together. Find ways for the teens and younger children to help and give their input. They'll learn important social skills with the respect and appreciation received for their efforts. Choose a place that is accessible by plane, train or bus, spacious enough for everyone, comfortable for the disabled and elderly and safe for little children. Have multi-generational activities for all: family heritage history and pictures, plenty of games, songs, poetry, talent shows, and honorary recognition for elders. Don't forget that crowd-pleasing food. As family members leave, they will take with them a deeper understanding of where they came from, a stronger connection to each other and many lasting and fulfilling memories. Haven't planned yours yet? Well there is still time!

Make It a Food Safety Reunion

As you prepare meals for your family reunion, follow the food safety basics to help avoid harmful food borne bacteria. **CLEAN:** Wash produce. Remember to wash your hands and food surfaces with soap and water before preparing food. If no running water, bring water; pack clean wet towelettes and paper towels. **SEPARATE:** Don't cross contaminate food. Raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs can easily contaminate and in one hour spread germs to ready-to-eat foods. Don't put raw meat and cooked meat on the same plate. **COOK:** Cook meat, poultry and eggs thoroughly and cook at right temperature. Keep hot foods hot (140 F degrees temperature or above.) **CHILL** leftovers promptly after serving. Keep cold foods cold. Keep ice chests close.
Advocates for Children of NJ Message excerpt by Cecilla Zalkind, President/CEO

"New Jersey's child care population has increased since 1990, and it is more diverse than ever, with more than 50% being kids of color. Although NJ ranks fifth in child well-being, wide racial gaps in educational outcomes, economic well-being and maternal and child mortality exist. With the multicultural boom in our youth population, more investments must be made to expand opportunities for all our state’s residents. More than 270,000 children live in poverty, a 27% increase since 1990. The Garden State has seen other troubling trends in economic well being, with a greater share of children in families burdened with high housing costs. New Jersey has made progress in health, ensuring that more children have insurance and reducing child and teen death rates....But we must continue investing in children to ensure they have bright futures.”

Advocates for Children of NJ Message excerpt by Cecilla Zalkind, President/CEO

"La población de cuidado infantil de Nueva Jersey ha aumentado desde 1990, y es más diversa que nunca, con más del 50% de niños de color. Aunque NJ ocupa el quinto lugar en bienestar infantil, grandes brechas raciales en los resultados educativos, bienestar económico y la mortalidad materna e infantil existe. Con el auge multicultural en nuestra población juvenil, se deben hacer más inversiones para ampliar las oportunidades para todos los residentes de nuestros estados. Más de 270,000 niños viven en la pobreza, 27% de aumento desde 1990. The Garden State ha visto otros problemas tendencias en el bienestar económico, con una mayor proporción de niños en familias con altos costos de vivienda. Nueva Jersey ha progresado en la salud, asegurando que más niños tengan seguro y reduciendo las tasas de mortalidad de niños y adolescentes ... Pero deberemos seguir invirtiendo en los niños para garantizar que tienen futuros brillantes ."

 Haz que sea una reunión de seguridad alimentaria

Mientras prepara las comidas para su reunión familiar, siga los principios básicos de seguridad de los alimentos para ayudar a evitar las bacterias dañinas transmitidas por los alimentos. LIMPIO: Lavar productos. Recuerde lavarse las manos y las superficies de los alimentos con agua y jabón antes de prepararlos. Si no hay agua corriente, traiga agua; Empaque toallitas húmedas limpias y toallas de papel. SEPA-